

Using Habits of Mind to Develop EFL Writing Skills and Autonomy

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to determine the impact of habits of mind (HoM) based strategies on students' writing skills and autonomy. Questions formulated to achieve the purpose of the study focused on. (1) Determining the habits of mind suitable for EFL students. (2) Finding out differences in both English as a foreign language (EFL) students' writing performance test regarding experimental and control group. (3) Finding out differences in both EFL students' autonomy scale of experimental and control group. Thirty three EFL students constituted the sample for this study and four instruments-designed by the researchers- were used for data collection. Results indicated that students of experimental group outperformed their counterparts of the control group in EFL writing performance test and autonomy scale scores. The effect of using HoM on students writing skills and autonomy was profound and significant.

Key Words: Autonomy, EFL Writing Skills, Habits of Mind

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Introduction

The aim of English language teaching in EFL training is to develop communicative competence to help students produce written and oral language in social situations. One can deliver a great number of messages to all kind of readers through writing. Writing is the central element in the language teaching setting as students need to write down notes and to pass written exams. (Abdelwahab, 2002). Yet, over the years it has seemed that writing has been seen as only as a support system for learning grammar and vocabulary rather than a skill in its own right. However, methodologists have looked again at writing and acknowledged the importance of writing as a vital skill for a foreign language speaker as much as for everyone using their first language (Harmer, 2004). Writing is the activity of being able to communicate with language through a graphic representation of ideas. Hence, writing could not be naturally acquired like speaking, so it should be learned. The reasons for teaching writing for EFL learners include: reinforcement, language development, learning style, and most importantly, writing as a skill in its own right as Harmer assures. The fact that writing requires some criteria of acceptability relative to different aspects of writing which include content, organization, vocabulary, language use, spelling, punctuation and accurate capitalization and paragraphing makes writing a very toilsome task for EFL learners (Hamadouche, 2010).

At their school levels, students are not taught English in a proper way. Students feel frustrated because they do not know how to write in English properly (Ansari, 2012). Al-Khasawneh & Huwari (2013) and Zahran (2015) assure that the reasons behind the weakness in writing among students are summarized up in lack of vocabulary register, structure, organization of ideas, grammar, spelling, and referencing. Therefore, teachers should employ multiple writing teaching techniques that are related to learners' needs in order to develop their writing skills. Students are expected to write well, but are not taught to do so. In most classes students are left to use whatever strategies and competencies they have. Moreover, the students' role in completing a writing task is made yet more difficult by the lack of provision for the teacher when time and syllabus constraints come to the fore (Moony, 2004). Moreover, the lack of explicit criteria and standards is considered a writing difficulty for students. In some courses, students have little or no information about what constitutes appropriate or good writing (Holmes, 2003). A number of studies (e.g., Mogahed, 2007, ;Hamadouche, 2010, ;Ansari, 2012) assure the impact of teaching writing on the language proficiency of students. They reached the same conclusion that developing writing is among the multiple factors that affect students' language proficiency. Thus, developing students' language proficiency requires promoting the effectiveness of writing.

For students to succeed in EFL writing skills, they need to deal with writing habitually, to think in English and express their thinking through writing. HoM are means to develop students' thinking. Costa & Kallick (2008) believe that HoM focused on how to act when a student does not know the correct answer. Ritchhart, et al. (2011) add that HoM development requires teachers to use teaching methods to embody the ideas to be absorbed, it is also linked to the stages of cognitive development. Costa & Kallick (2005) believe that training on HoM will aid learners in solving problems in life, taking rational and right decisions, managing business and facing challenges. Wineburg (2003) assure that using HoM make them stable and repetitive. Cognitive researchers started to care for educational strategies that put students in open environments in order to enable them to make use of the thinking strategies in their daily life.

The Context of the Problem

The writing skill has been totally ignored in the preparatory stage curriculum. There are problems in students' writing skills. A number of studies (e.g., Al-Khasawneh & Huwari, 2013 ; Zahran, 2015) note that students' lack of use or ineffective use of strategies affected the content, organization and coherence of their writings. Moreover, Fabregas & Gaeta (2015) assure that one of the causes of weak performance of students is lack of autonomy. They recommend developing autonomy to better support students with the skills, attitudes and knowledge to succeed in school and to become lifelong learners after leaving their formal education. El-Nagar (2016) assures the relation between using habits of mind strategies and writing enhancement.

