

EXPLORING THE PERCEPTION OF EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN PROMOTING SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH TRAVEL WRITING

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Abstract

This research explored how EFL students perceived the implementation of self-directed learning through their process of composing travel writing. With the enhancement of the independent learning model, it had become an interesting investigation of students' engagement in their creativity. Promoting self-directed learning through the students' travel writing becomes one of the ultimate strategies that is potentially integrated into nowadays conditions since it addresses students to foster their learning style. This research was designed as a descriptive statistics method using self-directed learning analysis by Knowles (1975) and Garrison (1997) which was employed as the theoretical framework. A total of 17 EFL University Students who joined in creative writing class volunteered for this research to have a deep interview with comprehensive related questions through a questionnaire. Based on the creative writing class they chose; the respondents were chosen at random. The optional creative writing class, which is offered for two semesters, attracts students who are interested in improving their writing. They take several courses in the class that are focused on producing various kinds of creative writing products. The results of the study show: (i) the integration of self-directed learning in students' travel writing encourages the improvement of student writing, (ii) there is a fostering of their cultural awareness, and (iii) a building of their autonomous learning that covers three fundamental elements of self-directed learning, including self-management, self-monitoring, and motivation. Finally, promoting self-directed learning in students' travel writing is incorporated properly to enhance the students learning model in an effective way for nowadays learning needs.

Keywords: *self-directed learning; students' perception; travel writing*

1. Introduction

There was a profound influence of the pandemic era on essentially every element of human life (Ali & Sofa, 2018; Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Cutri et al., 2020; Van der Spoel et al., 2020; Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). Many aspects of the countries involved have changed significantly, including the economy, health, education, and so forth (Büssing et al., 2020; Norouzi et al., 2020; Rupani et al., 2020; Sklar, 2020; Sutin et al., 2020). Indonesia has

abundant natural resources; however, its people resources are also a cause for worry. Indonesia is home to many millions of people. The quality of the developed human resources, however, has not been optimally enabled. Improving its talents is one action that may be taken to give it additional strength. A person should now possess at least 5c talents, such as those critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and connectivity. For educational principles to be realized, these five talents must complement one another, claims Mazzola (2020), Each person must enhance their skills to compete on a global scale as times change. The combination of these five skills will help achieve the present educational development objectives.

In light of this situation, innovation is crucial to the advancement of time in addressing 21st-century needs. According to Piya-Amornphan et al., (2020), creativity is an essential component to have since it stimulates innovation and addresses unanticipated challenges that are useful for societal progress. One of the essential demands that materialize in response to external conditions is creativity (Aldujayn & Alsubhi, 2020). In nowadays conditions, students need their creativity to be developed to balance global competition. It is because educational components are forced to adapt to constantly changing and unexpected environments. In essence, creativity plays a sufficient part in raising the standard for education development.

Numerous studies in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) demonstrate the importance of creativity in language instruction (Hana & Hacène, 2017; Khodabakhshzadeh et al., 2018; Arifani et al., 2019; Arifani & Suryanti, 2019). For instance, according to Boden (2001, quoted in Tin, 2013), creativity is the capacity to generate innovative, inventive ideas that are astonishing also understandable, and useful in some way. Daniel (2021) concurs that creativity is one of the most exciting ideas in ELT today, and also supports it. Words creativity in this context refers to the playful use of language to produce creative and intriguing interpretations. It is a valuable quality that the educational system should promote since it is a frequent component of standard linguistic forms and includes a variety of creative thinking (Ritter & Mostert, 2017). Therefore, encouraging students' creativity can assist them in achieving their learning objectives.

One of the critical skills that need an exclusive of creativity is writing. Writing skills are necessary for effective communication since it enables somebody to convey ideas to a larger audience clearly and concisely (Yundayani et al., 2017; Muluneh, 2018; Yulianti et al., 2019; Graham, 2019; Kahveci & Şentürk, 2021). Furthermore, writing is one of the four most productive language skills since the components of writing activities necessitate multi-skills such as listening, speaking, and reading (Kahveci & Şentürk, 2021). Creative writing is one sort of writing that calls for a formidable engagement. According to Şenel (2018) and Denham (2020), creative writing is a complex process that requires the simultaneous application of many different skills and pieces of knowledge. By demonstrating strategies and engaging techniques that engage students' interests and inspire their creative desires, teachers may help them develop their creative writing skills (Denham, 2020). It suggests that creative writing inspires students to foster their creativity while developing their writing skills in a comprehensive performance.

