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

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctorate of Education at

Massey University, Manawatu, New Zealand

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2016

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.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to my Qatari research university and unique participants for opening the delicate and exciting prospect of investigatory research regarding the Arab tertiary culture's clash with foreign pedagogy and ideology.

Many thanks also to Dr. Alyson McGee and Dr. Ute Walker for enduring guidance during the long hard journey of thesis formation and completion. I would also like to thank Professor John O'Neill sincerely for his help in the challenging end effort.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

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

Chapter 1: Introduction

This project was about improving second language writers' ability to write academic English at University in their out-of-class time. The data gathering was conducted at a Qatari university in Doha between September 2010 and June 2011 over two semesters with Arab students. The research focus straddled, as the thesis title suggests, the development of second language (L2) writing proficiency for Arabs with special attention to (i) autonomy; (ii) online self- access centres (SACs); and (iii) extra help via advisement. The second language (L2) for most Arabs in Qatar is English (their first language being Arabic). At the tertiary level they typically struggle to become proficient at English academic writing. To help with their development, my study sought to create a space outside classroom hours where students could help themselves and their autonomy could be enhanced specifically towards their writing development.

The new 'space' was a self-access centre (SAC) where students could freely access extra help for their writing in the form of many resources and tools. The self-access centre was online, allowing students 24 hour access. The students were also provided with additional help in the form of an advisor to aid them with their writing problems.

I acted as both a participant and an action researcher in this study. Already a Lecturer in Academic Writing for undergraduates at the University, I received permission from the University to set up the online SAC and act as the advisor to students. Students were invited to join the centre and use its services. As student needs were identified, the site was adjusted in response. Resources and tools were added and advisory time redefined and allocated as worked best. The actions and interactions on the site generated data that were automatically gathered and used by me as participant and action researcher.

The study adopted an exploratory mixed methods approach to gather mainly students' and the advisor-researcher's perspectives on the effects of the establishment of the SAC. Descriptive statistics and content analysis of qualitative data were used to answer the research questions which covered: the students' use of and perspectives on the SAC, the experiences of those groups of students who received additional advisor support, and the success aspects that seemed to cause increased student autonomy and writing proficiency.

I have been working in the field of academic writing for many years in different cultures. Originally my interest in this topic developed when, as a Lecturer, I experienced first hand the immense needs that L2 writers have when required to produce academic writing, and also the limited autonomy they sometimes experience in classroom settings. Since then I became aware of the paucity of adequate

online resources to support L2 student writing in academic environments. More recently, as a doctoral candidate, I identified a major gap in the literature, particularly with reference to L2 speakers from non-Western cultures and advisement. This study seemed to offer a very practical way of better meeting the needs of a particular cohort of University students and adding new theoretical perspectives to the areas of L2 writing proficiency, autonomy, online SACs and advisement.

1.1 Arab Context

The Arab world encompasses the Middle Eastern and North African countries where Arabic is the native or official language and someone who comes from this region is presumed to be an Arab. The Qatari University where this research is located draws its enrolment largely from the Arab region. This research was limited to Arab participants from the Arab world.

1.1.1. English in the Middle Eastern region. The history of the use of English specifically in the Middle Eastern region of the Arab world aids in understanding the Qatari context. Charise (2007) reported the use of English language in the Middle East from the nineteenth century when most of the Gulf states (Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE) became British protectorates. This type of association involved a positive trade agreement, not colonization, where Britain protected these states with its army and built infrastructure in exchange for having protected passage for its trade ships. When each state claimed its independence, between the 1950s and 1970s, a positive relationship continued. Schools were established with English as one of the basic subjects.

The English language became more widely used in the Arab Gulf States after the second Gulf War with 9/11 and the defeat of Saddam Hussein (Zughoul, 2003). Leading officials and private sector jobs relied on English as a means of communication so Arab universities were encouraged to promote its use (ibid.). Zughoul reported that English medium education occurred even in public universities in the Middle East, except in Syria. The author likened this to the return of imperialism and neo-colonialism , as English was adopted as the medium of instruction for some important educational subjects. In colleges, departments like science and business were the main sections that adopted English, but some completely adopted English, including various institutions in the UAE, Oman and Qatar.

The impression given by Zughoul (2003) was that English was adopted without regard for careful policy making. However, Al-Issa and Dahan (2011) explained that the use of English depends on each country's political, social and economic goals.

1.1.2. Qatar demographics. Qatar is a desert peninsula of almost 12,000 sq. km. jutting out into the Arabian Gulf between Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The official language is Arabic and the official religion is Islam with Sharia (Islamic Law) being the main source of legislation. It is governed by an Emir from the ruling tribe. According to Brewer et al. (2007), with the growth in the 1950s and 1960s arising from the oil industry, Qatar has developed from a small number of scattered villages to a fast emerging oil-rich state with a generous welfare system in just a few generations. In 2004, only 20% of its resident population was Qatari with unique citizen status and rights. The rest were foreign nationals comprised of 20% other Arab nationals, 20% Westerners (the majority from English-speaking nations), and 40% mainly lower paid workers from developing Asian countries (ibid.).

In 2013, according to Marhaba (2013), its population approached 2 million. In addition, it has the highest GDP per capita in the region, is one of the world's fastest growing economies and is the world's largest exporter of liquefied natural gas. To diversify its economy, emphasis is being placed on development in education, health, tourism, sports and the private sector industries.

1.1.3. Education and English in Qatar. Brewer et al. (2007) reported that the 1950s saw the rise of an organized public school system where English was included as one of the subjects. Under the Ministry of Education, public schools served grades 1-12 and some Arabic private schools were governed by the Ministry as well. International children of expatriates went to either community schools (private schools funded by their embassy) or international schools (private schools usually with Western curricula). The latter were attended by some Qatari nationals too. Most students, including those in the Arabic private schools, took English as a subject.

Qatar became independent from British protection in 1971, and the first university opened in 1977, Qatar University. It was publicly funded and from an initial four colleges has grown to a present eight with separate male and female campuses run side by side. A further accomplishment in the tertiary realm was the establishment of Education City in 1997, where a number of elite, mostly American, universities have set up branch campuses, including Texas A&M, Cornell, Carnegie Mellon, Georgetown and Virginia Commonwealth (Qatar University, 2013; Brewer et al., 2007).

However, Brewer et al. (2007) reported major deficiencies found in pre-tertiary public education. In the 1980s, the Qatari government and citizens became dissatisfied with its public school system feeling it was not producing quality students with the skills needed for work or the academic level needed for tertiary study. "Qatarization", a Government term for having all the top jobs filled by

Qatari nationals, still had a long way to go. Bureaucracy, rote learning and memorization predominated in the Ministry schools. Reforms were instituted in the 1990s with mixed results.

In 2001, according to Manasreh (2011), the Government called for another major educational reform with external assistance, which was of critical importance for Qatar's progress. RAND Corporation (an educational consultancy company from the USA) was the principle source of a review, and overhaul, called "Education for a New Era," in the years following. Also, continual input was made from organizations in other Western countries in the form of training and quality assurance. With high, internationally benchmarked curricula and professional standards, public schools gradually became chartered schools (known as independent schools).

Manasreh (2011) reported that the new Supreme Education Council associated the English language with world class educational development. With the reform, English became one of the four main basic subjects for independent schools from grades 1-12, and used as the instructional language for Science and Mathematics. A proficiency level of IELTS 5.5 was expected by the end of grade 12, a goal not yet achieved.

1.2 The Specific Qatari Tertiary Setting

The setting for this project is a university in Qatar where reforms were being implemented in an attempt to achieve accreditation under the aegis of the esteemed international universities. The university is quite concerned with the quality and standards of courses. In addition to undergraduate degrees, various Masters and a few Doctorate programs are offered.

When this study was undertaken, in 2010 and 2011, English was the language used in most lectures. Critical thinking with a global perspective and technology use had become priorities. Though entering students were required to have obtained a good mark in the secondary schooling terminal examination, many were still not ready for university level courses and therefore a foundation program was offered to boost their English, Maths and Computing skills including study skills and critical thinking.

The demographics of the university contain differences in terms of gender and ethnicity. The proportion of male to female students in the university was 1: 3 with sessions in separate but adjoining facilities. Over 60% of the students are Qatari, the others mostly a mixture from neighboring Arab speaking countries such as Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iraq, Egypt, Yemen, Sudan, Bahrain, Jordan, Algeria, Syria, and Palestine. A small minority of students were non-Arabic speakers from Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Overall according to the university at the time of the study, the total student population was just over 8000. Qatari students receive the benefit of free tuition but more than 400

international students receive scholarships each year, to increase competition. The latter's scholarships continue if they maintain high grades.

1.2.1. The University's mandatory English language programmes. At the time of the study, all the colleges (except for Sharia and Islamic studies) required students to obtain a 5.5 score in IELTS (International English Language Testing System) before they could be accepted into any undergraduate courses. Students below this level were assessed using a US authorized ESL Accuplacer test which resulted in placement at an appropriate level in the university's Foundation program. Students were allowed up to two years to complete this four-level 20-hour a week intensive English program, which is officially accredited by the American Commission of English Language Program Accreditation as a quality programme. Students could shorten their time in the programme by attaining the 5.5 level or above on the IELTS exam, so many students sat this exam numerous times until they passed. Passing this exam could be their sole motivation to improve their written English as writing was one of the major components of this exam. It was often their main weakness and they had to work hard to pass this test at the required level.

Once students were in their undergraduate majors, it was mandatory for them to take two undergraduate credit-bearing courses in academic English – English 202 and English 203. These courses prepared students for writing quality term/research papers in their majors, thus the emphasis in both courses was writing.

The institute and its colleges clearly expected a high standard of English writing. The 120+ teachers who were employed as lecturers for the Foundation English and mandatory undergraduate English courses were selected carefully, requiring a minimum of an MA in TESOL or Applied Linguistics, and two years university ESL/EFL teaching. They had to be up to date with professional development and familiar with student-centred teaching, motivating students and using technology to enhance learning. Some came from various Western countries but an equal proportion come from Arabic speaking countries, or Turkey, Iran, India, Pakistan and Africa. Some of the non-Western teachers have obtained their tertiary degrees in Western countries.

As learner autonomy was a major aim of the university, one focus of my research concerned this aspect. My experience with many language lecturers confirmed that most realized that autonomy was a fundamental capacity needed in university students and they strove to encourage its development. Some considered this an uphill battle as the students came from high schools that reportedly "spoon fed" them and a culture that was perceived to be conservative, submissive and collectivist. As a result,

these teachers seemed to assume their students had no autonomy and could not acquire it. This assumption could have contributed to the prevalence of teacher-centred lectures and minimum autonomy development despite the institutional encouragement to do the opposite. A majority of the instructors sought to understand their students as individuals and to help them progress in autonomy within the framework of normal lessons.

1.2.2 Student Learning Support Center with Writing Centers. A Student Learning Support Center was available to both male and female students in the Student Activities Centers on each campus. A major part of the support provided there is in English language learning. The Centers offered English learning self-access materials, peer tutorials, and teacher-led student workshops on sub-skills. Resources included computers for Internet research, online English practice, and word processing; prepared activities in hard copy; English reading books and learning games. The peer tutors (undergraduates who have achieved high grades in English language) had undergone US accredited training to qualify them as capable assistants (Ghajar-Selim, 2010). These parts of the Centers became officially known as the Writing Centers in 2010 (the year this research began) to meet the critical need for writing aid.

Students could drop into the Writing Centers or make an appointment anytime between 7:30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. Also lecturers could refer specific weak students through a custom-made Writing Center referral form on which the lecturer indicated the needs detected by checking the boxes alongside the listed problems. The needs regularly listed for foundation and post foundation English students included aid in the areas of essay focus, paragraph elaboration and organization. Also included were sentence level problems such as fragmented sentences, comma splices, subject-verb agreement and spelling.

The emphasis of the support in the Writing Centers was encouraging autonomy. Editing and proofreading help, albeit sought, was not provided, in accordance with US writing centre standards. Instead peer tutors offered to assist students in proofreading in order to isolate their particular pattern of errors so they could then edit their own work (Ghajar-Selim, personal communication, 2010).

The students who voluntarily came or were referred to the Writing Centers tended to have low English proficiency and included repeat students (those who had failed a course previously). Though the Centers were a recent intervention, they had experienced success, with 430 students using them in the fall semester of 2010. Some of these students even attained “A” grades on their end-of-semester exams. For initial analysis, students were encouraged to bring along a recent essay of theirs that had

been marked by their lecturer. Otherwise, they could write an essay on a topic of their choice for assessment at the center to ascertain needs (Ghajar-Selim, personal communication, 2010). The center officially joined the recently formed Middle East North Africa Writing Center Alliance in 2010 for collaboration and recognition of status. As a regional association, it was greatly influenced by the principles of the parent writing center association in the USA.

1.3 Organisation of the Thesis

My thesis is organized into six chapters, including this introduction. Chapter 2 presents the literature relevant to the main constructs of this research: L2 academic writing expected at tertiary levels, autonomy with its multifaceted nature, online SACs and other independent facilities, and the state of advisement provided in support of students. The autonomy section provides an explicit working definition of autonomy as used in the study. The definition reflects the exploratory holistic nature of the research and its out-of-class context. The review identifies problems and research gaps, although the research questions were only finalized as the study proceeded.

Chapter 3 defends the choice for action research methodology, describing the double cycle of research design and the overall process. Care was taken to ensure that most of the research processes undertaken stemmed from students' chosen activities on the site so as not to distract from the naturalistic nature of the situation, and to ensure students' welfare in terms of L2 academic writing improvement. For transparency, the quantitative and qualitative data collection sources are fully itemized including the comprehensive analyses undertaken. Data sources are linked to the research questions.

Chapter 4 presents the findings under the four research questions. Brief interpretations are also provided, as continuous reflection and evaluation are important functions of action research.

Chapter 5 more fully discusses the interpretations of the major findings by isolating four main principles. The value of each principle is appreciated by comparison with literature reviewed previously. Critical inquiry is applied leading to proposed practical implications of the research.

Chapter 6 identifies potential contributions to the field of language education. Limitations are stated and recommendations made for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

My project was designed to explore how to improve Arab students' L2 academic English writing via autonomy, an online SAC and advisement. The context is an English-medium university (EMI) in Qatar where the L1 is Arabic. The purpose of the literature review is to identify what is known and not known about the four main constructs. Reference throughout is made to research available on the specific context of Arab learners.