It is assumed that habits of mind strategies can affect English language learning and improve students' writing skills and autonomy. Students would be able to take the responsibility of their own learning through knowing how to make use of appropriate strategies while learning the target language.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study is that in spite of the stressed importance of writing skills, preparatory students lack many of the EFL writing skills which may have a negative impact on their autonomy. Therefore, the researchers suggest that through using HoM strategies, students' self-autonomy and writing skills could be developed.

Questions

The problem of this study can be addressed in the following questions:

1. What are the habits of mind strategies suitable for EFL students?
2. What is the effect of using habits of mind strategies on developing EFL students' writing skills?
3. What is the effect of using habits of mind strategies on developing EFL students' autonomy?

Significance

The study gains its significance from the following:

1. Helping students to learn new strategies based on HoM.
2. Providing EFL teachers with a model that may develop students' writing skills and self-autonomy.
3. Raising the awareness of English language curricula developers to the importance of using HoM strategies.

Hypotheses

1. There is statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and the control group on the post administration of the writing test favoring the experimental one.

2. There is statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group on the pre- and post- administration of the writing test favoring the post administration scores.

3. There is statistically significant difference between the mean score of experimental group and the control group on the post- administration of autonomy scale favoring the experimental one.

4. There is statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group on the pre- and post- administration of autonomy scale favoring the post administration scores.

Delimitations

The study is delimited to:

1. A sample of the second year students from Dreen preparatory school in Dakahlia Governorate.
2. Four HoM based strategies (applying prior knowledge to new situation, metacognition habit, striving for accuracy and precision, questioning and posing problems).
3. Five writing sub-skills (convention, word choice, coherence, organization and description).

Review of Literature

Nature of Writing Skill

Writing is a sophisticated, prestigious social activity of communication and an important skill for language learners. It is directly linked to people's roles in society. According to Matsuda (2003: p. 22), to be deprived of the opportunity to learn how to write is "to be excluded from a wide range of social roles, including those which the majority of people in industrialized societies associate with power and prestige". Hence, writing is a powerful effective communication instrument that allows writers to grow personally (Johnson, 2008). Writing is considered as a tool for creation and using ideas for communicative objectives in an interactive way. Accordingly, the successful transmission of ideas from an addresser to another via a text and this exchange of information through writing becomes a powerful means to promote and develop the language skill. Hyland (2003) argues that writing is conceived as a skill, and that skill is a process dependent upon a range of other skills.

Writing Challenges

The difficulty of writing lies in organizing, generating and translating ideas into a text. Students often lose interest even with the simplest exercises. They lack the motivation needed for language learning because of the difficulty of writing (Tessem, 2005). Badger & White (2000) point out that students have no clear understanding about the characteristics of writing and are provided insufficient linguistic input to write in a certain text. Although proficiency in writing is somewhat related to overall language proficiency as Archibald (2001) states, improvements in general language proficiency do not necessarily affect a student's proficiency in writing. According to Wang (2005) writing is a problem for many teachers. They spend a lot of time correcting students' composition. Although teachers do their best, students' composition remain poor, grammatically awkward and deprived of sentence structure variety and use. The reason for all this is that learners have not been involved in their own learning. They have not been taught to become self-sufficient. Monaghan (2007) assures that teaching writing should include methods of imparting necessary knowledge of the conventions of written discourse and the basis of grammar and syntax. So, the purpose of teaching writing is guiding students toward achieving the highest ability in communicating in words. Additionally, Taggart (2009) states that writing has not been giving the attention it deserves in schools. Students have not been taught to make ideas flow on papers. Nazim (2012) investigates students' writing problems at preparatory stage. The sample was fifteen teachers and sixty students. The instruments of the study include questionnaires and writing samples. The results indicate that students repeat the errors in conventions, punctuation, spelling,

language use and organization. Some remedies were suggested to improve writing skills such as remedial exercises in conventions, punctuation and spelling.

Writing for communication is very important. Through writing, a person can communicate a great number of messages to different kinds of readers. Students need regular opportunities at school to write in all subjects. Following a consistent approach to the writing process in all subject areas and an explicit instruction in writing would help students become better writers. One of the important variables that affect students' writing skills is their autonomy.