Travel writing is one of the creative writing genres in which the author attempts to tell the reader about people's journeys. The travel writing genre has the potential to stimulate students' imagination while portraying or describing their travels or the sights they encountered on their adventures. Travel writing, a type of creative writing, also instructs readers about ideas, characteristics, and lifestyles (Farida & Margawati, 2014).

Englert & Vlasta, (2020) argue that travel writing comprises both written and visual aspects, such as maps, images, drawings, photographs, sketches, views, and other media, whether they are displayed visually or rendered with words. This is especially true for the component of travel writing. In other words, in its presentation, travel writing prioritizes the beauty of paper and considers the aesthetics of depictions of objects presented in the form of visualization. It also stimulates the students to foster their self-learning in the process of obtaining the data to be described in their travel writing.

The majority of self-study was driven by self-directed learning. Self-directed learning is, in theory, a teaching strategy that inspires students with a sense of responsibility, motivation, and independence (Morris, 2019; Brandt, 2020). As a result, self-directed learning may encourage students to take more initiative in their learning, which would be beneficial for them (Francis, 2017; Bhandari et al., 2020). Additionally, there is a proportional chance that a relatively new learning environment method would include a considerable amount of self-directed learning. This is because it only benefits students by fostering their motivation, autonomy, self-control, and self-regulation (Knowles, 1975). The learners can therefore acquire an effective learning technique for the short-term and long-term learning environment by implementing self-directed learning.

A study that draws a connection to the use of self-directed learning and the results of travel writing produced by students was not sufficiently explored. Therefore, it is crucial to do a study on how self-directed learning is applied in the instruction of travel writing outputs and results. The study intends to explore their perspectives on how travel writing affects the development of their writing, the advantages gained during the process of composing travel writing, and their view of incorporating travel writing in connection to promoting self-directed learning. The following research questions are addressed in the study:

1. What do the students think about the effects of travel writing on their writing improvement?
2. What do the students think about the advantages of travel writing by promoting self-directed learning?
3. What do the students perceive of composing travel writing by promoting self-directed learning?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning was popularized by Knowles (1975), who also broadened the meaning of andragogy theory. According to Knowles, it is a process in which people take the initiative to identify their learning needs, establish personal objectives, choose learning materials and strategies, and assess the outcomes. This may be done with or without the help of others. Then, Dun et al., (1996) stated that self-directed learning may occur in a variety of situations, including learning with self-planned and self-conducted learners as well as learning in teacher-directed classes. Self-directed learning enhances knowledge, competence, success, and personal growth to connect those two ideas. People constantly use several methods in a range of situations.

Self-directed learning is a widely prominent educational strategy when it comes to more recent learners. Since it motivates them to be responsible, it encourages students to increase their motivation to learn independently. Self-directed learning is currently receiving greater attention as technology-based learning advances (Lee et al., 2017). Additionally,

self-directed learning encourages learners to self-regulate their learning. It implies that students must demonstrate their creativity-related abilities. Additionally, self-directed learning fosters managerial abilities and learning enthusiasm in learners (Lee et al., 2017; Bhandari et al., 2020). The key components of self-directed learning have been linked with those of 21st-century learner competencies.

Regarding the fundamental idea of self-directed learning, several opinions have been expressed by various scholars. The first definition provided by Ko (2018) defines that self-directed learning is a subject that is frequently brought up in discussions regarding language acquisition and education in general. Morris & Rohs (2021) go on to explain that self-directed learning is a learning process in which students are in charge of choosing their learning objectives and goals. According to Moradi (2018), self-directed learning has been a major concern for researchers and linguists attempting to assess the effectiveness of implementation over a longer period.

2.2 Dimensions of Self-Directed Learning

Contrasting perspectives on self-directed learning can be thought of as dimensions, with various features or attributes being categorized. Knowles (1975) and Garrison (1997) are only a few experts who have helped with this kind of classification (2013). These experts have primarily scaffolded a variety of components, encompassing the target audience, online learning-related topics, context-influence self-directed learning, and the relationship to lifelong learning. According to Garrison (1997), the goal of self-directed learning is to empower students to assume personal accountability and collective control over their cognitive (self-monitoring) and environmental (self-management) processes as they design and validate meaningful and valued learning outcomes. The extension of Garrison's (1997) model will be the main emphasis of this study. Self-management, motivation, and self-monitoring are three of the collaborative constructivists' main aspects that are covered.