Section 2.1 covers the literature regarding the L2 academic writing skills required for the tertiary context, the standards expected, approaches taught, and types of feedback in use. Problems hindering writing development for L2 learners are identified. Section 2.2 focuses on learner autonomy with consideration of broadening definitions, cultural appropriateness and resource-rich contexts currently known at this time. The literature that describes the processes of recognizing and fostering autonomy through a multidimensional framework is discussed.

Section 2.3 discusses online SACs and similar facilities as regards the known effectiveness of help for writing and autonomy development. In Section 2.4 the specific role of advisement in these independent facilities is investigated including initial and continuous support, advisor skills and online interaction modes. Section 2.5 presents an evaluation of the SAC, Writing Centre (WC) and Online Writing Lab (OWL), Section 2.6 discusses Learning Management Systems (LMSs) and finally Section 2.7 presents a summary of the literature review.

2.1 Academic Writing Skills

A competent university student writer must be rhetorically attuned to the language and able to cope with cognitively demanding compositional requirements, often focusing on argument (Lunsford, 2011). To achieve this, a student needs to demonstrate proficiency and autonomy.

The quality of many L1 freshmen's writing in North America has needed development, prompting a majority of these universities to include compulsory academic writing classes for all first year students (Isaac, 2008). Hewett and Warnock (2015) reported that students' literacy standards remain below optimal. Numerous native English speakers in these universities need and seek extra help at writing centres (WCs) to meet basic academic writing standards for assignments (Isaac, 2008; Wang, 2012). Yet, much more support is required by L2 speakers, in both ESL and EFL situations, where academic writing can seem like a whole new language, on top of their everyday L2 English language development (Bruce & Rafoth, 2009; Hirsch, 2014; Tan, 2011; Tang, 2012). Lecturers and L2 students

alike attest to how many times harder they need to work to succeed in writing their required compositions (Dehass, 2013; Kietlinska, 2006; Silva, 2013).

Universities' expectations for L2 students and current writing theories for EFL classroom writing teachers are germane to understand the specialized learning centres' ideologies and problems featured in the latter sections of this review. This section considers universities' writing standards and current L2 writing pedagogy. Transference problems for Arab EFL learners are also examined in terms of contrastive rhetoric. The importance of feedback is described, as are differences in student needs according to their L2 level of language development.

2.1.1. Writing standards. Most of the L2 writing research comes from North America as universities there accommodate an increasing number of ESL students (Silva, 2015), followed by L2 writing research in other countries where English is the L1 (Al-Khairy, 2013). The British Council, known for its high profile English proficiency exams, is one of few bodies researching the problems with EMI institutes in foreign countries where whole classes are L2 writers (Dearden, 2014).

Literature demonstrates a controversy over whether L2 writers should be expected to attain a L1 university acceptable standard in their writing (Canagarajah, 2009; Fraiberg, 2010), given the unequal effort required by L2 students to achieve western university writing standards (Cumming, 2001; Cox & Zawacki, 2014). The same conundrum applies equally however in English medium institutions in non-native English speaking countries, such as the university where my study was conducted, where native English speaker standards may be sought at internationally recognized and accredited levels (Kratochvil & Karram, 2014; Al-Issa, 2011; Olcott, 2012). One study reported that general anxiety about L2 students' level of English writing unpreparedness had been expressed by 330 tertiary institutes from 54 countries (Thaiss, 2012).

Cook (2003) has termed the requirement for L2 writers to be held to native English speaker standards "monolingual bias" (p.35). Matsuda (2006) called this privileging a linguistically homogeneous people rather than allowing for linguistic inclusivity. Clearly, there is a lack of knowledge and indecisiveness about how to actually apply standards to L2 writing (Cumming, 2001; Zawacki & Habib, 2014). English as an International Language has been asserted as a fairer type of English to be more achievable for L2 learners. However, this standard is just emerging and is accepted only in some places (McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008; Rose, 2013).

At non-western universities where English is the medium of instruction, the expected standard of English can differ as a function of the adherence to English-based norms, despite trends to

internationalism and the acceptance of globalization-localization distinctions (Preisler, 2011). Arab L2 writing and language skills falling below institutions' literacy expectations have been reported as a problem (Bacha, 2002; Khalil, 2000; Rababah, 2003; Tahaineh, 2010). Rose (2013) has claimed that the bottom 25% students in an EFL situation would not pass in a western university.

The literature on grading in western situations with L2 writers revealed a problem that can also occur in foreign universities where English is the medium of instruction. Subject teachers at a university in North America showed lack of lenience and low grading for compositions displaying L2 errors (Janopulous, 1992); while Holling's (2004) study showed that graders of a high-stake middle school marked down L2 surface errors on exams as "irritating and stigmatized" (p. 31). Recent research in the US, e.g. Zawacki & Habib (2014) reported that though college discipline instructors were willing to invest extra time for L2 writers, when it came to assessment they had a "zero tolerance for error" (p. 190). Reinders (2007a) mentioned many L2 students in a specific New Zealand university receive bad grades or fail because of their low English proficiency.

In reviewing Zawacki's & Cox's (2014) edited work on research regarding more inclusive practices for L2 university writers, Thaiss (2014) pointed out how little of the book involved institutions upholding inclusiveness and accommodation mandates for L2 English writers. The few that did included a North American university (Hirsch, 2014), a Lebanese university (Zenger, Mullin, & Haviland, 2014) and a Swedish university (Lavelle & Shima, 2014). As Cox (2014) stated, "Linguistically and culturally inclusive writing pedagogy is currently theory that is waiting to be translated into practice" (p. 312).

Meanwhile, the pressures of the L2 students' workload mean that many of them do not have time to seek the extra help they need from outside the classroom (Reinders, 2007a). Furthermore, while classroom concessions for L2 students are recognized as necessary, many universities reportedly struggle to cope well with the intensive nature of interventions (Kietlinska, 2006; Thaiss, 2012). The (American) National Council of Teachers of English (2009) stated the ideal requisites are low class numbers and more feedback or conferencing time.

A writing class with only L2 students should have a maximum of 15 students according to the L2 position statement of CCCC (2009) – the (American) Conference on College Composition and Communication, with this statement reaffirmed in 2014. Kietlinska (2006), a former EFL student, ESL student and now a Writing teacher in a US university, emphasized the most effective and important concessions for L2 writers are more time to do what they need to do and more individual 1-1 tutorial support. Other concessions summarized by Thaiss (2014) from various research studies on L2 writer

success are: models given to students, faculty who help with language needs, and collaboration between L2 Writing specialists and disciplinary teachers.

2.1.2. Writing approaches. Two main writing approaches have been advocated the last few decades, described below, that apply to L2 writing today overall and in the Middle East in particular.

The older is a product writing approach which contrasts with the newer process approach. The controlled composition and current traditional rhetoric frameworks are forms of the product approach, with a focus on accuracy and form, while the expressionist and cognitive frameworks focus on the process of writing, particularly in terms of ideas and content formation (Ferris, 1999; Hewett, 2015; Johns, 2001; Truscott, 1999).

The process approach deemphasizes mechanical and grammatical errors by relegating them to lower order concerns, while allocating the status of higher order concerns to coherence, development and organization (Flower & Hayes, 1977; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Hyland, 2002; Purdue OWL, 2013). Emphasis on the process approach was more accepted initially by L1 writing instructors with many L2 instructors following their lead in the mid-1970s to the 1980s (Matsuda, 2003). The process approach has been claimed to encourage autonomy with its promotion of critical thinking and reflection (Al-Hazmi, 2006) as well as its metacognitive knowledge of the writing process (Hyland, 2003).

With some L2 teachers, there had always been some uneasiness in turning away completely from the product approach for L2 writers because of the totality of their English language development needs (Leki, 1992; Raimes, 2003). Mu (2005) isolated the rhetorical strategies implicit in the product approach, while Oxford (2011) claimed these are essential metacognitive knowledge (autonomy aspect) for L2 writers. Myles (2002) argued regarding the experience of many L2 writing instructors, "the process approach …is only appropriate for second language learners if they are both able to get sufficient feedback with regard to their errors in writing, and are proficient enough in the language to implement revision strategies" (p.2). Moreover, as the CCCC's (2009) position statement says to encourage the practice of equity and fair treatment by L2 writing instructors: "most second language writers are still in the process of acquiring syntactic and lexical competence—a process that will take a lifetime" (para. 2).

Many argue that eclecticism, flexibility, balance and support for learning over a range of approaches and strategies are required, depending on the context and individuals, to encourage the best learning gains for L2 writers to help them fill in all their gaps in explicit L2 knowledge (Hyland 2002; Macbeth, 2009; Miholic, 2004; Nation, 2005; Silva, 2015). Such gaps include the knowledge of diverse

communicative strategies, discourse patterns and styles, organization, cohesion, audience, and academic conventions as these can differ according to students' L1, culture and education (Hyland, 2003; Krashen, 1982; Silva, 1993). Mu (2005) mapped out the approaches to autonomous writing strategies to represent the range needed for L2 writers. Hyland (2003) claimed L2 learners need a considerable focus on form (lower order concerns) as well as content. Likewise, Matsuda (1999) argued that for L2 writers, rhetoric and linguistic components are inseparable. Ferris (2015) addressed the need for teachers to be proactive in incorporating lexical and syntactic development into writing lessons to strengthen the linguistic sophistication of students' end product. Thus, "reasoned eclecticism", where the strengths and elements of different approaches complement rather than conflict with each other, would seem to fulfill needs best (Ferris & Hedgecock, 2005; Silva, 2013). Unfortunately, the philosophies driving writing centres and online writing advisory outlets do not always embrace this hybrid approach, as will be discussed later. Also, teachers do not necessarily have the opportunity of a small class size or the unlimited time to do all they realize could be done (Kietlinska, 2006).

Some Arab researchers (Al-Hazmi, 2006; El-Sadig, 2010) have reproached the traditional bottom-up grammar, product approaches as stunting for Arab learners' L2 writing development, since that type of emphasis is on the sentence rather than the overall idea development and audience of the text. These limited approaches can still monopolize Arab education (Tamer, 2013). Alnufaie and Grenfell (2012) reported in a study conducted with 121 Saudi university students with product-orientated instructors that these students used a mixture of process and product-orientated strategies when they wrote, with the most common strategies being process-orientated. Unfortunately, the origin of these strategies was not identified. More explicit consideration will now be given to the literature that discusses problems that stem from L1 writing negatively influencing L2.

2.1.3. Contrastive rhetoric and L1 interference for Arab EFL learners. Differences in the rhetoric in language use and formation fall within contrastive rhetoric. Connor (1996, 2002) identifies problems in L2 writing that could be explained as stemming from L1 rhetoric. When L1 causes problems at the word and sentence level, it has been called L1 transfer or interference (Grami & Alzughaibi, 2012). Either way, differences between the L1 and L2 cause problems in L2 writing. This occurs at the word or sentence, textual and conceptual levels for Arab EFL learners. By knowing these differences, learners can increase their writing proficiency and autonomy.

Arab learners struggle at the basic sentence level, with special issues in some low level errors. For instance, since capital letters are not used in Arabic and the use of a period is scarce, a lack of

punctuation and run on sentences commonly occur. Other transference issues include specific grammar differences (AbiSamra, 2003; Barone, Bu Saad, & Popova, 2007; Sayidina, 2010). Spelling can be a problem where Arab learners are vowel-blind, leaving out vowels between consonants (Grami & Alzughaibi, 2012). Also, reverse visualization occurs since Arabic is read from right to left (Patil, 2010).

At a textual level, content organization can pose problems for Arab learners. In their L1 environment they are accustomed to placing the main idea of a paragraph at the end rather than at the beginning. Other examples include not following a linear English pattern or staying on topic (Barone et al., 2007; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Kunz, 2010). These patterns lead to higher order errors in English writing. It is very important they are addressed for the readers' and graders' comprehension and satisfaction of coherence.

In addition, correct academic writing requires the proper acknowledgement of sources and formal language. Many Arab L2 writers, while respecting a writer's original words, might not understand why plagiarism is unacceptable (Myles, 2002; Rilling, 2005; Wang, 2012). Also, in a mainly oral culture, the formal language concept demanded for academic writing can be a struggle for Arab L2 writers. Many apply their informal oral language practices in L2 writing situations (Maamouri, 2005).

Knowing these common problems of specific L2 learners of English composition can greatly help teachers and advisors who can point out these weaknesses and assist these learners with explanations referenced to their L1 (Hyland, 2002). It can support them in their inter-language development and can help them overcome cultural barriers in their effort to attain acceptable L2 writing levels (Myers, 2003). Consequently, feedback is a major aid for the students, as discussed below.

2.1.4. Feedback. Feedback in writing classrooms (both L1 and L2) is usually provided using three main methods: teachers' written feedback, oral conferencing and peer review. Though the discussion in this section pertains to feedback provided in the classroom, there are applications to my study concerning online advisory support, where feedback is a large part of advisement.

Feedback is information provided to a student regarding how well he/she performed and how to improve and has been identified as the main technique to influence student learning (Hattie, 2009). It is especially important for the development of L2 writers' writing and autonomy. Its most helpful form involves personalized attention (Ferris, 2003; Hyland, 2003).

Hyland (2003) reported that teachers and students alike consider written feedback for L2 writing significant. Many learners appreciate feedback on grammar, organization and ideas. Revisions

reflecting improvements make the feedback process worthwhile (Ferris, 2004). However, the carry over effect of revision into future texts remains in dispute (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Explicit comments at the end and in the margin are appreciated by learners, with those placed close to the error more valued (Hyland, 2003). Vague or over-directive comments can be ineffective (Zamel, 1985). Bitchener and Ferris (2012) reported that L2 writers appreciated comprehensive feedback (on all errors), but a combination of comprehensive and focused feedback (some selected errors) may be more efficient. However, there is still controversy about this issue (Hartshorn et al., 2010; Lee, 2015).

Another major form of feedback, face-to-face conferencing with students, gives learners the chance to clarify meanings as well as negotiate needs and ambiguities within a two-way dialogue (Hyland, 2003). According to Zamel (1985), oral feedback can be more precise and useful than written. Some teachers use oral conferences as a follow-up to the written feedback they provide on a draft where more explanation and time for students' questions can be given (Johnstun, 2009). Nevertheless, learners may have problems like shyness, lack of interaction skills and cultural inhibitions that hinder the feedback process (Hyland, 2003).

The third main form of feedback comes from peers in the form of collaborative peer review. However, Hyland (2003) conceded, the peer reader can be the one who benefits the most. Peer review may require scaffolded guidelines and students generally prefer teacher feedback, distrusting the value of their peers' opinions. However, one recent study of Saudi Arab university students found the writing of those who participated in peer response improved compared to others who did not (Grami, 2010).