Autonomy in Language Learning

According to what autonomy research has acknowledged, developing learner autonomy is concerned with both the individual and social interaction. Social autonomy pertains to awareness raising and learning generated by interaction, collaboration, individual reflection and experimentation while the individual dimension of autonomy involves individual learning styles over collaborative learning. Social autonomy, emphasizes that "the development of a capacity for reflection and analysis, central to the development of learner autonomy, depends on the development and internalization of a capacity to participate fully and critically in social interactions" (Little 1996, p.211). Ushioda (2003) assures that teachers take the basic role of supporting learners' motivation through building necessary scaffolds, and facilitating interactions in the classroom. Ushioda (2006a, p. 287) raises an argument about whether teachers and other social practices are relevant and applicable in "learners' attempts to exercise self-motivation and take control of affective learning experience" on top of "the genesis and growth of individual motivation". Teachers play an important role in facilitating the development of effective motivational thinking through the process of giving feedback to their students. The possibility of exercising self-motivation and taking control of affective learning experience depends on the presence of "local constraints on the exercise of self-motivational resources". Dickinson (1995: p.167) defines autonomous learners as "those who have the capacity for being active and independent in the learning process; they can identify goals, formulate their own goals, and can change goals to suit their own learning needs and interests; they are able to use learning strategies, and to monitor their own learning". Autonomy is operationally defined as students' ability to acquire knowledge and skills independently using learning strategies that he/she determines and it is measured by the score that the students get on the post administration of autonomy scale.

Ushioda (2006a, p.289) posits that the "processes of engaging, constructing and negotiating identities are central to [the] ... interface" between motivation and autonomy, and distinguishes individual identity of self and social identity. Whereas to individual identity of self where an individual has great control over his/her pursuit, social identity is "subject to conditions and constraints imposed by surrounding social practices" (Ushioda 2006a, p.291). Norton (2000, p.5) describes social identity as "how a person understands his/her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" and L2 motivation as the "investment" learners make which has the potential of increasing their cultural capital, self-concept and identity, and aspirations with the acquisition of symbolic and material resources. Exerting control over one's acquisition of symbolic capital, and engagement of self-concept is subject to the constraints imposed by the surrounding social environment. Ushioda (2006a) points out the importance of creating an enabling environment for

students to engage their identities so that they would be able to have a better understanding of their identities, aspirations and the ways of relating themselves inside and outside the classroom.

Research has been focused on autonomy and motivation in relation to specific skills of language learning such as writing (e.g., Deng 2007, Zhao 2007) and vocabulary (e.g., Dam & Legenhausen 1996), knowledge about the language system (e.g., Allan 1997), examination preparation (e.g., Barrett-Lennard 1997), and strategy use (e.g., Schmidt & Watanabe 2001). In addition, although there have been some studies trials to explore how various motivation-related variables were related to success and failure in language learning (e.g., Nikolov 2001), those studies were not specific to the self-access learning context where learning takes place outside the classroom.

In EFL classrooms, writing teachers commonly use direct feedback (Williams, 2003). Teachers enter all corrections onto students' writings and then ask them to incorporate the corrections into a subsequent draft. Lee's (2003) study concerning Chinese writing teachers' perspectives found that most writing teachers corrected students' writings because they felt that it was their duty to correct students' errors. This method is based on the traditional role of the teacher, as owner of knowledge, didactically provides correct answers for students who then receive the feedback and copy them down in revision stage. Accordingly, the students' role in the learning process is purely passive receptive. Habits of mind help students to build up their autonomy, academic writing competencies and help student writers become less dependent on the teacher (Costa, 2007). An autonomous classroom places a strong emphasis on pair and group work as means to promote learner autonomy. In fact, students become less dependent on the teacher by learning to collaborate with their peers. An autonomy-supportive environment for learners that allow them to engage in activities and develop a capacity to control their learning (Benson 2001) can be created both inside and outside the classroom. Habits of mind based activities as a mean for developing students' writing skills encourages learners to move from being teacher-dependent to autonomous students. According to Voller (1997), teachers have three major roles in autonomy-supportive classrooms: 1) facilitator, 2) counselor, and 3) resource. The role of teachers in habits of mind training is deciding the content, skills and strategies, resources, materials, patterns and which habits of mind to focus on. Teachers also measure students' learning and identify the purpose, intentions and goals. Moreover, they need to design the cognitive tasks that can engage students in deeper thinking processes.

Habits of Mind

Habits of mind based strategies are considered as an educational theory which indicates what and how people should learn (Tishman, 2000). HoM enable students to confront difficulty, learn from each other and develop their skills (Costa & Kallick, 2000). Costa (2007) assures that when teaching is based habits of mind, students learn how to behave when they do not know an answer. HoM are intellectual behaviors that lead to educational productive actions. They also include making choices about which pattern should be used at a certain situation because it is a composite of many skills, past experience, cues and attitudes which indicate that students prefer one pattern over another. Costa & Kallick (2000) define HoM as dispositions toward behaving intelligently when confronted with problems, the answers to which are not immediately known. HoM are operationally defined as behaviors which help students to improve their writing skills through four habits of mind (applying past knowledge to new situations, metacognition, striving for accuracy and precision, and questioning and posing problems).