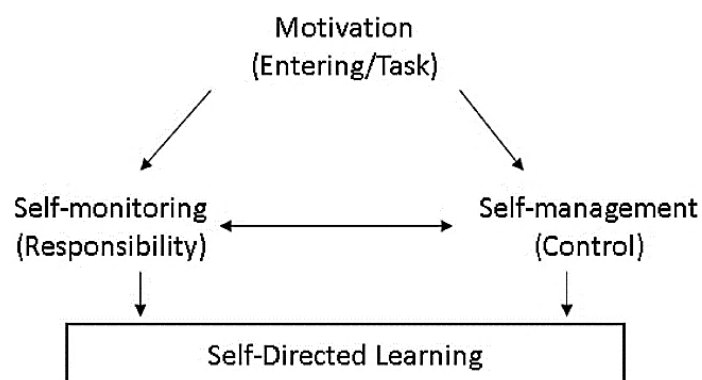


Figure 1. Dimensions of Self-directed Learning

Self-management concerns challenges with task management, such as carrying out learning goals and managing learning support and assistance (Garrison, 1997). In addition to goal-setting and metacognitive techniques, regulating learning activities explicitly is a sort of external task control that is connected to self-management (ditto). It emphasizes the social and behavioral implementation of learning objectives, or the outward manifestations of the learning process (Shahrouri, 2016). Furthermore, Self-monitoring is another component of Garrison's self-directed learning approach. It stands for the expanded components of cognitive and metacognitive processes. They include ongoing awareness of the learning processes of others, as well as the capacity to reflect on one's views. It is the method

through which a student takes ownership of developing their own meaning by fusing fresh ideas and concepts with past information (Abd-El-Fattah, 2010). The last element connected to the other three is the motivation dimension. This component is crucial for starting and continuing a learning process and reaching cognitive objectives (Garrison, 1997; Fattah, 2010). The beginning and persistence of effort toward education and learning goals are significantly influenced by motivational variables. According to Garrison, choosing goals and purposes and deciding to engage in academic work are all examples of motivation (ditto).

2.3 Writing Skills

Writing is a crucial component of English language teaching (ELT) since it helps students understand grammar, cohesion, coherence, and all other aspects of the text. Writing has a special place in language learning because it calls for the development of the other three language skills of listening, reading, and speaking, each of which also calls for the mastery of other skills, such as metacognitive ability (Misbah et al., 2017). One of the most difficult skills to teach is writing in the English language, which is acknowledged by both native speakers and English Second Language teachers globally (Akramova et al., 2020). In general, teachers had difficulties while attempting to teach writing due to the students' different academic levels, a lack of professional expertise, and a lack of student enthusiasm (Gündoğmuş, 2018; Moses & Mohamad, 2019).

It also contributes to the learners' challenges with developing writing skills in terms of the problems experienced by the teachers. Poor spelling a lack of vocabulary, poor grammar, students who are not ready (Foster, 2015), inadequate access to books (Akramova et al., 2020), and reading resources and a lack of enthusiasm are the first causes (Gbollie & Keanu, 2017). In general, every student will approach learning to write in a distinct method that excites them. These challenges will impede students' ability to write an acceptable piece of writing (Misbah et al., 2017)

2.4 Travel Writing

The purpose of travel writing is to provide the reader with information about the writer's adventures. Travel writing emphasizes the differences in customs and civilizations throughout the world. It helps the reader understand diverse individuals and places. It also helps readers plan their holidays and steer clear of expensive mistakes while driving. Most essential, though, is that it enables readers to see several places that they otherwise may never visit. The act of seeing different places and writing about them is closely related to travel writing.

The main goals of travel writing have often been to convey news around the world and educate readers about unfamiliar people and places. In this instance, Ariestanty quoted in Juliaty et al., (2021) said that travel writing's main function is to serve as a way of keeping track of travel memories. In this case, Daniel (2018) promoted four fundamental writing processes for the travel genre: (i) generating concepts, (ii) focusing on the task, (iii) arranging the key components, and (iv) revising and editing.