Overall, it would seem that teachers' feedback is the most useful; yet it also seems there is room for improving feedback's efficiency. The personal scaffolding that strategic feedback provides has been shown to aid students' immediate revision of texts, yet whether students are enabled to more autonomously revise their own texts remains unproven.

2.1.5. Other problems hindering writing development. Other problems are known to influence the level of a student's academic writing. The first, termed "fossilization," is when a L2 student has plateaued in learning and is no longer noticing the mistakes being made. Although plateauing for the L2 adult learner has been accepted by many as inevitable, it can occur especially when the student is not getting enough external feedback (Kietlinska, 2006). The remedy identified is explicit language instruction, especially for grammar (Gardner, 2010; Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Selinker, 1972).

Secondly, students can have insufficient educational preparation due to the level of their L1 development. Leki, Cumming and Silva (2008) asserted the importance of a solid secondary school level of L1 literacy for aiding L2 proficiency at university level. However, interpretations of "solid" can be different in L1 than for L2. If academic expectations for critical thinking and language standards were lacking in their L1 schooling, their transition to university writing can be a huge leap**.** Alsamdani (2010), in regard to Saudi Arab university students, and Al-Khuweileh and Al-Soumali (2000), in regard to 150 Jordanian university students, both showed a strong correlation existing between the students' Arabic writing proficiency (L1) and their English (L2). Many students do not learn Modern Standard Arabic (Arabic written language) properly in high school, so their writing more resembles informal speech.

Lastly, academic and critical thinking demands for an academic essay can prove beyond the experience of the students and the skills they were taught. If rote learning and memorization were the learning norm, many students will not understand how to compose original academic writing. This task demands knowledge-transforming skills including reflection, composing, developing and analyzing ideas (Myles, 2002). Bacha (2010) demonstrated the need also for teaching academic argumentation to Arab students. Cummins (1999) explained that L2 students' difficulty with L2 academic writing conventions stems from their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). This proficiency is challenging to master and can take 5-7 years or longer, compared to the 2-3 years required for informal language (although CALP in L1 can help significantly). Thus, fossilization, different standards in L1 high schools and lack of L2 academic language can be barriers for L2 university students' writing proficiency.

2.1.6. Summary of academic writing. On balance, L2 writers are often held to native English speaker standards when submitting their assignments to tertiary subject teachers in ESL and EFL contexts. The abilities of emerging L2 writers may not meet these standards.

Research encourages L2 writing teachers not to employ just the latest L1 approach but to exercise an eclectic range of approaches and strategies to meet their students' needs, rather than only one. Product and process, contrastive rhetoric, form as well as content can be important for students developing competence in academic writing as L2 students are still developing proficiency in the L2. Other barriers for L2 writers must be addressed, including fossilization, L1 literacy and writing level, and the time needed to develop L2 cognitive academic language thinking.

Individual feedback is recognized as vital for improvement and to ensure that the major barriers are overcome to enable a student to move forward autonomously. Feedback can be provided by

teachers in written and oral form as well as through peers, with the help of teachers preferred. How feedback works for efficiency and aiding future writing is still in the process of investigation.

Arab L2 academic writers are being subject to all the problems mentioned, in addition to their native rote learning and the oral predominance of their language. They especially need out-of-class support for their writing endeavours, i.e., feedback.

2.2 Autonomy

This section provides a discussion of the literature relevant for second language autonomy underlying my research project. A working definition of autonomy is discussed and refined for my specific study. The effects of culture and resource-rich contexts are considered. Following this, a framework for fostering autonomy through learner development is discussed including technical, psychological, sociocultural and political perspectives. Also considered are affective factors and evaluation.

2.2.1. Definition and scope. A working definition is required to use autonomy as a construct as definitions vary. Increasingly autonomy is construed as a capacity manifested on various levels, making it multidimensional (Benson, 2001; Finch, 2002; Tassinari, 2012). Gardner (2011) points to Holec's (1981) brief definition as most popularly accepted by language learner autonomy researchers, whereby autonomous learners are defined as those who take charge of their own learning. Holec further specified that such learners take responsibility for their own learning by setting goals, planning and carrying out activities, and follow up by reviewing and evaluating the outcomes.

Researchers have supplemented this definition with special qualifications and terms. For example, autonomy includes psychological and affective aspects as well as cognitive. Little (1995) initially described the psychological aspects as a capacity "for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action" (p.4). Littlewood (1996) added the affective component of willingness comprised of motivation and confidence. In addition, being interdependent and interpersonally competent, or "socially autonomous" has been identified as an important element of autonomy (Benson, 2006; Esch, 1996; Little, 1996). Learner self-management and metacognitive knowledge comprise other elements (Benson, 2001). "Self-directed" and "independent" learning are terms often substituted for autonomy, but they lack the multidimensional aspects (ibid.). In the last decade, "self-regulation" has become the term most contiguous with autonomy, defined by Zimmerman (2008) to include both learning on one's own and learning socially, as "the degree to which students are

metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally active participants in their own learning process" (p. 167). The main definitions of autonomy are presented in Table 1 alongside their respective aspect, illustrating the development of the meaning of autonomy.

Table 1. *Various Definitions of Autonomy*

Author	Definition	Aspect
Holec (1981, p. 3)	"the ability to take charge of one's own learning"	control
Little (1995, p. 4)	"a capacity – for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action"	psychological
Littlewood (1996, p. 428)	"This capacity depends on two main components: ability and willingness	affect
Little (1996, p. 211)	"the development of a capacity for reflection and analysis, central to the development of autonomy, depends on the development and internalization of a capacity to participate fully and critically in social interaction"	social
Benson (2001, p. 47)	"a multidimensional capacity that will take different forms for different individuals, and even for the same individual in different contexts and at different times"	multidimensional

Benson's (2001) definition focused on the multidimensional capacity, pointing out that autonomy "will take different forms for different individuals, and even for the same individual in different contexts or at different times" (p.47), thus encouraging a more flexible view with a variety of representations. In a practical vein, Reinders (2010) explained that as autonomy becomes a "catch-all" phrase (i.e., including motivation, interactions and affect), it can likewise become more difficult and unwieldy to foster (p. 41). Still, Benson (2011a) concluded that more empirical research from local practices is needed to explain the construct of autonomy, not to tighten it further. He advocates that this is the way to reach "a fuller understanding of autonomy in language learning, the practices that best foster it among learners and their relation to language acquisition" (p. 240).

This study does not avoid the multidimensional nature of autonomy but rather justifies using an exploratory, holistic approach to investigate it. Clearly, having complete control over one's learning at all times and in every situation is unrealistic. Instead, autonomy at any one time is more likely to be a matter of degree (Nunan, 1988; Oxford, 1990; Sinclair, 1996). Therefore for this research "learner

autonomy" as a construct is defined as: the capacity and willingness to take responsibility for some aspects of one's language learning in a specific situation. This includes the behavioural, cognitive, psychological, social, political and affective aspects of the learning process (Benson, 2001; Oxford, 2003). The following sections will elaborate these aspects as applicable.

2.2.2. Cultural context appropriateness of autonomy. An appreciation of cultural diversity in learner autonomy is important for understanding the conceptual basis of my study. Autonomy in education, with its emphasis on independent learning and individual control, is largely seen as originating in the western cultures (Benson, 2001; Palfreyman, 2003). As such, it has been associated with the liberal democracies of western Europe and North America (Benson, 2001). Accordingly the concept of autonomy may seem "culturally inappropriate to non-western cultures" (Palfreyman, 2003, p. 7). However, history shows there are roots of autonomy in Eastern education (Kirtikara, 1997 cited in Benson, 2001; Pierson, 1996). Furthermore, self-determination theory implies a universal psychological need for the wellbeing of self which is deemed to motivate all self-regulatory behaviours (Deci & Ryan, 2000). My research continues alongside other studies in the cultural suitability of autonomy, notably in non-western countries where EFL is taught (Jones, 1995; Littlewood, 1999; Palfreyman & Smith, 2003; Press, 1996).

In particular, there are countries that are described as socioculturally collectivist, rather than individualist. Such countries have been viewed as less suitable for the encouragement of autonomous learning (Benson, 2001; Jones, 1995; Palfreyman, 2003; Pennycook, 1997). However, other research reveals that cultural stereotypes are not applicable to everyone in a specific group. Cultures are not static because they have been affected by contemporary ideas (Watkins & Biggs, 1996). Intra-cultural differences within any one culture as regards autonomy may be greater than differences between cultures (Palfreyman, 2003). Thus, overall it seems not so much a question of whether to promote autonomy but "how" (Benson, 2006; Finch, 2002; Horwitz, 1999; Palfreyman & Smith, 2003).

Building on this view, Schmenk (2005) advocated a "glocalized" learner autonomy view in accordance with the trend of world globalization. In other words, research should take place in local settings to establish what learner autonomy balance is required for specific settings (Tan, 2006). To this end, negotiation of the forms of autonomy between teachers and their learners is suggested so that methods can be fostered in keeping with context and culture (Aoki & Smith, 1999; Benson, 2011a; Clemente, 2003, 2012).

Smith (2003) looked at culturally sensitive autonomy pedagogies and classified them as “weak” or “strong” versions. A “weak” version assumes autonomy is a capacity that learners totally lack so they must be introduced to it and receive training in it as something new, while a “strong” version assumes that learners have some kind of autonomy already and that its co-creation between teacher and learners can occur sensitively to foster the continuation of their developing autonomy. Though openness to all versions is encouraged by some (Oxford, 2003), a “strong” version is generally considered more ethical and less limiting to the individual (Benson, 2006). Sensitive negotiation with respect for the learners’ cultural paradigm, identity and local ideology allows fostering “strong” approaches (Jones, 1995; Palfreyman & Smith, 2003). This includes sensitivity towards individual idiosyncrasies, and any broad pattern not attributed automatically to every learner within a culture (Benson, 2011a; Clemente 2012).

Littlewood (1999) introduced another distinction between “proactive” and “reactive” autonomy, which is helpful when considering culturally responsive autonomy. Previously only proactive autonomy was recognized as autonomy, where learners take responsibility at least partially for the direction of their learning. Littlewood then introduced reactive autonomy where learners need some direction before progressing to organize by themselves. Littlewood then posited that reactive autonomy should be seen as a valid step on the way to autonomy in some individuals or cultures, or even recognized as a type of autonomy per se and an end goal for some (ibid.). Nakata (2007), Huang (2009) and Le (2013) reported that reactive autonomy was manifested in students in particular universities in classrooms in Japan, China and Vietnam respectively. This type of autonomy could be gradually guided over time to become more proactive.

Regarding the specific research on autonomy with respect to Arab students, a lack of learner autonomy is revealed with the preponderance of pedagogy being teacher centred. Fareh (2010) was a teacher trainer and researcher in Syria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, the West Bank, Morocco, Jordan and Sudan. He reported that the schools in these countries used teacher-centred methods with an emphasis on rote learning and promoted low student motivation. He generalized that in Arab world countries “EFL programs still fail to deliver as expected” (p. 3600), let alone promoted autonomy, because of these problems.

Mynard (2004) echoed this situation specifically for Emirati female high school graduates entering a tertiary program, explaining their low learner autonomy skills as the result of their teacher-centred high school education. The author reported that their motivation to learn English was minimal as well.

El-Sadig (2010) criticized three Arab universities in Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Morocco for their teacher-centredness. In Oman, Al-Saadi (2011) reported how despite the radical changes introduced to the Omani educational system since 1998, including the fundamental principles of learner autonomy, what actually took place in the classrooms was "highly teacher-led" and "spoon-feeding" where "learning how to learn" and "reflection" were missing (p. 100). This resulted in a lack of skills for students reaching the university level where "self-feeding", "academic standards" and "study requirements" were very challenging, even leading to a hatred of the autonomy components (ibid.).

However, one positive aspect was reported by Malcolm (2011) in Bahrain concerning university students' involvement in producing SAC material for their peers. This response was credited as stemming from "keeping channels open for learners to contribute in a way consistent with their own particular wants and needs" (p. 72). Yet, those contributing were the students with better language ability, so it could be argued that these students were already more autonomous.

Overall, there is a dearth of literature affirming autonomy and its development amongst Arab students though various attempts to implement autonomous strategies are being made and some curricula are claiming to respond to it. My study sought to address this gap, working in a culturally sensitive way and starting, in keeping with Smith (2003), with a "strong" version of autonomy, using an explorative approach to find what it was that learners actually did with autonomy opportunities.

2.2.3. Fostering autonomy through resource-rich contexts. The role that resources play in providing opportunities for autonomous learning is complicated and must be understood in depth. Both physical and virtual resources are discussed. Finally, the element of additional guidance for learners to make full use of resources is considered.

Learners need to develop their autonomy; they "can be autonomous in order to become more autonomous" (Little, 2003. p. 3). In theory, any context "that encourages and enables learners to take greater control of any aspect of their learning can be considered a means of promoting autonomy" (Benson, 2001, p.109). Contexts that are resource-rich provide affordances. Cotterall and Murray (2009) exclaimed that "affordances are opportunities for learning which students perceive within the learning structure" (p. 42). Affordances are associated with identity as different individuals can perceive specific resources as presenting different properties, given their prior knowledge, experience and skills (Stockwell, 2012).

Learners' independent use of physical resources as a method of learning forms the basis of material approaches. Resource-rich environments can encourage individuals independent choice and

expanded use of resources. In an environment exclusively without human resources, the learner's interaction with the subject relies on the availability of appropriate materials for experimenting and discovering a method that fosters their own autonomy. Furthermore, the organization and design of such a store of materials should be such that learners can find what they need with ease (Benson, 2001; Coy & Brady, 2003; Gardner & Miller, 1999; Dofs & Hobbs, 2011).

It has been suggested that there should be a range of materials to choose from with a means of self-evaluation and instant feedback possible as well (Benson, 2001). Authentic materials are deemed best for promoting autonomy (encouraging and developing a range of strategies, flexibility, experimentation and active learning). However, an eclectic mixture of items with supporting structures and level-appropriate materials including behaviouristic applications can be more responsive to the full range of learners for autonomy and language proficiency (Gardner & Miller, 1999). To this end also, Littlejohn (1997) argued for tasks involving responses ranging from just attending, responding in a scaffolded way, to coming up with the students' own ways using high level thinking.