The sixteen HoM identified by Costa & Kallick (2004) are: persisting, thinking flexibly, striving for accuracy, questioning and posing problems, creating, imagining and innovating, managing impulsivity, listening to other with understanding and empathy, thinking about our thinking, striving for accuracy and precision, applying past knowledge to new situations, gathering data through all senses, responding with wonderment and awe, taking responsible risks, thinking interdependently, learning continuously, and finding humor. Costa & Kallick (2009) declare that when teachers draw upon intellectual resources, the results are more powerful of higher quality and significance. Studies on developing habits of mind (e.g., Perkins, 2010, ; Spencer & Claxton, 2012) indicate that habits of mind are effective in life skills and improving realization levels. Moulds (2002) indicates that teachers have a great responsibility for instilling thinking process and dispositions in students. Teachers must teach students to value intelligent, rational and creative actions. Furthermore, providing the conditions that will nurture these habits must be supported.

Among the studies that were done linking HoM strategies to developing writing skills is the study of Dugler (2011). The researcher examines the effect of metacognitive strategy as one of the HoM on achievement and retention in developing writing skills. The study was conducted on 77 students enrolled in English department at Selcuk University. The results proved the contribution of HoM on developing writing skills. Wiggins & McTighe (2005) indicate that when teachers are intentionally developing students' skills using understanding by design, a focus on habits of mind strength the capacity of students for deeper understanding. Learning is not simply about mastery of a subject matter, but it involves developing the habits of mind of those who engaged in the discipline. Based on the previous studies, it was indicated that HoM were not widely used in the field of language in general and writing in particular. It was also indicated that integrating habits of mind in learning English language can develop students' level and mind.

Implementing Habits of Mind for Developing Writing

The school's vision must seek ways to provide students with high proficiencies, self-confidence and desire to continue learning in addition to meeting challenges creatively. Accordingly, students need to be prepared with the skills of problem solving, critical thinking, self-direction, communication, flexibility, social skills, responsibility and productivity. Learning based habits of mind can help students to go through that vision. It provides a map for classrooms, individuals and for a full system to enhance curriculum, instruction and assessment (Partnership for 21st century skills, 2007). Costa & Kallick (2008) assure that the habits of mind cannot be added onto overcrowded curriculum but they are an important part of a generative curriculum that included students so that they think not just for exam but to apply in other subjects and in their lives. Cooper & Jenson (2009) suggested some procedures for implementing HoM: determine what skills students need to know, guide students to specific idea, raise the habits of mind to the consciousness level, make the teacher a collegial learner, use thinking time to maintain focus and merge the habits of mind into curriculum.

Costa & Kallick (2008) indicate that teachers have to focus on the coherence and the effects of activities in the classroom besides employing thinking skills in the content. Thus, they help students to think creatively and critically, observe and collect data, formulate hypothesis, draw

conclusions and pose questions while students can plan and demonstrate their understanding. Students can evaluate themselves in groups in addition to thinking and working interdependently. The researchers assure that students must use the HoM to reach the cognitive task. Schwertner (2005) examined the effect of using habits of mind to improve writing to understand why the HoM might be considered useful in the writing classroom and find ways to incorporate the habits of mind in the writing classroom. Organization and word choice was found to be better. Moreover, the results indicated that most students were able to provide a clearer focus.

Methodology

Participants

A feasible sample of students from Dreen Prep School was selected and then assigned to a control and an experimental group (33 students in each group). Students' age ranged from fourteen to fifteen years. They had been learning English for seven years, six at the primary stage and one at the preparatory stage. The researchers selected that school to perform their experiment for some reasons:

- 1- The instructors of the experimental group were the researchers themselves.
- 2- The researchers were offered some facilities and support by the school administration.

Design

Adopting the quasi-experimental design, the control and experimental group were pre-tested on their writing skills and autonomy. Then the experimental group received training through habits of mind. On the other hand, the control group received the regular course of the writing skills. Both groups received the pre-post application of the writing skills course and autonomy scale to measure improvement in students' writing skills and autonomy.