3. Research Method

This study's descriptive statistics analysis was designed by volunteering seventeen EFL University students. The respondents were selected randomly based on the class they chose in the creative writing class. The creative writing class is taken over a period of two semesters and is an optional class that gathers students who are interested in developing

their writing. In this class, they get several courses that focus on composing various creative writing products. Those who take this class is a choice based on their willingness and interest to develop their writing capability.

The questionnaire was presented as a 4-point Likert scale with four options: strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). Each option addressed three key characteristics of each statement. To obtain more concentrated findings, this method was used to eliminate neutral reactions. To enhance students' perspectives, the researcher also included open-ended questions. Two steps in the data collection process must be accomplished. The demography of the participants covered in the first stage's participant data, including gender, age, and class. Then, all questions on the given questionnaire were to be answered by the participants. The research instrument used in this study was adapted from Fattah (Abd-El-2010).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Travel Writing's Impact on Writing Enhancement

The majority of the participants highlighted that, in contrast to other types of writing they produce in English classes, travel writing was a sort of writing in which the writer felt free to create and communicate their material to the audience. They said that because of this independence, they were able to write more imaginatively and with greater artistic authority. Additionally, they were delighted that they could express their feelings and opinions to the audience honestly without being constrained by the rigid rules of formal writing or potential hierarchical relationships between the author and the audience, such as in a traditional teacher-student relationship. As an example of such a case, consider the following:

I am very happy when there is a travel writing assignment. For me, by writing, I can process, understand, and express my feelings in response to an experience that I have experienced and share it in an interesting written form.

In addition to flexibility, being more attentive and mindful to avoid errors was noted as a difference in the participants' writing processes. As a result, the student's attention to detail increased while writing about their travels since they realized that not only their instructor and classmates but also the entire web travel blogs would be reading everything they had to write. The majority of them stated that they did not want their use of English to be perceived as inadequate and ineffective, which allowed for their significant concern about their writing. They were discovered to verify their writings multiple times to ensure that they were excellent compositions with few errors. As an illustration, one participant stated:

In the process, I am the type of writer who is not satisfied with reading once but reads it several times, and often after reviewing, I get new errors... so I have to review and re-match several times with photos, pictures to cell phones... how come it doesn't seem right... Why is this photo like this... but how come I wrote it like this...? I adjusted it again until I was sure it would be the right writing to collect.

As demonstrated by the example excerpt up top, the majority of participants claimed that travel writing required capturing the reader's attention and keeping them

interested and that this resulted in a new change to their school writing because they weren't used to such genres as a part of their educational life. In the process of composing travel writing, most of them experience interesting experiences that they can include in their writings, so they feel that readers will feel what they write. This way can stimulate them to write better and strive to create improve their writing quality.

When compiling travel writing I have had experiences such as being more sensitive to details such as how the air is when I visit a place, whether it is cold or hot, what I see, and so on. I learned to bring readers into my writing.

The 21st-century learning strategy of self-directed learning enables students to enhance and expand their writing abilities since it empowers students to conduct their learning. To this study, self-directed learning is an effective way for teaching English, particularly when it comes to enhancing and exposing students' writing abilities. In a particular context, several studies validated that self-directed learning adequately has a strong potential to promote and develop students' writing skills through self-learning strategy (Lee et al., 2017; Morris & Rohs, 2021). Also, this claim argued by Bhandari et al., (2020) that self-directed learning integration with students' writing capability has a strong correlation since it connects with some aspects, such as imagination, critical thinking, and creativity. Principally, enhancing students' writing capability has a great deal with their learning strategy in empowering their writing improvements.

4.2 Benefits of Composing Travel Writing

To strengthen the learners' knowledge and cultural awareness of the place they were living in, it was frequently suggested that they engage in local travel and write about their experiences for a real audience. Participants reported that learning about their place's history and cultural significance through travel writing helped them become more aware of the local elements in their communities. Although the majority of the participants said they had lived in the area all their lives, they had never gone to such areas. The trip offered them a fresh perspective on their locality and its significance.