The range of digital resources is more extensive than physical resources and allows for more authentic items. This is because of the affordances of multimedia presentations and hypermedia choices (Felix, 2003; Warschauer, 2000). Autonomy is encouraged through making selections and concomitant exploratory and integrative processes (Davis, 2003). Besides materials, more tools are offered to aid with writing (Warschauer & Liaw, 2011). Also, access can be available anytime where an internet connection is available. One possible drawback is that items found in some resource-rich online SACs can still involve a behaviouristic mode orientation regarding the transmission of information (Benson, 2011a). Blake (2008) and Warschauer and Morrison (2011) warn that it is not so much the "what" with new technologies that is paramount so much as the "how" they are used or supported in being used. Though technologies provide affordances, learners might not perceive them or recognize how to use them to benefit themselves (Stockwell, 2012).

According to Benson (2011a) material or technology based approaches involving exclusively non-human resources should not be the only ways autonomy is encouraged. Though being surrounded by ample resource opportunities might pressure individuals to become autonomous, in practice much of the current research suggests that this is not the case, unless the learners already have a reasonable degree of autonomy (Benson, 2011a; Gardner & Miller, 1999; Sturtridge, 1997; Victori, 2007). Students need to have agency not just to perceive but to act on affordances. As van Lier (2004) points out, affordances are only available or actual when active learners perceive them and apply them. According to Oxford (2003), some students also might just interact with resources in a technical behaviouristic way

rather than meaningfully. Little (1995) contended that the possibilities of using resources were not enough by themselves; availability must be empowered with capacity building. The capacity for autonomy is a progressive ability that needs to be taught (La Ganza, 2008; Little, 2001; White, 2005). Hence, the learner development approaches below examine different ways to foster autonomous learning.

2.2.4. Fostering autonomy through learner development. Learner development is concerned with learners learning how to learn effectively. Effective ways of putting language learners in control of their development help to foster autonomy and language learning (Benson, 2011a). Possible stages of learner development for autonomy have been identified by various researchers studying autonomy (Benson, 2001; Holliday, 2003; Littlewood, 1997; Nunan, 1997; Oxford, 2003; Reinders, 2010).

In this study, Benson's and Oxford's frameworks were chosen in combination because together they cover a holistic (as opposed to limited) range of possible autonomy development aspects. Benson's framework is also chosen for its association with autonomy control development in self-management, cognitive processing and content and its connection with constructivism and critical theory (Benson, 2001). The three aspects include technical, psychological and political perspectives (ibid.). An addition to this classification is Oxford's (2003) sociocultural perspective placed between the latter two perspectives hierarchically. Thus, the four perspectives covered below are ordered: technical, psychological, sociocultural and political. Refer to Figure 1 below which is explained in the following sections.

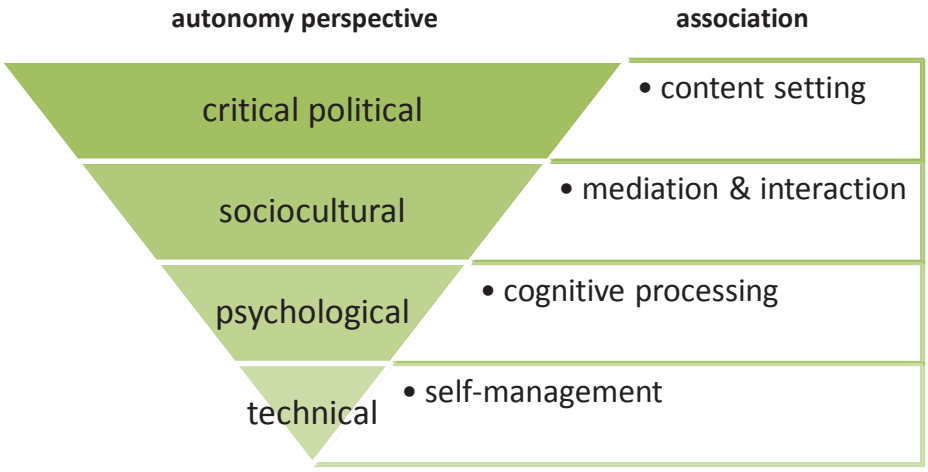


Figure 1. Autonomy development framework (Benson, 2001; Oxford, 2003)

2.2.4.1. Technical perspective. This first perspective highlights the external situation of a learning setting (a largely unsupervised setting) and self-management (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2013; Chan, 2012; Oxford, 2003). The emphasis is on the learners using the environment to teach themselves. Self-management applies particularly where learners are afforded technologies and tools to facilitate their language acquisition, as in SACs. Besides language knowledge**,** different strategies are presented that give learners control over specific behaviours needed for self-managing their learning (Benson, 2001).

Strategy training reflects observable behaviors that tended toward the technical at the onset given their correspondence with behaviorism and positivism (ibid.). Strategies are tools to be handed to the students via explicit instruction (Oxford, 2003). These training tools have been named, modeled, explained and can first be practiced and then expected to be used (Chamot & Rubin, 1994). This whole process can be done without a teacher, involving the performance of observable actions associated with self-management (Benson, 2001; Chan, 2012, Finch, 2002). Various taxonomies of strategies have been created including the categories: cognitive, planning, monitoring, self-evaluation, metacognitive, social and affect (Oxford, 1990). However, the last three categories display more than a technical perspective.

Difficulties have arisen when implementing strategy training for autonomy development. Strategy training has often led to an increase of language proficiency, though not as clearly to learner autonomy (Benson, 2001). Also, studies reveal that students need to experiment with strategies and reflect on them to use them effectively (Alton & Trombly, 2006; CIEL Language Support Network, 2000; Dam & Legenhausen, 1996; Little, 2003). Moreover, as Cohen and Weaver (2006) pointed out, there is a need for being sensitive to individuals' learning styles.

Integration of strategies with a lesson and self-assessment has been advocated as well (Cotterall & Murray, 2009; Victori, 2007). These additional elements of constructivism, reflection with attention to individual context and goals encompass more than the technical perspective. As Benson (2001) explained, the problem with just giving explicit instruction in strategies for learning management "without developing the corresponding abilities concerned with control over cognitive and content aspects" prevents students being able "to apply these techniques flexibly and critically" (pp. 149-150).

In the last decade, the central place of technical strategies in fostering autonomy has been in partially displaced by more focus on the learner's beliefs, reflection and metacognitive knowledge that support self-management, as cognitive psychological constructs effectuate a greater change (Benson, 2006). My study is intended to reflect this more holistic trend, by providing a resource-rich environment alongside basic strategy training but also with time and effort concentrated on psychological aspects

using more constructivist methods (see below). In contrast, many SACs are limited to the technical perspective (Littlejohn, 1997; Reinders & Làzaro, 2007a).

2.2.4.2. Psychological perspective. A second perspective of autonomy is the psychological, whereby the learner develops autonomy control (Benson, 2001). This cognitive-process level of control encompasses more than rote actions; instead a psychological relationship develops informed with the knowledge and process to make "these actions more effective and systematic" (p. 98). Oxford (2011), a strategy expert, recently revised the previous developed taxonomy of strategies by adopting more psychological underpinnings and redesigning strategy delivery to incorporate meta-strategies. Benson (2001) ascribed two main categories within the psychological perspective for developing learner autonomy, metacognitive knowledge and reflection. These have associations in constructivist theory as well.

Metacognitive knowledge is what students need "to make decisions about their learning" (Cotterall & Murray, 2009, p.34). Wenden (1995) aligned metacognitive knowledge with autonomy by claiming it is needed to make self-management of the basic autonomy strategies of planning, monitoring and self-evaluation work properly. Further, it involves the knowledge a learner has of him/herself as well as two other types of knowledge: strategic and task. Metacognitive knowledge grows with experience and, with particular reference to the task, can involve metalinguistic considerations. In fact, limits in a learner's metalinguistic knowledge can restrict his or her control of language learning (ibid.).

One procedure that raises the awareness of metacognitive knowledge acquisition and autonomous learning is the elicitation of learners' beliefs in their metacognitive knowledge (Wenden, 1998; White, 1999; Zhang, 2010). (Hence, a questionnaire on students' metacognitive beliefs was selected to measure autonomy in this study.) Such beliefs have been found to be important enabling or disabling factors in language learning and autonomy (Cotterall & Murray,2009). Successful ways to change beliefs include providing good materials (White, 1999) and students' own critical reflection about their learning process (Benson, 2001; Hurd, 2005). Other research that concentrated on metacognitive knowledge's significant role in autonomy, with positive results, includes Green (2013), Hurd (2000), Murphy (2007), Navarro and Thornton (2011), Ushioda (2003), and Zhang and Goh (2006).

Reflection plays an important part in the psychological aspect of developing language learning autonomy (Benson, 2001). Little (1991) defined autonomy as a capacity "for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action" (p. 4). Individual cognitive reflection, as a deep level of reflection, allows distancing in order to understand oneself, information or the learning process

better (ibid.). Candy (1991) also contended that conscious reflection is a distinctive attribute of an autonomous learner. More recently, journals, logs and blogs have been popular ways of encouraging students to reflect (Dion, 2011; Elliott, 2011; Endo, 2011; Little, 2007). There appears to be a consensus that developing reflection is important for language learning autonomy, for as Reinders (2010) pointed out "many learners' reflection is limited to surface level language and learning issues" (p. 49).

The role of constructivism in helping develop autonomy has also been analyzed (Little, 2007). Constructivism theory is relevant to autonomy because of the active interpretative learning and reflection encouraged in learners (Benson, 2001). Little, basing his statements on the work of Kelly (1991), Barnes (1976) and Bruner (1986), pointed out that learners construct and add to their own knowledge through interaction by co-constructing meaning, which demands metacognitive thinking and reflection on what they already know vis-á-vis the new experiences with information.

Language is a major part of constructivism in autonomy as "knowledge is constructed through the learner's involvement in linguistically mediated interactions, encoded in language, and reproduced through one or another kind of communicative activity" (Little, pp. 20 & 21). This process is important in terms of both medium and knowledge. Furthermore, language is also used in metalinguistic reflection involved (ibid.). The interconnection between thinking and verbalizing is expressed by Lantolf (2000): simply stated, thought cannot be explained without words and words cannot be explained without thought; hence the importance of inner speech as well. Writing can allow more metacognitive thinking and reflective engagement to occur (Little, 2007). Both Little and Lantolf incorporated their psychology of language autonomy and learning into the social or sociocultural perspectives, discussed below.

2.2.4.3. Sociocultural perspective. Oxford (2003) added a third perspective of autonomy, the sociocultural, which in Oxford's usage is synonymous with "sociocognitive and social interactionist" (p. 84). In this perspective, social participation and interaction are used to aid autonomy development (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2013), with associations to communicative language teaching theory and Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and agency as well as incorporating behavioural, cognitive, psychological and social aspects.

In communicative language teaching theory, language with another person in its communicative function centres on the learner's endeavours to create meaning using the target language. Learner autonomy is promoted in this process through meaningful learning, interpretation and negotiation (Littlewood, 1996; Nunan, 1997). Rather than the behaviourism of drill and practice, meaningful

learning is advocated for communication (Gremmo & Riley, 1995). In fact, one of Littlewood's definitions of an autonomous learner is as a communicator (Littlewood, 1996).

Social interaction also figures prominently in the work of Vygotsky (1986), who claimed that learning begins from a person's individual experience and grows through social interaction. Vygotsky's constructivist system, specifically included his principle called the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), defined as "the distance between the actual development as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Little (2007) later incorporated Vygotsky's constructivist principles of social interaction, most importantly, the idea of the ZPD into his concept of autonomy.

Accordingly, learners internalize new meanings through guided interaction with a more knowledgeable person which enables them to become self-directive in this new knowledge. Their new independence (autonomy) level then becomes a platform for a fresh ZPD with reflection a bridge between the new knowledge in the social interaction and new implicit knowledge of the learner (Little, 2007). Lantolf (2013) concurred that "the ZPD is one of the most important mechanisms through which autonomy …can be promoted" (p. 20). Learning can even occur between two equally inexperienced learners, where both can do more than they could do alone, thus aiding each other through their ZPD (Zuckerman, 2003).

This interplay between individual cognitive reflection and social interaction has been emphasized by some in autonomy development and language learning (Benson, 2006; Hurd, 2005). Little (2007) notably rejected the notion of individual reflection in isolation but rather understood it as acting in balance with social interaction.

Studies have also taken into account the social context and the classroom via sociocultural theory (Benson & Nunan, 2005; Oxford, 2003; Toohey & Norton, 2003; Ushioda, 2003). The need for guidance via social interaction is no longer considered counter to the concept of autonomy (Reinders, 2010; Sinclair, 2006; Thanasoulas, 2000), even well-developed autonomy (Arnold, 2006; Allwright, 1990). Though SACs have more to do with independent learning than classroom-based learning, research shows social interaction needs to be incorporated for these facilities to be more effective (Benson, 2011a). The synergy of both interdependent interaction and individual reflection is therefore important in the discussion of autonomy in my study. However, as discussed below, the struggle for fuller agency and autonomy can be more than a sociocultural challenge; it may also involve a political or critical perspective (Benson, 2011a).

2.2.4.4. Political (critical) perspective. A fourth perspective emphasizes the political aspect of control over learning content and forms the final level of Benson's (2001) autonomy hierarchy. This form of control defines a learner having control over what he/she really wants to learn or the self-determination of content. It is an equivalent to Littlewood's (1999) "proactive autonomy" and is part of the psychological approach insofar as it provides control over the cognitive process; yet it remains discrete as the ultimate and primary control aspect. A student, however, can have direction over some content and not some other (Ecclestone cited in White, 2011). Consequently, the political perspective focuses on student power issues (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2013).

The learner's primary control is discussed by Little (2000) in a three-step pedagogy for fostering autonomy and language development via Vygotskian constructivism with support from a teacher. The learner must first have the motivation for setting and owning his/her own goals. However, institutional, social and political context can frustrate and preclude this motivation from fruition, hence Benson's political, or using Oxford's (2003) term, critical, perspective.

Benson (2001) conceded that if learner goal setting is allowed, it is often compromised in the average set curriculum in a teacher-planned classroom. An online SAC (as the one in my study) with its open agenda may provide a better environment to promote learner goal-setting. Learners having such opportunities, as Benson and Voller (1997) argue, can become discerning and free themselves of misconceptions in their beliefs and ideas caused by social and cultural conditions or any customary, accepted circumstances. Furthermore, Ecclestone (cited in White, 2011) defined critical autonomy as involving the capacity to judge content leading to the development of expertise.