Instruments

To achieve the purposes of the study, the researchers prepared four instruments:

- 1)- Writing skills test, see Appendix (A).
- 2)- Analytic scoring rubric, see Appendix (B).
- 3)- Habits of mind checklist, see Appendix (C).
- 4)- Autonomy scale, see Appendix (D).

Validity and reliability of the four instruments were established through jury validation and the calculation of internal consistency for the autonomy scale (alpha coefficient = 0.710).

The Treatment: Program for Developing EFL Students Writing Skills and Autonomy

Objectives

Based on reviewing related literature and the habits of mind checklist, training program was designed in order to improve students' writing skills and autonomy (Appendix (E)). The program aims at developing the following skills:

- 1- Developing writing skills including the five components; conventions, coherence, organization, word choice and description.
- 2- Training EFL students on using habits of mind.
- 3- Developing students' autonomy.

Materials

1- The selected topics for second year of preparatory stage.

Aids

- 1- Worksheet.
- 2- Mind maps.
- 3- Grouping.

Duration and Content

The program consisted of five topics that were distributed over ten sessions. Each session was 45 minutes. The program lasted for one semester. Teaching to the experimental group took place over a period of 12 weeks (October, November and December) during the academic year 2016/2017 from 2/10/2016 till 22/12/2016.

Description

The program was designed based on habits of mind for the experimental group. On the other hand, the control group received regular training. The intent of habits of mind based strategies is to help students get into the habit of behaving intelligently. The habits of mind employed in the present study are:

- 1- Applying prior knowledge to new situations through effectively responding to students and providing them with feedback. In addition, relating classroom learning to students' prior knowledge, life experience and interest.
- 2- Metacognition habit through using mind maps and asking students questions like (what make you think that? and how do you know that?).
- 3- Striving for accuracy and precision habit through the reporter's notebook. It is a strategy for distinguishing between facts and thoughts as identifying a situation, story or dilemma for discussion.
- 4- Questioning and posing problems through using the parking lot strategy in which the teacher creates a parking lot area in the classroom and ask students to post their questions in it using the six starters (how, what, why, who, when, where).

Evaluation

Students are told that they will be evaluated according to their contribution and participation in class discussion, in addition to their answers to the assigned writings activities. Students are allowed to evaluate each lesson, give their comments and suggestions and are also encouraged to write any difficulties or challenges they face during the lesson.

Results and Discussion

It was hypothesized that the experimental group will outperform the control group in the post administration of the writing test. t-test was used to compare the differences between the mean scores of students in the writing test in the experimental and control group as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Comparing the writing performance of the control and experimental group on the post test.

Writing Skills	Groups	Test	Mean	SD	t value	Sig.
Conventions	Experiment	Pre-test	4.06	2.17	9.026	0.001
		Post-test	8.40	0.86		
	Control	Pre-test	5.04	1.12	1.037	0.304
		Post-test	5.46	1.81		
Coherence	Experiment	Pre-test	2.57	2.05	5.932	0.001
		Post-test	5.41	1.34		
	Control	Pre-test	2.61	1.54	1.714	0.121
		Post-test	3.82	1.71		
Word choice	Experiment	Pre-test	1.89	1.45	5.891	0.001
		Post-test	3.76	0.83		
	Control	Pre-test	2.00	0.98	1.161	0.273
		Post-test	2.57	1.10		
Organization	Experiment	Pre-test	4.68	1.16	4.590	0.001
		Post-test	5.76	0.49		
	Control	Pre-test	4.83	0.89	1.200	0.281
		Post-test	5.00	0.98		
Description	Experiment	Pre-test	4.66	1.98	4.612	0.001
		Post-test	6.70	1.38		
	Control	Pre-test	4.80	1.13	0.772	0.451
		Post-test	4.97	1.70		
Total	Experiment	Pre-test	19.49	5.65	10.915	0.001
		Post-test	30.70	2.89		
	Control	Pre-test	19.47	2.54	1.084	0.398
		Post-test	22.52	4.12		

Results in table 1 shows that the mean score of the experimental group post-test is higher than that of the control group's mean score. The increase in students level in the experimental group could be interpreted that students in the experimental group were active in using habits of mind especially questions that are related to their thinking. Moreover, using habits of mind activities and strategies like mind maps, parking lot area, discussion, group work and report's notebook led to entertaining lesson and thoughtful environment.

It was hypothesized that the experimental group post- administration of the writing test will outperform the pre- administration scores. t test for paired sample was used to compare between the pre- and post- test score of the experimental group to determine the effect of the study intervention on writing skills as shown in table 2.