I tend to see real conditions and situations because when I start to compose my travel writing at this time, I decided to choose the spot in my area where every year there is an event there, so I understand more or less

A sense of responsibility and a sense of accomplishment were reported to be given to the participants by composing travel writing since they also claimed to have realistic goals to pursue. Additionally, they claimed that travels gave them a sense of belonging since they perceived themselves as the administrators of separate spots and members of a particular destination. Consequently, they felt certain and inspired to write more.

...Because the place is not only a tourist spot but a historical place that can educate me as a young man who is less for any knowledge. I know the place is also unique, at first, I didn't realize that the place was a tourist spot the first time I visited, when I got home, I searched on the internet it turned out that the place was a historical place that was inherited from the Netherlands to my hometown. So, when I had an assignment here, I visited the place a second time in the hope of being able to describe more about this place.

Travel writing was also found to be a supportive means to encourage the students' self-learning which was promoted during the process of composing travel writing. The students perceived that travel writing was potentially stimulating them to have independent learning abilities. It correlates with the way students compose the writing to become a proper form of writing quality.

I learned to be sensitive to my surroundings and learned to be more expressive in writing because I prefer to explore things on my own. And, I feel that learning travel writing can make me an independent learner

Following the research findings of this investigation, it reveals that composing travel writing with self-directed learning gives a great signal to be implemented in nowadays learning circumstances. Referring to The Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud, 2019) is the leading national education sector that plays an important role in realizing the quality of Indonesian human resources, followed up by issuing various important policies, including the Learning Independence education policy. The Independent Learning Program according to the Minister of Education and Culture will be the direction of future learning that focuses on improving the quality of human resources. In this case, the students' processes in enhancing their writing capabilities indirectly can be part of the program, namely by becoming independent learners. Some researchers pay the same attention to this as Sumuer (2018) and Mahlaba (2020). For them, the implementation of self-directed learning can increase their independent learning process.

4.3 Students' Perspective on Self-directed Learning Implementation

The study also considered students' perspectives regarding the implementation of self-directed learning in the process of composing travel writing. It was found that the majority of the students perceived a positive response toward the integration of self-directed learning in connection with some aspects of self-management, motivation, and self-monitoring.

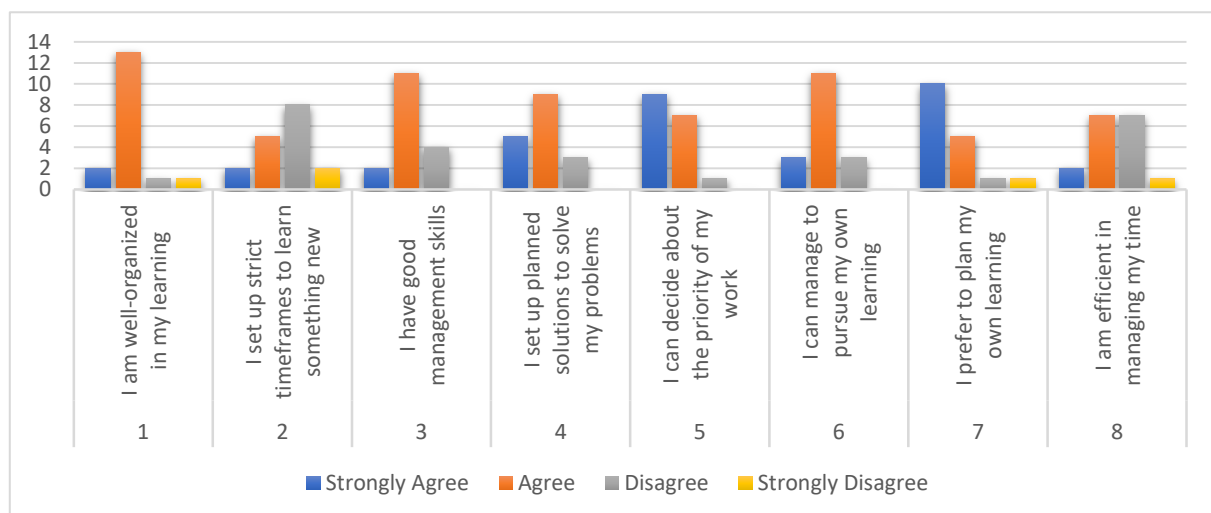


Table 1. The extent to which the students agree or disagree with their self-management

The comprehensive responses stated in the chart above adequately present the positive outcome of the students' self-management. According to the data, the majority of the students gave a positive view toward their learning organization (98%). It shows that the students were successfully organized as well during the learning process. Also, the students

agreed that they have good management skills and are capable to overcome some challenges they face during the process of composing travel writing (89%). In connection with the student’s management of their self-learning, the majority of them also perceived positively towards the statements. The students mostly agreed that they can prioritize the important thing in doing their work, encourage their learning plan, and manage their efficient time to learn (80%).