However, learners may need help from talking to advisors, for as Guba and Lincoln (1994) explained "transformations occur when ignorance and misapprehensions give way to more informed insights by means of a dialectical interaction" (p. 111). Also, as Hatch (2002) reported, historical or cultural misconceptions (in a Qatari student's case, the comfort of teacher-centred and rote learning) can invisibly restrain a person. Some learners may feel more comfortable in the reactive mode if it is normal to them (Brown, Smith & Ushioda, 2007; c, 2009; Littlewood, 1999).

Overall, attention to the holistic nature of and interrelatedness among the four perspectives of learner development is likely to yield more success in fostering language and autonomy learning, yet incorporating them all seems to add greater complexity to the learning process. Benson (2001) noted that failure to incorporate the first level without the second can result in neither being effective. To achieve success in fostering autonomy, strategy skills may need to be mixed with metacognitive knowledge and reflection; and without an individual's willingness and motivation, which comes about

through identifying their own needs and setting their own goals (the fourth level), optimum meaningful learning and engagement do not take place.

The effectiveness of any learner development framework is also dependent on the method of implementation and contextual factors including the specific learners (Benson, 2011a). With a view to these four autonomy perspectives, my study particularly explores where individuals are situated with respect to autonomy and how they respond to tools, opportunities, encouragement and instruction concerning how to move on. As Cumming (2006) stated, EAP writing is heavily goal specific, which might mean many students access my SAC (FLUACC) having set their specific goals already.

This section has reviewed four perspectives of autonomous development with the latter two perspectives (political and sociocultural) claimed to be more effective for autonomous learning and likewise subsuming the former psychological and technical perspectives. A problem with this autonomy development framework would appear to be the technical perspective compared to the political or critical. Sinclair (2014) emphasized that the political perspective involves the learner's voice and power, social and political emancipation, and in the case at hand, freedom from western imperialism. Such a view suggests that motivation, beliefs and emotion may be important in language learning. Consequently, the review of literature now turns to the role of affective factors in developing autonomy.

2.2.5. Affective factors. With the close relationship proved between cognition and affect (Damasio, 2000), there has been increasing recognition of affective factors as an element in second language autonomy (van Lier, 2004; Yamashita, 2015). While affective aspects could ostensibly fall within each of the psychological, sociocultural and political perspectives, they are discussed separately here to emphasize their global importance. Affect as a general concept is outlined first, then two main types, anxiety and motivation, are explored in terms of causing negative and positive effects respectively. A range of possible affects are introduced that may apply to autonomy.

The importance of affect in influencing autonomous engagement has only recently attracted much notice. Sheerin (1997) claimed it as a significant component of a learner's awareness and control of learning, while others have emphasized its significant place in a distance online environment (Murphy, 2011; White, 2003). Littlewood's (1996) definition named responsibility and willingness as the two main components of autonomy, where willingness is composed of motivation and confidence. Using the terms "beliefs", "motivation" and "anxiety", other researchers agree on the importance of such affect for autonomous learning (Cotterall, 1995; Hurd, 2005; Oxford, 2011; Reinders, 2010). Yamashita (2015) reported that affect barriers can be addressed very significantly by 1-1 advising

sessions to increase autonomy. Bown and White (2010) defined affective factors as "emotional interpretations of perceptions, information and knowledge" (citing Huitt, p. 433). They also used the term "meta affect" as the emotional equivalent of metacognition, meaning "awareness and control of affect" (p. 434). Meta affect is identified as a major part of self-regulation (hence autonomy) and language learning success, which can be used in "overcoming self-doubt, managing different forms of anxiety or generating positive emotions" (p. 434).

Anxiety specifically is seen as having a negative effect in language learning, and because one's inner self and resulting action is linked to anxiety, it affects autonomy. It is closely associated with self-concept, self-expression, self-confidence, and introversion in a way different from any other emotion (Benson, 2001; Cheng, Horwitz & Schallert, 1999). In view of this, language anxiety has been considered as a special category (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1992), involving communication nervousness, test anxiety and dread of adverse evaluation (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). Interestingly, introverts with high anxiety have been shown to manifest more autonomy in some research studies (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999). However, other research shows that anxiety interferes with a learner's ability to think or learn because it expends the memory resources (Mynard & McLoughlin, 2014).

The importance and necessity of motivation in autonomy is very clear. Motivation and autonomy even have overlapping meanings, sharing concepts of the learner displaying choice, independence, responsibility and reflection (Dickinson, 1995). Littlewood's (1996) incorporation of willingness in the definition of autonomy places motivation as part of autonomy. Self-determination theory via Deci and Ryan (2000) emphasizes intrinsic motivation as implying the learner control factor of autonomy, producing learning that is more effective than extrinsic. Motivation may still be construed as falling within a continuum from the externally controlled to self-determined.

Ushioda (1996) and Little (2006) equated autonomous learner with motivated learner, with Ushioda (2007) especially advocating the maintenance of support for autonomy and intrinsic motivation via dialogical interaction in the zone of proximal development (supplied via advisement in my study). The 1-1 dialogue has been found to be important for internalizing motivation and developing agency (Ushioda, 2014), insofar as maintaining motivation maintains autonomy and vice-versa.

The field of motivation as autonomy is still dynamically emerging and conceptualizing (Benson, 2011a). Little (2006) argued that "precisely because autonomous learners are motivated and reflective, their learning is efficient and effective" (p. 2). Motivation can act as a determinant for engaging in study in the first place, but also for goal setting, satisfaction and perseverance (Hurd, 2005). Oxford (2003)

placed motivation in the psychological, constructivist sphere, but ideal intrinsic motivation would be more equivalent to proactive autonomy and control of content.

Many other affective factors influencing autonomy may well be relevant yet there is a dearth of research in the area. Bown and White (2010) encouraged research on the full range because of the impact of these factors, offering examples including "enjoyment of learning, hope, pride, satisfaction, relief, anger, boredom and shame" (p. 433). Longitudinal, qualitative, exploratory studies which can track the dynamic changes of affective factors are also advocated by Hurd (2007).

Informed by the research described above, I decided that my exploratory study should also feature affect data. Tending to affect is further appropriate to this study in view of the native Arab speakers who participated come from a culture widely regarded as placing more importance on emotions and subjectivity than content and objectivity (Zaharna, 1995, 2010).

2.2.6. Agency and autonomy. "Agency" defined as "the quality of being an active force in producing an effect" (Oxford, 2003, p. 80) is an element used in the autonomy field to assist in explaining certain differences among language learners (Benson, 2006; Toohey & Norton, 2003). Schwartz and Okita (2009) recognized the correlation of varying levels of agency where a student with high agency was very productive. Further, agency constraining learning environments were seen as being teacher-centred and authoritarian where students were programmed with compulsory "coverage" like on an assembly line, gaining knowledge by transmission and watching as passive learners. The high agency promoting learning environments in contrast are student-centred, elective and the students felt their voice was important. Students constructed knowledge through participation as active learners. Each student was in control of his/her individual learning. Oxford (2003) included learner agency as a quality in all the autonomy development levels, from the technical to political-critical but more strongly incorporated in the sociocultural and political-critical.

As regards the technical level, Thorne (2005) claimed agency is both enabled and limited by the materials supplied and the pedagogical framework. Ahearn (2001) touched on the psychological perspective associating agency with an individual's ability to reflect on their actions in relation to themselves. Williams, Mercer and Ryan (2015) claimed that many psychological factors affect a student's feeling of agency and corresponding actions, including the learner's own self-efficacy judgement, preferences, learning styles, interests, beliefs, mindset and confidence.

Oxford (2003) identified a learner's agency approaching self-regulation in the social-cultural level, where self-regulation is promoted by the support of the more capable interlocutor via scaffolding,

with the latter's removal at an appropriate point. Oxford also recognized the struggle for agency in acceptance into the L2 community and the significance of the L2 to the learner (ibid.).

This agentic struggle as part of autonomy has been discussed by other researchers as well. Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) and Lamb (2013) elaborate on autonomy resistance from the sociocultural context, while Kohonen (2002) added the additional features of individual moral standards and goals. Benson and Nunan (2005) encouraged journaling and auto(biographic) accounts of individuals for a course term or longer to reveal the important interconnection of these complementary processes and their effect on both language achievement and autonomy. The voices of the learners are important as evidence of their individual agency and perspective.

Regarding the political-critical level, Ahearn (2001) identified agency as the ability to exhibit power and effect changes, while for Cervatiuc (2009) agency also involves making choices and acting by oneself rather than passive acceptance or submission. Feelings and internal beliefs are linked because they can constrain agency. Van Lier (2010) considered agency as inseparable from one's belief in one's ability to achieve (self-efficacy). He connected agency to autonomy by suggesting autonomy as being the "feeling of being the agent of one's own actions" (van Lier, 2007, p. 48). Below, in concluding the discussion of autonomy, the challenge of autonomous learning evaluation is introduced.

2.2.7. Evaluating autonomy. The multidimensional nature of autonomy, combined with its diverse manner and degree of manifestation, presents challenges for evaluating it (Benson, 2001). Also, the difficulty in establishing a rubric that, properly, should be self-initiated, means that the process of itself cannot truly be autonomized (Benson, 2001; Reinders, 2010; Riley, 1996). Nevertheless, fostering autonomy must be accounted for among the methods used to aid learners' language proficiency (Benson, 2011a).

Smith and Ushioda (2009) emphasized the different views and practices of are autonomy dependent on unique sociocultural situations. Therefore, measurement should concentrate on what is happening with autonomization in localized situations. Thus, data on the various control behaviours connected to autonomy, as manifested in different facets of students' learning, should be directly and indirectly collected from local situations (Benson, 2011a). For credibility, longitudinal studies are encouraged and using a variety of data sources, including beliefs, perceptions and experiences (Cotterall & Murray, 2009; Palfreyman, 2003; Reinders, 2007a). Issues of autonomy evaluation are addressed in more detail in the last section of this literature review, with special reference to SACs and independent learning facilities.

2.2.8. Summary of autonomy issues. Learner autonomy is a complex multidimensional construct, as evident from diverse definitions involving disparate aspects. For this research, learner autonomy was defined as the capacity and willingness of learners to take responsibility for some aspects of their language learning. It includes behavioural, cognitive, psychological, social, political and affective and components. With autonomy in education arising largely from western systems, a teacher needs cultural sensitivity to appreciate what form autonomy might take for a specific cultural group of learners and the ways to aid this development. Adopting a strong version of autonomy through respecting students' individual initial autonomy, and recognizing reactive, not just proactive, autonomy are considered more culturally inclusive. Research on Arab learners has generally reported a lack in autonomy and adversity in developing it. However, there is a gap in this research where the exploration of Arab autonomy and its further development needs to be addressed.

The literature demonstrates that autonomous language learning can be fostered by providing learners modes of opportunities and inherent affordances through resources and technology, but additional guidance is generally required. Support can take the form of fostering autonomy in learner development approaches.

My study is based on Benson's (2001) and Oxford's (2003) combined framework for the multi-dimensional range of non-linear development aspects and their associated areas of control. Since the literature suggests that success with such approaches requires more than one focus on a single perspective, the framework I adopted includes a technical perspective with self–management of materials with strategy awareness, a psychological perspective with cognitive processing by metacognitive knowledge and reflection, a sociocultural perspective with guidance and mediation, and a political-critical perspective with content control. Affective factors with their control, widely overlooked in research of language autonomy, were an additional part of the framework.

The effectiveness of a framework depends on how, where and with whom it is implemented. Evaluating autonomy and its development is challenging, highlighting most of all the need to study local perspectives to gain situated understandings via multiple methods over time to increase credibility and empirical evidence (Benson, 2011a). My study will also address this gap this study using data produced with its Arab cohort.

Autonomy also needs to be understood within the specific construct of L2 academic writing. The next part of the chapter focuses on the literature pertaining to independent learning centres.

2.3 Independent Learning Centres

Online independent learning centres in the form of online self-access centres (online SACs) and online writing labs (OWLs) are fairly recent inventions. They arose respectively from their equivalent brick and mortar forms, the university SACs and writing centres (WCs). The parent facilities were originally initiated in universities in Europe (mid-1980s) and in North America (pre-1970s) respectively (Tan, 2006). While previous research concerning SACs and online SACs has usually been conducted separately from research on WCs and OWLs because of their differing ideologies, this section examines them together, while remembering that the setting of the present study was an online SAC for L2 writers. Human support via advisors is then discussed in section 2.4.

Definitions of each of these separate support systems are compared before a brief summary is made of their operation globally. Static resources are then compared with other support provided to students.

2.3.1. Definitions of various Independent Learning Centres. A brick and mortar language SAC is a place where language resources are located, catering for to learners varying in terms of level, style, need, and interests (Cotterall & Reinders, 2001; Dofs & Hobbs, 2011). In the sense that this facility provides opportunities for learners to access resources at will, the SAC can encourage resource-based autonomy and language learning. SACs usually accommodate the four main language skills.

Concerning writing, Dofs and Hobbs' (2011) analysis of 14 tertiary centres in New Zealand found material on different writing styles and genres as well as vocabulary and grammar assistance. Mini-workshops were run for a number of students together; various group workshops were a regular feature in some physical SACs. Many SACs contain audio, video and computer programmes (Benson, 2011a).

Technology has provided heightened access to the number, multimodality and authenticity of learning materials (Beatty, 2003; Figura & Jarvis, 2007; Mayora, 2006; Warschauer, 2010). Gardner and Miller (2010) reported that technology resources tend to be well used but Castellano, Mynard and Rubesch (2011) found in a Japanese university this was not the case and paper based materials were twice as likely to be used. Tertiary SACs are the predominant source for supplying the extra support needed for students studying languages or for their majors in an L2 environment (Reinders, 2007a). Though resources are mainly in the form of materials, human advice is generally available from a teacher or advisor as well (Gardner & Miller, 1999; Dofs & Hobbs, 2011). The mandate of SACs has always been dealing with L2 learners.

Online SACs, in comparison to the physical SACs above, have everything available online. In addition to catering for the four skills with different enriched resources, they also provide ease of use, more accessibility and motivational factors, but still within the framework of developing and catering to autonomous learners (Benson, 2001). Some universities offer computer lab time/SAC time for such use but with many students now having computer access at home, online SACs can provide truly autonomous learning opportunities (Reinders & Darasawang; 2012). The technological, organizational and pedagogical advantages they provide are numerous (Reinders & White, 2008), some claim (e.g., Pinner, 2011) that many institutes' online SACs are simply e-resources housed on learner management systems (LMSs) and that a SAC with mixed paper and computer based materials is preferable (Jarvis, 2013).