Table 2. Comparing the writing performance of the pre-post-test administration for the experimental group.

Writing Skills	Groups	Test	Mean	SD	t value	Sig.
Conventions	Experiment	Pre-test	4.06	2.17	9.026	0.001
		Post-test	8.40	0.86		
Coherence	Experiment	Pre-test	2.57	2.05	5.932	0.001
		Post-test	5.41	1.34		
Word choice	Experiment	Pre-test	1.89	1.45	5.891	0.001
		Post-test	3.76	0.83		
Organization	Experiment	Pre-test	4.68	1.16	4.590	0.001
		Post-test	5.76	0.49		
Description	Experiment	Pre-test	4.66	1.98	4.612	0.001
		Post-test	6.70	1.38		
Total	Experiment	Pre-test	19.49	5.65	10.915	0.001
		Post-test	30.70	2.89		

Results in table 2 shows that the higher mean score is for the post administration of the experimental group post-test. Therefore, HoM training was effective in developing writing skills. Most of students liked parking lot area activity as it made them focus and gave them chance to express their questions and problems. Moreover, mind mapping taught students to organize their thinking and to order ideas in context. The most improved sub-skill among the five writing sub-skills is convention. Whereas organization and description were the least. This may be because students were not good writers and they did not know how to describe events or place. Coherence also was low. This could be because of students' lack of developed ideas.

It was hypothesized the mean score of the autonomy scale post-administration of experimental group will outperform the control group. Chi values were used in order to compare the results of the students in the experimental and control group regarding writing autonomy as shown in table 3.

Table 3. chi square results of the writing autonomy post-scale of control and experimental group.

Total		Experimental group		Control group		Chi-square	
		N	%	N	%	X2	P-value
Pre	I don't do it	14	42.2	10	30.3	46.32	0.001
	I don't do it well	19	57.8	13	39.9		
	I do it well	0	0.0	10	30.3		
Post	I don't do it at all	0	0.0	5	15.5	12.010	0.002
	I do it well	27	81.8	15	45.5		
	I don't do it well	6	18.8	13	39.9		
Chi-square	X2	13.018		10.563			
	P-value	0.001		0.005			

The chi square values indicate that the difference between the percentages of the students writing autonomy scale score in the experimental and control group were statistically significant at 0.001 levels in favor of the experimental group post administration.

It was hypothesized that the experimental group post- administration scores of the autonomy scale will outperform the pre- administration scores. Chi values were used in order to compare the pre- post scale results of the students in the experimental regarding writing autonomy as shown in table 4.

Table 4. *chi square results of the writing autonomy pre-post-scale of the experimental group.*

Total		Experimental group		Chi-square	
		N	%	Chi 2	P-value
Pre	I don't do it	14	42.2	13.018	0.001
	I don't do it well	19	57.8		
	I do it well	0	0.0		
Post	I don't do it at all	0	0.0		
	I do it well	27	81.8		
	I don't do it well	6	18.8		

Chi square values indicate that there was significant difference between the pre and post writing autonomy scale at (0.001) level favor the post one which indicates that the habits of mind based training had a great effect on developing students' autonomy. The increase in writing autonomy level of the experimental group may be due to applying habits of mind strategies as share strategy and thinking routines for managing impulsivity. Habits of mind strategies made students enjoy learning and have tendencies towards writing and expressing their thoughts. Students were encouraged to use resources in order to complete learning assignments, use dictionaries during the writing activities and use mind maps to organize thinking process.

Conclusions

Based on literature review and related studies, it is assumed that students need to deal with writing habitually, to think in English and express their thinking through writing. Habits of mind are means to develop students' thinking. Students' ineffective use of strategies affects their writings. Moreover, lack of autonomy results in students' weak performance.

Developing autonomy is highly recommended to better support students with the skills, attitudes and knowledge to succeed in school. Hence, the relation between using habits of mind strategies and autonomy and writing development is investigated in this study. According to the findings of this study, habits of mind based training gave students opportunities to practice discussion, give feedback, answer questions and make suggestions. Students get benefit through idea exchange with their partners. In spite of being curious concerning habit of mind based training at the beginning, students became interested and they concentrated in order to listen and take notes to take ideas for their writings. Thinking in every step students did and reflecting on these thoughts in solving writing problems was a new experience for students that encouraged them to be active

and motivated. Hence in the light of the results of this study, preparatory education programs should incorporate habits of mind into their language arts curriculum. Furthermore, future research is needed to investigate the impact of habits of mind on students' achievement.

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