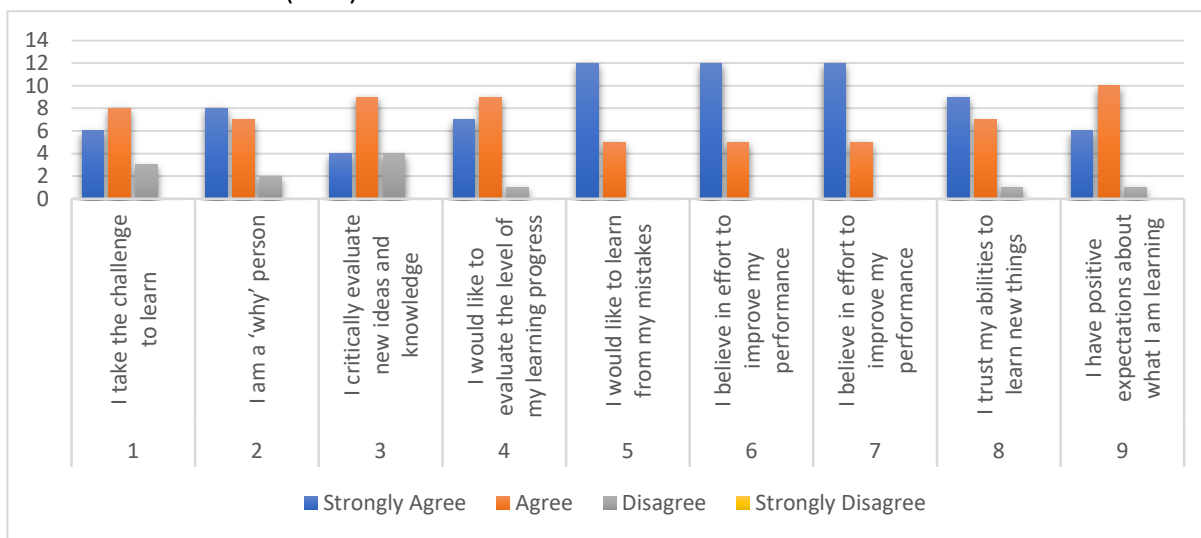


Table 2. The extent to which the students agree or disagree with their motivation.

The student’s motivation for implementing self-directed learning is shown in the apparent presenting data above. The dominant responses are given to their significant motivation of organizing their writing skills in connection with self-directed learning. Up to 90% of students perceived positively toward the statements. The students agreed that they have the potential to evaluate new ideas and knowledge and the level of their learning progress. Interestingly, the students gave similar positive responses toward the statement of motivational elements on their desire to learn from mistakes, belief to improve their performance, and trust in their abilities to learn new things (90%). It also shows in almost 80% of students perceived that they have positive expectations about what they learned in the process of composing their travel writing by promoting self-directed learning.

