

Self-Revision Method of EFL Writers

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Abstract. This research aimed to study EFL university students' self-revision methods and compare their self-revision methods with different background (gender and English background knowledge). The samples were 201 undergraduate students enrolled in Fundamental English course at Bangkok University. The students were required to write two essays and revise each essay two times with all reflections and revisions taking place in class. After they completed the self-revision process, they were asked to answer a questionnaire. Results indicated that the average mean of self-revision methods was at moderate level. Students appreciate the role of self-revision in minimizing errors in their texts; it helps in eventually producing well-written texts. There were significant differences at .05 level found in students' self-revision methods as classified by English background knowledge, but no statistically significant differences in terms of gender. The results from a multiple-choice question indicated that students have severe problems with grammar. Other potential obstacles that affect their ability to revise their own written work include vocabulary, essay outline, spelling, and punctuation respectively.

Keywords: Self-Revision, Self-Editing, Self-Correcting, Writing, EFL Writers.

1. Introduction

Self-revision can be defined as “procedures by which the learners themselves evaluate their language skills and knowledge” [1] Many researchers believe that awareness of one’s own writing and study of one’s movement through the writing and revising process will lead to growth as a writer and to transferable, more highly developed writing skills [2]-[4].

With self-revision, there also comes an increased awareness of the language. Students are not passive recipients of feedback but can be active participants in the construction and meaning of that feedback [5]. Students who can self-correct obviously understand the mistake and make the necessary adjustments to their language production.

Students make several different kinds of mistake when writing. There are four main types of mistake in written language: spelling, punctuation, grammar (problems with structure or form) and usage (the language is correct, but inappropriate in context). It is found out that some mistakes are not easy for EFL learners to find and correct by themselves. Although they look back at their notes or course book, they don’t know the correct way to express an idea in English. Thus, they tend to make the particular errors over and over.

It is interesting to study why it is so hard for EFL learners to see errors in their own writing, even when they can pick up the same errors in the writing of others. Thus, it is important to understand what self-revision methods EFL learners use and what obstacles they encounter during the process of revising their written work in order to provide the teaching instruction for them.

2. Purposes of the Study

The objectives of this study were:

- to study students’ self-revision methods
- to compare students’ self-revision methods with different background (gender and English background knowledge)
- to investigate students’ obstacles that affect their self-revision

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3. Research Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants in this study were 201 students enrolled in Fundamental English course at Bangkok University. The samples were selected by the use of stratified random sampling technique. They all shared the similar educational background of studying English as their foreign language. Before the students answered the questionnaire, they had edited their own writing. They were required to write two essays and revise their essays in class without direct feedback from the teacher.

3.2. Research instruments

In order to identify students' self-revision methods, a questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part gathered personal information from the respondents who were asked to answer the questions on gender and English background knowledge. This general background might have had something to do with students' self-revision methods. The second part was a survey of self-revision methods. The respondents were asked to check their opinions on self-revision methods that they used. The questionnaire was prepared in a form of three-point scale that ranged from "often", "sometimes", and "never". The last part was a survey of students' obstacles that affect their self-revision. Students were asked: "What obstacles did you encounter when doing self-revision?" A set of answers was given to them including "grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, essay outline". Students were allowed to check more than one answer.

3.3. Data analysis

The acceptable statistical significance level was set at alpha (α) < .05. After the receipt of the completed questionnaires, the data were statistically analyzed by using SPSS/Window 12 through the following steps:

- The data of personal information were brought to calculate for average means.
- The data of self-revision methods were brought to calculate for average means and standard deviation.
- The mean of self-revisions method were divided into three levels and interpreted in the form of range based on the criterion of $\pm 5SD$. Three categories of the self-revision method:

The average mean of self-revision methods was 2.21 and standard deviation was .32 (see Table 1).

$$2.21 \pm (0.5) (0.32) \rightarrow 2.21 \pm 0.16$$

Table 1: Self-revision Method and Mean Range

Self-revision Method	Mean Range
High/Positive	2.38 – 3.00
Moderate/Neutral	2.05 – 2.37
Low/Negative	1.00 – 2.04

- The independent-samples t-test was used to test the mean scores of two groups of subjects concerning their self-revision methods.
- The One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was used to compare mean scores of three and more groups concerning their self-revision methods. Then the Scheffe test was used to test a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of any two groups.
- The data from questions concerning s students' obstacles that affect their self-revision were analyzed through percentage and frequency distribution.