WCs, as their name suggests, specialize in writing support. Their writing specialty is pertinent to this study as the literature on SAC writing assistance remains sparse. In comparison to SACs, WCs are more curricula-driven since they generally operate with the mandate of academic writing and specific assignments. Advisors (usually called tutors and peer tutors) and their 1-1 advisory sessions are the core of the WC learning environment (North, 1984; Staben & Nordhaus, 2009). Materials amount to dictionaries, thesauruses, grammar/rhetoric/writing reference books and often computer access to word processing (Harris, 1988), with much reference material now online ("The Writers' Handbook," 2015). Their mandate originally was L1 writers, but subsequently it has extended to L2 writers as well.

OWLs provide online aid, i.e., attempt to be WCs online. Developing subsequent to the WCs in the mid-1980s, they originally were attached to a WC, often starting as simple basic computer support in the form of resources (Tan, 2006). McGraw (2007) reported on the quality of some OWLs from the students' perspectives, which were described as offering "electronic handouts, goal setting assistance, interactive tutorials/quizzes, assistance with a variety of writing styles, hyperlinks to writing related sites and online tutorial services." (p. ii). However, most OWLs tend only to offer "information" rather than full "interaction" sites, in contrast to WCs (Tan, 2011). Overall, most research regarding L2 writers and WCs or OWLs comes from the North American context where such writers are ESL rather than EFL (Silva, 2013).

2.3.2. Global use of Independent Learning Centres. SACs and online SACs are increasing. Originating in western Europe in the mid-1980s, SACs have spread via exported education, researchers and teachers into Asian countries, like Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Thailand and Malaysia. They can also be found in Australia, New Zealand, South America and especially Mexico (Dofs & Hobbs, 2011;

Gardner & Miller, 1999). The heavy use and advancement of technology within SACs in recent years has spread to online tertiary SACs in European institutes, so that the developed Asian countries have opted to have many of their SAC resources online with some online SACs available on and off campuses (Reinders & Darasawang, 2012).

WCs and OWLs have spread in range as well. Though known mainly from the 1970s, they trace back to an Iowa University Writing Center in 1934 (Tan, 2006). The North American regional WCs formed a national association in 1983 – NWCA. Communication concerning learning developments and commonly experienced problems was the reason for the consolidation. In 1998 NWCA was renamed International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) to reflect the membership of constituent writing centres outside North America (Tan, 2011). Later, WCs were established in a few tertiary institutes in some parts of Asia (Korea, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore and Taiwan) and Europe, where the European Writing Centers Association (EWCA) was formed in 1998. North American WCs tend to use peer tutors while the European and Asian centres frequently make more use of faculty members in the form of professional ESL and English instructors (Tan, 2011).

Finally, the Middle East North Africa Writing Centers Alliance (MENAWCA) was established in 2007 to support WCs in the research region where the present study was conducted. The WC of the university in my study only joined this association in 2010. Typically, OWLs are still predominantly associated with a physical WC, or less often with a SAC, but some are independent (Martinez & Olsen, 2015; Tan, 2006).

2.3.3. Resources versus human support. The following section outlines the balance and opportunities these independent learning sites present in terms of material resources and human support. This is followed by a section on advisement.

Despite the abundance of material resources in SACs, many students do not make use of the opportunities available. Whether off-line or online there have been reports of abuse, high attrition, and inefficiency in matching diverse needs and cultures (Davies, 2004; Figura & Jarvis, 2007; Morrison, 2005; Reinders & Darasawang, 2012; Victori, 2000). Many resources are simply not used and often the students who need the most help are not the ones that make use of these opportunities (Davis, 2004; Reinders, 2007a). Research shows that unless learners already have significant autonomy, explicit guidance and encouragement are required (Davis, 2004; Morrison, 2008; Reinders & Darasawang, 2012; Sheerin, 1997; Victori, 2007). This applies to technological resources as well (Castellano et al., 2011).

In addition to language learning materials, materials explaining how to learn, and other tools and aid have been provided (Gardner, 2011). Also, blended learning, where SAC activities complement the classroom's curriculum rather than using material dissociated from learners' current tasks, has shown that students accessed resources more effectively (Barrs, 2010; Benson, 2011a; Gardner, 2006; Kjisik, 2006; Toogood & Pemberton, 2006). This approach helps to blur the boundaries between the classroom and SAC (Gardner, 2011).

Advising is another form of support offered in SACs, but often language advisors are few in number or missing (Dofs & Hobbs, 2011). Moreover, learners tend to come for the resources rather than seeking help through advising. *System*, a prominent linguistics journal, produced a special 'advisor' edition in 2007 focused on advising in a L2 context. Only since this time have advisors been recognized as imperative for the success of L2 students using the SAC (Blake, 2007; Karlsson, Kjisik & Nordlund, 2007; Mozzon-McPherson, 2007; Rubin, 2007). Later, Barrs (2010) suggested that advisors should more openly interact and initiate interchange with learners, thereby promoting advisor help and availability.

Other studies have reported that the majority of the online form of SACs has tended not to provide a human advising service (Reinders & Lázaro, 2007a). When provided, the advisor might not assist extensively but simply recommend resources or provide links to resources rather than talking the learner through a problem (Freirmuth & Farrell, 2006; Salmon, 2004). Some SACs have experimented with the use of electronic advisors with the result that learners frequently ignore the computer prompts (Reinders, 2007b; Toogood, Pemberton, Ho, Tsang & Wilkins, 2003). Also, Darasawang and Reinders (2010) reported that advisors in an online SAC for a big university in Thailand were hardly ever contacted by students.

In contrast to SACs, WC advisors (tutors and peer tutors) have always been a big feature of WCs through the 1-1 conferences that students are afforded. To most students, the value of a WC depends on the quality of aid they receive from the tutors (McKinley, 2010). As North (1984) stated, the WC's "primary responsibility, [….] only reason for being, is to talk to the writer" (p. 446). Though available, materials and resources are not the main focus. However, it has been L1 writers who seem largely content with advisors, not so much L2 writers (Wang, 2012); this is undoubtedly because the main philosophy behind WCs is more orientated to the L1 writer's needs (Bruce & Rafoth, 2004; William & Severino, 2004).

Meanwhile, the online versions, OWLs, have struggled in terms of the advisory role (Breuch & Racine, 2000; Hewett, 2015). Their main offering is online material resources, with the majority of OWLs simply providing information or advertising websites for the WCs (Martinez & Olsen, 2015; Tan, 2006).

Some are well used for their resources, with Purdue OWL the most well-known worldwide registering over 248 million visits/hits to its resources in 2014 (Purdue OWL, 2014).

The full interaction OWL model that offers human advising has been resisted often by WC personnel who eschew OWL advisors due to doubts about the possibility of successfully implementing 1-1 sessions online with the same quality as the WC model (Golden, 2005; Norcross, 2011). Tan (2011) reported that it was the European and Asian OWLs that often seemed to lack advisement; but Anderson (2002) reported that of the 300 university OWLs registered officially in North America, only 34 offered full interaction models. Purdue OWL's human interactions mode is not at the same level of usability as its resource mode. Responses are only provided to questions online or address small portions of text, not a draft essay. Purdue's reasoning is pragmatic, as it does not have enough human resources to provide extensive responses (Golden, 2005). At the time of this writing, the website contained notices that online replies may take from 7-14 days or longer at peak times (Purdue OWL, 2013). Instead, it endeavours to get local online students to come in to its WC (Jackson, 2000). Also, Haberman (2004) claimed that evidence of any advisory sessions offered at all hours is negligible.

Some effective advisory interactions taking place in OWLs have been reported, even for L2s (Jackson, 2000; Rilling, 2005). Harris and Pemberton (1995) had stated that in such context, the tutor to tutee connection was as key to an OWL as it was to a WC. Norcross (2011) set out to investigate this by surveying OWL tutors in the USA and confirmed that in many of these the "collaboration between tutor and student is the key element in online success" (p. 42). Nevertheless, only the minority of OWLs offer fully interactive websites with human interactions via use of emails, forums, instant messaging and virtual chats (Martinez & Olsen, 2015; Tan, 2011). The challenges experienced by these independent learning systems are summarized below, as a preface to consideration of the advising part of such systems.

2.3.4. Summary of Independent Learning Centres. The four types of independent language learning systems have been discussed: SACs, WCs and their online equivalents - online SACs and OWLs. SACs provide opportunities for autonomous language learning with both language resources and how-to-learn materials. However, given low reported levels of effective use of resources and retention of learners in SACs, other ways to engage students better have been trialed with continued research. Blended learning or increasing the advisor's presence and interactivity with students are seen to be ways to make them operate more effectively.

WCs specialize only in writing. Although an assemblage of material and technological resources is usually available, typically students come for personal tutor advisory time. Yet success with L1 writers in North America has not easily been transferred to L2 writers in and outside the country, a continual research gap.

Finally, online SACs and OWLs range from being just WC/SAC websites, to information resource sites or to fully interactive websites with advisory help. As information resource sites, they have increased the quality and accessibility of autonomous language learning materials. However, the majority remain resource sites only, without offering any online advisors. More research regarding the fully interactive models is needed to confirm their worth and to overcome evaluation of them as a deficit model compared to F2F interactions.

2.4 Advising in Independent Learning Centres

Counselor, advisor, tutor and peer tutor are the common names given to a person who provides support, help and advice to learners in a SAC, online SAC, WC or OWL. Student-centredness, as implied by the first two names, is at the heart of the role whereby learners' needs will be addressed.

Concepts and issues on how advisors and tutors fulfil their roles in SACs, online SACs, WCs and OWLs are now compared critically to provide the background for the selection of what was considered appropriate for my study. Comparison is made between initial support and continuity of support, and advising skills including the therapeutic and those for developing autonomy and writing. The main forms of online advising, synchronous and asynchronous modes, are then critiqued before summarizing the evaluation challenges of these independent learning facilities.

2.4.1. Initial and continuing support. The literature substantiates the significance of the first advisory session in SACs, online SACs, WCs and OWLs. However, continuation of the individual's support from session to session seems to feature mainly in SACs.

The importance of the initial advisory session has been reported by researchers of SACs. It is reported that a genuine rapport needs to be established and information given on how to use the SAC. The purpose of learning to learn is also emphasized to develop some depth in autonomy (Karlsson et al., 2007; Reinders, 2007a; Victori, 2007). Selectivity is required to limit exposure to new approaches in these sessions to avoid discouraging the learner (Kelly, 1996). Both Karlsson et al. (2007) and Reinders (2007a) have reported success in the use of SACs in universities following the advisors' induction programmes. These demonstrate to learners how their time using the SAC will assist learning to learn.

Some centres make these induction programmes compulsory (Davies, 2004; Dofs & Hobbs, 2011; Morrison, 2008).

The start-up phase of online advising is also reported to be significant, with more time needed in order to build up rapport and create interactivity than in face-to-face SAC conferences (Freirmuth & Jarrell, 2006; Hurd, 2005). Salmon (2004) found that considerable interaction is needed to establish a rapport and understand the learner's needs before learning can take place.

For the learner's initiation at the WC, Harris (1988) described how the advisors are able to assess an individual's background and elicit his/her wants and needs. Students are encouraged to bring along their working texts and their questions. WCs are made as welcoming and physically comfortable as possible to counter the academic seriousness of the task at hand and any feelings of stress or inadequacy the students might have (Harris, 2000; Moser, 2002). Bruce (2009a) emphasized the importance of warmly welcoming new advisees with a friendly greeting and dispelling any fears. This she stated was even more important for L2 students whose first step to come to a WC can be the hardest due to their apprehensions of intimidation, judgement, risks and lack of familiarity regarding English academic writing.

Bruce (2009b) extrapolated from one Saudi Arabian male student why many Middle Eastern male students may avoid WCs. It was a "cultural taboo" for them to ask for help because it portrayed weakness. A writing centre where others could see them being weak was problematic, privacy was required. As my project was an online SAC, I decided to investigate whether this type of accessibility made any difference for male Arab students.

The learner's vital first encounter with OWLs is starting to be reported in the literature. Rubesch and Barrs (2014) reported the importance of having a site that is vibrant, attractive and presented in simple English. Hewett (2015), for online writing courses and OWLs generally, encourages relationship and trust building with greetings, informal phatic communication and orientation to the online system, indicating what can be done, and how learners can receive help. Using straight forward simple language and finding out what each student wants in terms of help are regarded as important. Martinez and Olsen (2015), specifically for OWLs, reported that how to contact an advisor and their availability should be emphasized.

Continuity for all the individual's support sessions has been advocated. Concerning SACs, Reinders (2008) reported that this is needed so learning can be built on systematically. With this in mind, he encourages the advisor to use systematic notes and record keeping regarding each participant for effectiveness and economy of time. Both Reinders (2007a) and Karlsson et al. (2007) in their

research offered several 1-1 monitoring advisory sessions in addition to the initial structured ones. Since 1994, Karlsson et al. have conducted continuous collaborative action research on their Helsinki provision. Howbeit, students received credit hours towards their degree for using this resource, a motivating factor not generally rewarded for SAC work. It should be noted that the SAC in my study did not provide university credit either.

In many WCs and some OWLs, advisors are taught to produce reports on their 1-1s (Harris, 1988; Rafoth, 2009). However, whether this is mandatory or voluntary may depend on the centre's policies or on whether a student was referred for help by a teacher (ibid.). Students may likewise be asked to fill out evaluation forms on their perception of their session's value (Rafoth, 2009). Martinez and Olsen (2015) discuss the need to maintain an online presence in an OWL, suggesting this could be done by advisors contributing regularly to a discussion board, wiki or blog. Yet, online presence appears to be emphasized more with online writing courses (e.g. Snart, 2015) rather than an independent support system that is accessed in an ad-hoc way.

In the literature pertinent to my study, there were no reports of an initial structured autonomy induction provided by an online advisor for the online facilities. This is a gap my project sought to address. In addition, I planned to offer some monitoring sessions, as such have reportedly been offered successfully offline by Reinders (2007a) and Karlsson et al. (2007).

2.4.2. Advisor skills. Advisors require many particular skills to perform their work in interaction sessions. Compared with other fields of counselling and advising, language advising "as an emerging field, is in the process of defining itself" (Carson & Mynard, 2012, p.16). Moreover, how advisors should use different skills is still in the exploratory stage (ibid.). For the purpose of my study and its emphasis on language writing skills, three advising categories have been identified for analysis: therapeutic, autonomous learning and writing skills.