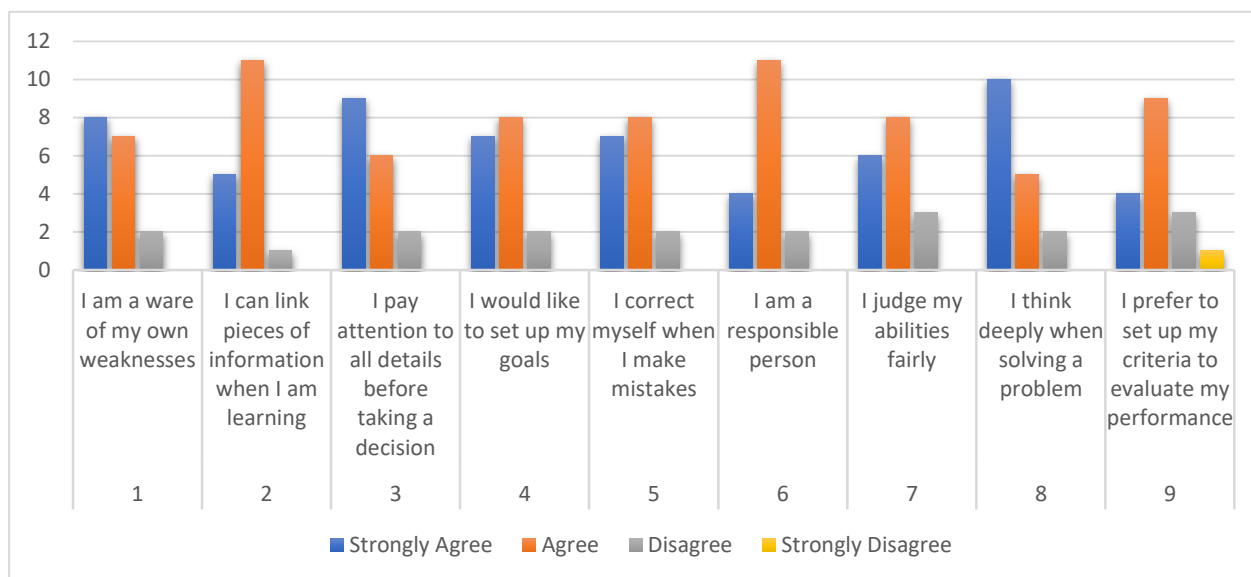


Table 3. The extent to which the students agree or disagree with their self-monitoring

The students' responses toward the ability to manage their self-monitoring on self-directed learning, were also observed. About ninety-five (95%) respondents replied to the question addressed to them. Based on the above results, shows that there are some elements of which students are aware of self-directed learning. The most aspect pointed out was the students' capability to be responsible people and the capability to link pieces of information during their learning process, which had 98%. It is followed by a positive view toward their critical thinking to face some problems 90%. While 85% of students replied that they pay attention to all details before taking a decision and they prefer to set up their criteria to evaluate performance. Three of the statements above also replied in a similar percentage which had 80% toward the statement of setting up their goals, correcting their mistakes, and judging their abilities fairly. It is quite an interesting result found in this chart which 75% of students agreed that they were aware of their own mistakes.

5. Conclusion

As this study was intended to explore the students' perspective on implementing self-directed learning in composing travel writing, the findings reveal that integrating self-directed learning through travel writing plays a pivotal role in enhancing the student's writing engagement. Also, it was discovered that composing travel writing assisted the students in developing a strong sense of autonomy and empowerment as well as increasing their cultural awareness. Furthermore, it adheres the students to have proper style by exploring independent learning aspects such as self-management, self-monitoring, and motivation. It can be proven by the high percentage of positive responses given by students which can be considered as a reference that the student has the enthusiasm and ability to learn independently in a way that they can do through a travel writing project. This is quite capable of promoting the implementation of self-directed learning in the writing process. Furthermore, in a particular way, this study is also meant to be very helpful for English teachers in higher education. Firstly, it is anticipated that teaching and learning in educational environments would be capable of combining self-directed learning with travel writing in connection with tourism integration. Practically, English teachers might utilize this strategy as a guide on how to improve or even develop their students' writing abilities and get them to promote their own cultures and possible tourism attractions through their travel writing projects. Ideally, it may be applied to other potential skills as well, such as speaking, listening, and reading. Secondly, by taking into account students' needs and interests when choosing the writing theme and topics, English teachers may have an additional opportunity to deliver a more engaging variation on the established learning model. Thirdly, teachers should think about offering a selection of appropriate sources and media for students to utilize as references so that they won't misunderstand the sources that they used to create their travel writing projects.

Future researchers must have a thorough investigation of self-directed learning if they intend to do similar research in the same field of study. It is because various studies define and interpret the term "self-directed learning strategy" differently. For further research, this idea may also be used with other forms of creative writing, such as features, poetry, short stories, descriptive writing, or possibly other abilities. Furthermore, the researcher can expand the model to other grade levels, such as senior high school or junior high school, to show how self-directed learning affects the teaching and learning process at various levels. Additionally, it is advised that future researchers think about creating a research model starting with the technique, research problems, and research demographics.

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