4. Results

4.1. Level of self-revision method of the respondents

The average mean of the self-revision methods was used to find appropriate mean range based on the criterion of $\bar{X} \pm 5SD$. The results were presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Self-Revision Method

Self-Revision Method	Often	Sometimes	Never	n	Mean	S.D.	Level
After I finished a draft, I waited a few hours before looking at it again.	15 (7.46)	158 (78.61)	28 (13.93)	201	1.94	.46	low
I looked at my draft as if I were reading someone else's paper.	35 (17.41)	139 (69.15)	27 (13.43)	201	2.04	.56	low
In the first revision, I concentrated on changing the content in my paper rather than attempting to look for mistakes in my paper.	25 (12.40)	116 (57.70)	60 (29.90)	201	2.17	.63	moderate
I checked sentences for accuracy such as grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.	61 (30.30)	123 (61.20)	17 (8.50)	201	2.22	.58	moderate
When I was not sure how to spell a word, I referred to a dictionary.	112 (55.70)	81 (40.30)	8 (4.00)	201	2.52	.58	high
I checked the accuracy of each sentence.	60 (29.90)	127 (63.20)	14 (7.00)	201	2.23	.56	moderate
I checked the accuracy of each paragraph.	58 (28.90)	119 (59.20)	24 (11.90)	201	2.17	.62	moderate
I checked whether my final draft covered all topics included in the detailed outline.	90 (44.80)	98 (48.80)	13 (6.50)	201	2.38	.61	high
I carefully paid attention to common mistakes I often make.	67 (33.30)	119 (59.20)	15 (7.5)	201	2.26	.59	moderate
I revised a piece of my composition over and over again before submitting it.	54 (26.90)	129 (64.20)	18 (9.00)	201	2.18	.57	moderate
Total	201	100	100		2.21	.32	moderate

The study revealed that the overall of self-revision method was at a moderate level ($\bar{X} = 2.21$). Among ten items of self-revision method, the first and second highest means were items no. 5 and 8 ($\bar{X} = 2.52$ and 2.38). These items were at a high level. The two lowest means falling on items no. 1 and 2 were at a low level ($\bar{X} = 1.94$ and 2.04). The other items were at a moderate level.

4.2. A comparison between students' self-revision method with different background information

Not all variables of background information affected students' self-revision method. There were significant differences at .05 level found in students' self-revision methods as classified by English background knowledge, but no statistically significant differences in terms of gender.

The overall mean score of self-revision method of female students was higher than that of male students ($\bar{X} = 2.29, 2.10$). Both groups had self-revision method at a moderate level. According to the results of the comparison of the overall mean scores of self-revision method, there was no significant difference found in students' self-revision method between two groups (male and female) at .05 level. This means that male and female students were not different in using self-revision method.

The results obtained from applying the ANOVA revealed that there was statistically significant difference at .05 level in overall self-revision method in terms of English background knowledge. This means that students with different English background knowledge were different in using self-revision methods.

As ANOVA showed significant differences among seven groups of English background knowledge (A, B+, B, C+, C, D+, D) in overall self-revision method, the Post Hoc test was further conducted to investigate significant differences of each pair in overall self-revision method. When the Post Hoc test was applied, it was found that the self-revision method of students with high English background knowledge (A, B+ and B) was higher than those of students with low English background knowledge (D) at the significance level of .05.

4.3. Language obstacles that affect their self-revision

The learners' English language problems that affect their ability to revise their own written texts were analyzed by the responses to the question: *What obstacles did you encounter when doing self-revision?* The results were presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Number and Percentage of the Respondents Concerning Language Obstacles that Affect Their Self-Revision

Types of Language Obstacles	Number	Percentage
1. Grammar	168	31.50
2. Vocabulary	115	21.50
3. Essay Outline	99	18.50
4. Spelling	87	16.30
5. Punctuation	65	12.20
Total	534	100.00

Most of the participants thought that English grammar is the biggest obstacle to success in writing and improving their written work (31.50%). Other obstacles include vocabulary (21.50%), essay outline (18.50%), spelling (16.30%), and punctuation (12.20%).

5. Conclusion

This study attempts to investigate methods that EFL students use to edit and improve their own written works and to determine if gender and English background knowledge affect their methods. Also, it aims to find out what obstacles EFL students may encounter during self-revision process. The research results can be used by those who wish to understand language problems of non-native English writers and help them improve their writing ability.

Male and female students are not different in having self-revision method; they have self-revision method at a moderate level. It seems that students do not use proper self-revision techniques. For example, they do not wait awhile before editing their essays and read the essays with the eyes and mind of a reader. Students with high English background knowledge use more proper self-revision methods than students with low English background knowledge at the significance level of .05. It signifies that EFL students who have problems with English will not be able to edit their own writing. Thus, students with low English background knowledge may need more guidance and time to edit their work.

The participants in this study admitted that they have the biggest problem with English grammar. Also, the final drafts checked by the teacher show some common mistakes of EFL students such as unnecessary to be" verbs, the choice between a plural or singular noun, and the subject-verb agreement. Thus, EFL students should be aware of common errors in constructing sentences so that they will be able to avoid making them. They should have experience to see common errors done by other writers and practice correcting them. This may help remind them to be more careful when they write their own work.

When the students were asked about the obstacles they encountered during editing their own writing, they also admitted that they had trouble with vocabulary and spelling. They were allowed to use a dictionary to check the meaning of words. However, the final drafts checked by the teacher reveal that the students have severe spelling problems. Some words were used in the wrong context. For some words it is not enough to know just a rough definition because it can convey both positive and negative meanings. EFL students should be encouraged to be aware of understanding the exact meaning of a particular word.

Self-revision provides students with an opportunity to look reflectively at their own writing in order to improve its quality. This process can raise students' responsibility and motivation for their own learning. In addition, when students can correct their own writing, it reduces teachers' workload in correcting students' papers. Therefore, self-revision should be regarded as a vital tool in achieving success in writing.

6. References

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