2.4.2.1. Therapeutic advising skills. Therapeutic advising is concerned with making learners feel calm and relaxed and includes definite skills. The need for therapeutic skills in the initial interaction advising sessions and thereafter appears throughout the literature on independent learning facilities of different kinds with various emphases. SAC advisors are encouraged to have such person-centred skills so that the students will confide in them and the advisors will be able to hear and help learners. These skills include "attending," "reflective listening" through "restating" and "questioning," and

"interpreting" (Carson and Mynard, 2012; Kelly, 1996, p. 96; Mozzon-McPherson, 2012). Kelly first labelled these processes as the micro skills of advising. Such skills are underpinned with values of "unconditional positive regard, genuineness and empathetic understanding" (Kelly, 1996, p.97; Carson & Mynard, 2012). Mozzon-McPherson (2001) argued that this therapeutic type of counseling should be combined with a pedagogical counseling philosophy aimed at achieving efficiency to ensure autonomous learning and language skills. A decade later Mozzon-McPherson (2012) reported the importance of these therapeutic skills for the advisory process and for student autonomy development. Carson and Mynard (2012) compared other advisory type roles in society to clarify the counselling and information sharing roles of a writing advisor. Meanwhile regarding WCs, Harris (1988) and Bruce (2009a) reported that their advisors are urged to be helpful, positive, friendly and adept at listening to what the learner is saying. Interaction is encouraged whereby the learner is supposed to do more talking than the advisor. Also, it is reported that online advisors, if provided, need to ensure they take time to build up relationships and create interactivity (Hewett, 2015; Salmon, 2004).

2.4.2.2. Advising skills for developing autonomy. To meet the practice requirements of SAC advisors, the literature retrieved presented a considerable focus on fostering students' autonomy. Kelly (1996) along with Carson and Mynard (2012) argued the need for advisement autonomy skills, calling these the macro skills of advising. Macro skills include autonomous self-management skills as well as support and guidance to be able to help learners with their own self-management. To these, Blake (2007) added knowledge of metacognitive choices, learning styles, language learning strategies, learning processes, and planning and monitoring skills. He also recognized helpful tools for needs analyses, reflection and assessment. Other writers emphasized the advisors' role in helping learners to reflect (Davies, 2004; Hauck & Stickler, 2006; Hurd, 2005; Little, 2007; Valdivia, McLoughlin & Mynard, 2011).

To enable learners' autonomy development, a holistic dialogic approach in SACs is advocated, guided by an individual's needs, rather than a set routine (Carson & Mynard, 2012; Karlsson et al., 2007; Kelly, 1996). This type of approach is consistent with offering cultural and individually sensitive autonomy (Benson, 2001; Griffiths, 2007; Horwitz, 1999; Palfreyman & Smith, 2003). Kelly (1996) specifies cultural and subcultural adjustment as a major reason for having advisors in SACs. Others have argued that only individually appropriate discussions will make the learning programme meaningful to learners so that a reciprocal, balanced relationship is more likely to be obtained (Karlsson et al., 2007; Mozzon-McPherson, 2012). Little (1995) ascribed the need for a quality pedagogical dialogue between a

qualified other and the learner to foster autonomous learning, placing the dialogue above any particular method of fostering autonomy.

However, sessions in SACs can focus on advising to develop autonomy more than specifically developing a language skill. For example, a recent definition for language learning advising from Carson and Mynard (2012) is "helping students to direct their own paths so as to become more effective and more autonomous language learners" (p. 4). This is not to say that language skills are not included, but advising is distinguished from tutoring or conferencing about a skill (Reinders, 2008). Still, Little (1997) argued the inseparableness and interrelatedness of learning to learn and specific language learning concerns. Also, Tan (2006), noticing the different roles between the advisors in SACs and those in WCs, stated that both types are needed for maximum learning and autonomy. Therefore, in my study I tried to achieve a proportionate balance of learning to learn and language skills in the service of a single advisor.

In many WCs, advisors expect learners to have full control from the outset. In other words, they only advise about writing skills as specifically suggested by each learner (Wang, 2012). This "collaborative and non-directive approach" of advisors has been the standard expectation from staff to facilitate control by the tutee of his/her own writing (Lefort, 2010; North, 1984; Williams & Severino, 2004). The advisor endeavors to help a student write more independently and steers away from appropriating the learner's text (Lefort, 2010). Though workable with L1 students, this approach does adequately address the needs of L2 learners (Wang, 2012).

The core of WC philosophy is about the learners taking control of their own writing. However, very little of the WC literature uses the term "autonomy" to name this capacity or discusses "fostering autonomy". Rilling (2005) is one of the few who does with regard to advisor-learner interactivity in OWLs.

The general separation of WC philosophy from autonomy possibly stems from the WCs' origins in North America, where socio-cultural theory was embraced rather than autonomy (Benson, 2006). According to Myatt (2010) and O'Tootle (2006), there does not seem to be much mixing of the two research traditions. Nevertheless, it is precisely the high level of control expected from students over their own writing that has been identified as making WC advisory sessions unsuitable for L2 writers (Lefort, 2010; Wang, 2012). WCs seem to require Littlewood's (1999) proactive autonomy from the learner or knowledge of content as defined in the political, critical autonomy of Benson (2001) and Oxford (2003). They reject the need to foster autonomy methods through their adherence to socio-

cultural theory (Little, 2013). This L1 orientation may explain what could make such advising sessions unsuitable for L2 writers.

Nevertheless, some WC and OWL researchers and advisors experimenting with L2-friendly settings adopt a more advisor-directive and learner-reactive approach in delivering writing help. This process involves the advisor giving directions rather than suggestions and the student responding to this direction rather than solving all of his/her own problems (Littlewood, 1999). This approach was first identified in the mid-1990s when L2 students were found to require a more directive role from a tutor (Wang, 2012). Some researchers have suggested that using this approach does not mean completely changing the traditional writing centre philosophy but rather incorporating flexibility. Even within one conference session a tutor might need to adjust roles, changing from student-centred, to collaborative, to teacher–centred, as all three stances have been claimed to be valid for the situation (Harris, 1997; Thonus, 2001; Williams, 2004; Williams & Severino, 2004).

It is also argued that direct suggestions, rather than questions or forms of indirect suggestions, can ensure that an EFL student is not overwhelmed or confused (Lefort, 2010; Williams & Severino, 2004). Williams (2004) suggested a compromise by showing and giving full explanations of problems. Paoli (2006) and Thonus (2001) emphasized that the L2-friendly philosophy is warranted as it is ethical to investigate qualitatively what is actually needed; L2 learners in WCs should have their needs met rather than having the set L1 philosophy enforced. From autonomy studies, this more flexible approach would seem to be in line with a culturally sensitive way of fostering autonomy for students from collectivist societies, especially using Littlewood's (1999) "reactive" form as previously outlined in the "autonomy" section. Discussion of the WCs' L1 standard and a more flexible L2 approach continues below, specifically with reference to writing-skill advising.

2.4.2.3. Advising skills for developing writing. The need for advisory sessions about writing skills is argued to differ across the various independent learning facilities.

Very little is found in SAC advisors' literature regarding the development of writing. SACs' advisors (and those of online SACs that operate with advisors) focus more on autonomy skills and referring learners to where they can access material to instruct them in their language skills, in this case writing (Coy & Brady, 2003; Dofs & Hobbs, 2011; Domínguez-Gaona, López-Bonilla & Englander, 2012; Reinders, 2008).

In contrast, the basic L1 writing help philosophy, despite the differences in individual WCs, prevails among WC advisors, as discussed in the "autonomous skills" section above (Tan, 2006; Wang,

2012). Prior to 1975, WCs had largely been viewed as writing clinics for error correction, remediation and editing services, but today with the collaborative and non-directive approach very little instruction is imparted by tutors in tutor-student conference sessions.

Wang (2012) summarized the four theories from which the non-directive philosophy has been derived: expressionist WC concept, minimalist teaching, peer tutoring and collaborative learning. North (1984), as an expressionist theorist, advocated writing as a process of self-expression with no explicit directives from the tutor; Brooks (1991), also an expressionist, extended the minimalist non-directive idea; Bruffee (1984) introduced peer tutoring of equals, while Lunsford (1991) emphasized that further collaboration between tutor and student was needed where the tutor encouraged the student to do the work. The consensus in the literature is for writers owning their script, as this is argued to foster increased independence in learners' writing capabilities. The focus is on changing the writer rather than just the individual script (Golden, 2005; Jones, Garralda, Li, & Lock, 2006; McKinley, 2010).

This prevailing philosophy affects what WC tutors will do for tutees' writing. In a dialogue, the tutor works only with the needs expressed by the student rather than with any problems in the text that a tutor might perceive (Bruce & Rafoth, 2004; Hewett, 2015; Williams & Severino, 2004). Priority in this WC philosophy is also for higher order concerns of content, logic and organization, with very little attention given to lower order errors (Wang, 2012). Fixing, correcting and editing is discouraged (Tan, 2006). The advisor does not write on the student's work, the student holds the pen – showing he/she is in charge of the writing (Harris, 1988). It is suggested that a tutor might list points covered or jot down outlines on an extra piece of paper for the student to take way with them (Staben & Nordhaus, 2009). Generally the position amounts to discouraging proof reading, but instead helping students learn to develop in writing, self-editing and proof reading skills (Isaac, 2008; Wang, 2012).

However, a more flexible L2 philosophy has been introduced by some who advise L2 students in WCs, acknowledging what a L2 learner does not know, or needs time to acquire (Paoli, 2006; Williams, 2004). Powers (1993) initiated the term "cultural informant" to describe the tutor's role in filling in the knowledge gaps of L2 learners, where much of the problem resides in language differences. Most L2 learners are not at the stage where they recognize the errors for revising their writing (Wang, 2012). Lower order concerns such as spelling and grammar might benefit from explicit help as well as higher order concerns (Bruce & Rafoth, 2004; Williams & Severino, 2004). Also, the luxury of time needed for language acquisition may be compromised by the tension of assignment deadlines accentuating the need for directness of advice (Paoli, 2006). (The L2 writers using in my research site also presented these needs.)

This newer philosophy provides for more information and different techniques than those traditionally offered by an advisor or peer tutor (Thonus, 2001). In fact, attention to language development, meaning low as well as high order errors, along with explicit teaching parallels a L2 writing instructor's stance in the classroom (Hyland, 2003). Wang (2012) noted this parallel stating, "From a L2 writing perspective, some WC scholars and L2 researchers […] perceive that tutors fill the role of target language teachers and writing instructors" (p. 25). Thonus (2001) explained that such tutors are more teacher than peer in their role. In fact, some L2 learners from authoritarian collectivist cultures may believe that only teachers can really help them with their problems; they may have little confidence in peer help (Lefort, 2010; Tan, 2011).

Nevertheless, the teacher-type advisor is unlikely to edit and teach about all the learner's errors and problem areas in a single session. Negotiation can take place to find a practicable stance between the errors fixed and those left for the student or another time, thus helping the student to make progress towards independence (Bruce & Rafoth, 2004; Williams & Severino, 2004). Linville (2009) capitalizes on line-by-line editing with the student over a selected section of text for serious and rule-based errors to promote self-editing. The author conceded that while this is helpful towards the self-editing goal, it can be a slow process. A useful question in the context of my study is how could this translate to online services?

Overload is also a factor to be managed as students might be overwhelmed by attention to too many errors at their stage of comprehension and development of language acquisition (CIEL Language Support Network, 2000). The optimum balance is still emerging where student and advisor views can differ under the terms comprehensive versus focused feedback (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Lee, 2015). Overall, L2 WC philosophy currently appears as newer, evolving and more amenable in a number of WC manuals (Bruce & Refoth, 2009; Lefort, 2010; Paoli, 2006; Thonus, 2001; Williams & Severino, 2004).

Some OWLs have reported implementing the newer L2 philosophy, relating how effective online writing advisory interactions take place (Jones et al., 2006; Martinez & Oslen, 2015; Rilling, 2005; Thonus, 2002). Through such interactions, knowledge is gained and individual writing struggles and problems are solved (Rilling, 2005). Hewett (2015) in discussing online conferencing even encouraged "semantic integrity" (p. 4) for L1 writers, where advisors provide students with what they need to improve their writing. "Sufficient information" is provided to students, rather than "hints" or "guesswork." (p. 4). The author also advocated the need in an OWL for teacher instruction, not only tutor collaboration, acknowledging that peer tutors lack knowledge to fulfil this role while WCs fail to meet such needs because of their stance against this form of help. Hewett (2015) further argued that

online writing conferencing demands new practices and theories to be followed. The author advocates eclecticism to adapt to individual needs and rejects a minimalistic help approach. The question then arises, if this new change is proposed for online L1 writers, how much more should it be practised with L2 writers?

The first book length contribution regarding online writing instruction (OWI) was written by Hewett (2010) and is based on considerable empirical research and experience in North America. Though dedicated to 1-1 advisory sessions with text based commentary, it mainly addresses online writing courses rather than exclusively OWLs. However, online writing course instruction and OWL advising are intermeshed, rather than treated as separate entities of practices and ideologies, as has historically been the norm. Also, this book concentrates on L1 writers, not L2. Nevertheless in my view, the work has much to offer in application. Criticising the persistent hold of F2F ideologies and advocating eclectic approaches beyond these, the author argues in favour of direct feedback for maximum student helpfulness, intervening in process, product and content, and "milking" a student's writing for the teachable moments that will advance them to their next level.

In 2013, the CCCC issued an OWI stance which is incorporated in Hewett's (2015) second edition. Four pages in this latest edition are dedicated to L2 writers with recommendations including knowing how to show respect and avoid shaming, using language at the individual's level to write to them, making comments clear (not open to ambiguity) with correct spelling and grammar, and modelling or demonstrating.

Recently, Hewett and Dupew edited a book on online writing including one chapter written by Martinez and Olsen (2015) dedicated to OWLs exclusively and another by Miller-Cochran (2015) devoted to L2 learners. In the latter chapter, Miller-Cochran (2015) endeavors to combine CCCC's (2009) position statement for L2 writers (referred to in the writing section of this literature review) with CCCC's (2013) principles for online writing instruction to promote best practices for those teaching and advising L2 writers online. These include the accessibility of technologies used and linguistic inclusivity, rather than North American English dominance. Both syntactic and lexical competences are seen to take years rather than a semester to acquire. Other assertions include that academic English requires time to explain and technology explanations should not take away from writing focus time. Instructions should be very clear online with oral and video forms able to provide different pedagogical forms for identical things. Some off line theories and strategies concerning writing instruction and feedback can be used but adaptation to new ways for the online environment and the specific culture of the students is paramount. Finally, some informal discussion space is needed where learners can use their L1.

