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**THE DEVELOPMENT OF L2 ARAB WRITERS' PROFICIENCY: AUTONOMY, ONLINE
SELF-ACCESS CENTRES, AND ADVISEMENT**

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Abstract

Autonomy has been identified as a contributing factor to language development and may affect the use and effectiveness of self-access centres (SACs). Numerous universities in non-English speaking countries have adopted English as the language of instruction with Western academic writing being a main form for assessment. SACs have been funded in many tertiary institutes to promote language proficiency through autonomous learning. The general purpose of writing SACs is to make a wide portfolio of resources available to aid L2 writers with the place of advisors an emerging field. The use of technology at SACs has been extended with some going completely online.

This action research study involved the development of an online SAC for second language (L2) academic writers at a university in Qatar. The SAC provided volunteer students with out-of-class help in the form of multiple resources and tools. Additional help could also be accessed in the form of advisement both synchronously and asynchronously.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the form of the L2 students' individual autonomy to determine how this might be fostered and implemented online to develop their academic writing proficiency. The online research SAC was designed to offer aid with grammar, vocabulary, and writing skills and to be responsive to the needs and demands of the students. Interactions between participants and the researcher were available via email, chats, revisable assignments, and forums.

Diverse data sources were integrated and analyzed, including questionnaires and interactive dialogues, to understand deeply the cultural dimension and situated perspective of the participating Arab students. The findings revealed that, contrary to expectations, the Arab participants manifested multi-dimensional autonomy. Most preferred to receive help with their writing via 1-1 advisory sessions together with some use of the online resources. Advisory sessions evolved into multiple dialogues whereby reactive autonomy could gradually become proactive. The addition of a structured component to the advisory sessions enhanced autonomy and writing development. The success of the SAC depended on various factors, such as aiding students' language development and academic writing in a way that capitalized on the participants' desires and perspectives without imposing Western ideologies.

This study contributed to the body of research on developing academic writing proficiency in an under-researched context of Arab learners and with a special emphasis on autonomy, online SACs, and advisement. In doing so it broadened existing paradigms of constructivism and critical theory in the arena of education, and challenged the use of established concepts in the setting of the Arab world.

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List of Abbreviations

1-1	One-to-one
AR	Action research
CCCC	Conference on College Composition and Communication
EFL	English as a foreign language
ESL	English as a second language
EMI	English-medium instruction
F2F	Face to face
HOC	Higher order concern – content, organization, coherence, citation of writing
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
L1	First language
L2	Second language
LMS	Learning Management System
LOC	Lower order concern – lexis, grammar, mechanics of writing
OWI	Online writing instruction
OWL	Online writing lab
SAC	Self-access centre
WC	Writing centre
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development