A high level of teacher to student interactions compared to student interactions with materials has been advocated in distance learning courses for optimum effectiveness (Arnold, 2006; McDonald & Reushle, 2002; Shea & Bidjerano, 2010). Whether this balance is needful in an OWL for L2 learners as in a WC has yet to be determined and may depend on context, nature of advisement, and modality type or availability (Martinez & Olsen, 2015; Thompson, 2014).

Furthermore, the use wholly of the target language, English, during advisory sessions has been questioned in some of these L2-friendly WCs (Wang, 2012) and in SACS (Thornton, 2012). Lately more researchers have been supporting the use of L1 when needed as an efficiency policy, since it can allow for quicker understanding by students (Canagarajah, 2000; Cummins, 2007; Wang, 2012). L1 use has been identified as a part of learner autonomy. Jarvis (2013) reported that 55% of an Emirati sample of learners when using computers in out of class time accessed L1 on-line sites all or most of their time. In Japan, Thornton's (2012) study found advisors preferred using L1 for advising, placing more emphasis on helping students' cognitive autonomy than language proficiency; thus, seemingly moving away from Little's (2007) target language stance.

Overall in my study, it was decided that an eclectic approach would be taken in advisement that remained open, to be guided by the needs of individual L2 writers. An effective and efficient balance was sought between academic writing and language development, directive and non-directive approaches, advisement and resources, target language and students' L1, old versus new ways, and comprehensive versus focused feedback. An analysis will now be made of online SAC and OWL modes with regard to full interactivity to explore the options of advising online.

2.4.3. Online interactive modes. Currently, there are a few interactive forms available for OWL tutors to use. These include discussion forums, assignment review posting tools with a means of tutor editing, audio connections, and visual plus audio connections such as Skype (Griffin, 2008). Despite audio and visual connections now being available and accessible, email and written chats are still the most widely used modes (Ellis, 2015; Hewett, 2015). The latter are mainly used by online SACs and OWLs (Tan & Emerson, 2002), and my research concentrated on these. The general advantages are first reviewed followed by a comparison of each one's specific advantages and disadvantages.

Chats and emails have been compared by several researchers to WC face-to-face interactions. However, researchers are not in full agreement on their advantages and disadvantages. For example, Weigle and Nelson (2004) proposed that online conferencing might be more fruitful than the results of F2F and Hawkinson (2010) reported that there was no difference of statistical significance between the

success rates of F2F and online sessions over a two-year period. However, many hold to the view that nothing is as useful as the powerful F2F WC session and claim that these other modes compromise the WC tutoring philosophy (Ehmann Powers, 2015; Norcross, 2011; Williams & Severino, 2004). For example, Ehmann Powers, in a study of 10 random advisors using the online Smarthinking system, specializing in online writing conferences, found that all except two advisors felt online sessions were inferior to F2F.

Some advantages are shared by both synchronous chats and asynchronous emails. One benefit is that the actual interaction is recorded, allowing reprocessing. Writers tend to remember more from an online conference than F2F, since it is all written down (Williams & Severino, 2004; Hewett, 2015). Furthermore, because the medium in both cases is writing, the student is actually getting the practice of writing for a real audience (Coogan, 1995; Hewett, 2015; Inman & Sewell, 2000). Also, students can be conveniently referred to extended online explanations and appropriate practice places via comments and hyperlinks (Breuch & Racine, 2000; Rilling, 2005).

2.4.3.1. Synchronous interactions. The synchronous modes present several major benefits, noteably that the chat interaction in real time is faster than asynchronous, allowing immediate feedback and checking (Hewett, 2015). In addition, Jones et al. (2006), reporting on a study of L2 students in Hong Kong, noted that learners using synchronous sessions tended to elicit comments, control the interaction and present greater volubility than their tutors. Students may even be quite directive. Collaboration, interactivity, and authenticity can all be high (Mick & Middlebrook, 2015). Williams and Severino (2004) suggested this mode should be superior to asynchronous methods for clarifying any points of confusion.

However, synchronous modes have some drawbacks. Comments cannot be attached to a working text, in contrast to email, making it hard to address lower order concerns like grammar errors or the whole student draft – although some platforms lately include a whiteboard or other file sharing means (Hewett, 2015). Less able students can be slow at typing questions and responses (Hewett, 2015). Also, wasting time through missed meetings or technical failures during a session can occur, due to problems in synchronizing or technological problems (Golden, 2005). Another drawback mentioned by Mabrito (2006) is that collaboration can be less focused and more social than via asynchronous means, with a lack of depth and unfinished writing task business (ideas not properly explored or dealt with). In agreement with this, Hewett (2015) mentioned the restraint of covering several issues because

of the direct textual talk needed. The advisor must provide purposeful communication to push the session beyond simple chat. Finally, answering synchronously in real time does not make it easy for a L2 learner to read and understand information sent, and craft questions or responses (ibid.).

2.4.3.2. Asynchronous interactions. Asynchronous modes have some significant advantages for writing interactions. Since it is very easy to make revisions on the working text, students tend to implement more revisions (Coogan, 1998; Hewett, 2015; Rilling, 2005; Williams, 2004). Breuch and Racine (2000) reported the extensiveness of a tutor's notes being an advantage, with 2-3 times the amount of time expended for this compared to other modes. Honeycutt (2001) claimed students have a preference for the asynchronous mode because of advisors' extensive responses too. Isaac's (2008) study showed that an advisor-teacher advising students via email helps to increase student writing outcomes. The flexible scheduling afforded by advisor and advisee not needing to be present simultaneously makes it more accessible than the synchronous mode (Hewett, 2015).

Another point that has been emphasized by some researchers is the benefit of the time delay associated with asynchronous email. This delay between each interaction can encourage students to use the time to write better and without pressure (Golden, 2005; Hewett, 2015; Rilling, 2005). Moser (2002) reported such flexibility is appreciated for reading, response and revising; while Barker and Kemp (1990) explained that there is not so much stress for students or reticence about being right in content or mechanics. Castner (2000), Dehoff (2000) and Jackson (2000) noted that learners' responses can be more reflective with promotion of critical thinking.

This time delay promotes social constructivism and the writing process. Increased metacognition, cognitive processing and reflection are promoted because students have time to think carefully in order to craft their requests for help and responses (Mick & Middlebrook, 2015; Thornton & Mynard, 2012). Ehmann Powers (2015) reported that advisors claimed the relative anonymity afforded by distance in time and place "allowed students to save face" and this "minimizing fears of looking stupid […] afforded students affective security" as they concentrated on their writing (p. 179).

The drawbacks of the asynchronous mode can also be significant. One of its main strengths, the time delay, is also its main weakness as instant checking or explanation of problems is forfeited, making it hard to clarify any confusion quickly (Williams & Severino, 2004). Similarly adviser and advisee may bypass each other on some points because of failure to address or pin down these points directly (Hewett, 2015). Another negative aspect can be problems with response time from tutors when they are overloaded. The ideal time is 24-48 hours but unfortunately this cannot always be adhered to. In

addition, some students do not find time to have more than one exchange on any specific text (Hewett, 2015; Jackson, 2000; Rilling, 2005). Thus, unless care is taken, some learners may use this mode more as an immediate "fix" rather than being drawn into a constructive, reflective dialogue (Anderson, 2002; Breuch & Racine, 2000; Golden, 2005; Moser 2002; Hewett, 2015).

***2.4.3.3. Synchronous and asynchronous OWLs*.** Some WCs offer both online modes as a choice to students although this is not the norm because of time, money and staffing. An example is the University of Wisconsin which offers synchronous Skype appointments between 7pm and 10pm and email help with feedback promised within three working days ("Individual Writing," 2014).

Breuch and Clemens (2009) reported experimenting with advising ESL students online at the University of Minnesota via a hybrid process. Students' drafts are responded to asynchronously followed up by a synchronous chat in which students have the opportunity to question and advisors can ensure understanding. Advisors particularly seemed satisfied with this chance to make the online version more like a face to face with dialogue and negotiation. Students liked the resulting double transcript they received and extra thinking time.

My research offered asynchronous feedback to all participants and synchronous chats to one of the two groups. Nevertheless, instant messenger was available to all. It can be used asynchronously but becomes synchronous when used to "ping" another person visiting the online SAC at the same time. The bottom-up exploratory nature of my study was directed at true student-centredness where student needs were being met (Sloan, 2013) and adjustments were made to the online SAC accordingly rather than a stoic adherence to mainstream ideology (Wilson, 2012).

2.4.4. Summary of advising. In this section, the concepts and issues on how advisors and tutors fulfill their role in SACs, online SACs, WCs and OWLs have been critically compared. Firstly, advisors providing initial support to establish rapport and direction with learners are an important feature in all the systems, with increased significance online. This extends into the advisors' use of therapeutic skills. To complement the initiation, some SACs have successfully added monitoring sessions with systematic record keeping for additional effectiveness.

Secondly, autonomous learning skills differ in these four systems. Autonomy development skills are most explicitly focused on by SAC advisors often with linkage to a language skill. In contrast, WC

advisors encourage students' full control of their own writing skills. This expected control is like a form of proactive autonomy from students associated directly with the collaborative and non-directive approach to writing. WC advisors have success with L1 writers but not to the same extent with L2s. To remedy this some WC advisors have adopted a flexible directive approach for L2 writers that encourages more of a reactive autonomy in students.

With regard to writing skills, SAC advisors seem to rely mainly on referring learners to good resources while WC non-directive advisors help students discover answers for the problems the students perceive in writing their texts. This non-directedness does not seem to work for many L2 writers although some WC advisors have responded by being more directive in identifying students' problems and actually showing students how to fix them.

Those few online SACs and OWLs with advisors have followed up with these prototypes. However, lately empirical evidence has shown even L1 writers need more directedness in online writing courses, hence OWLs as well. This gives added weight for OWLs to use directedness with L2 writers. There is a need for balance and efficiency in L2 writing advisory sessions between directive and non-directive approaches, autonomy versus writing help, resources versus advisement use, academic writing versus language help, use of L1 versus L2 in a session, old ways versus new ways, and comprehensive feedback versus focused feedback.

Also some OWL advisors particularly utilize full interactivity online via synchronous chats, asynchronous emails or both for advisory sessions. Using multiple modes has been encouraged for inclusiveness. Despite some disadvantages, each mode has useful advantages in enabling successful 1-1 sessions. Of special interest, due to its association with autonomy and writing development, is the more egalitarian relationship between advisor and student in the synchronous session, and the focus on writing to communicate everything with concomitant increased metacognition in the written modes. Yet, more research with adaptations is needed to promote greater value of these niches.

2.5 SAC, WC & OWL Evaluation

The evaluation of SACs in terms of effectiveness is often inadequate (Reinders & Lázaro, 2007b). The learning effectiveness of a SAC is seen to be a combination of developing learner autonomy plus language proficiency (Cotterall & Reinders, 2001; Morrison, 2008). However, assessment of SAC effectiveness is often not undertaken because of the complexity of the SACs, their uniqueness, the difficulty of data collection and analysis. This is further complicated as not much is known about the learners, the SACs are used in an ad hoc fashion by so many users, and they are often used as a hybrid

complement to English courses. Moreover, measuring both autonomy and language proficiency is difficult (Gardner & Miller, 1999; Reinders & Lázaro, 2007b).

Different researchers have varying ideas about the effective methodologies for evaluating SACs. Morrison (2005) advocated the importance of learners' perceptions rather than quantitative data while Gardner and Miller (1999) argued against reliance on numbers and statistics as a measure of effectiveness and instead suggested a cross referencing of learners' and advisors' perceptions. Champagne et al. (2001) suggested both qualitative and quantitative measures and, along with Mynard (2006), identified multiple-methods to gather a more comprehensive and accurate idea of learners' autonomy achievement and language learning development. WCs and OWLs face similar evaluation problems.

Arguably, the true measure of WCs' and OWLs' effectiveness should be learners' improved writing ability due to the tutoring they receive. Tan (2006) and Deal (2011) reported a lack of empirical research in this respect. Deal's (2011) study is one of few that gathered data on changes in students' future writing. The results were mixed, however. Deal assessed only the immediate revised paper, whereas control and retention for future writing is needed. One measure of writing improvement that would satisfy institutional administrative stakeholders would be grade improvements (Ehmann & Hewett, 2015; Harris, 2000; Tan, 2006).

Because of the nature of WCs and OWLs, too often evaluation is not done or is inadequate. Thonus (2002) took a stand against totaling student visits without accompanying qualitative evidence or only reporting successes. The quality of the visits would seem to be a more valid measurement than their quantity, demonstrating what the students assimilated from interactions and support as they and their tutors perceive it (ibid). In line with this, some researchers have concentrated on the constitution of 1-1s (tutor-learner conferences) in specific situations to maximize learner outcomes (Greenfield, 2003; Kane, 2010; Sotillo, 2000; Toyoda & Harrison, 2003; Tudini, 2005). However, more research is needed to determine whether the full needs of the L2 writer are being met in the context of the realities of their situations, and whether any adaptations that are used are working for both students and advisors (Harris, 2000; Lefort, 2010). Very few studies have captured EFL writers' problems, struggles and successes outside the USA in association with WCs and OWLs (Tan, 2006). Thus, evaluation of these independent learning systems' efficiency has been poor, a gap that my research endeavoured to address. Because the platform for running an online SAC with advisory service in my project was via a learning management system (LMS), such systems are now discussed.

2.6 LMSs

A LMS (Learning Management System) is a software system explicitly created for the learning teaching situation. Some other names for these systems include VLE (Virtual learning Environment), CMS (Course Management System) and MLE (Managed learning Environment). WebCT and Blackboard were initially two of the most popular commercial LMSs (Beatty, 2003). However, Moodle, the LMS used in this research, is prevalent in language learning and teaching communities, and, moreover, is available as open source software (Bateson & Daniels, 2012).

LMSs permit the development of courses that can supply flexibility in time, the meeting of a variety of needs, the use of different types of communication with their unique distancing where students and facilitator are connected (Beatty, 2003; Benson, 2011a; Davies, 2003; Felix, 2003). Contents and tools can be added to a course structure via easy management. Access can be allowed to many external resources, assessments, exercises and tracking tools (Bateson & Daniels, 2012; Shetzer & Warschauer, 2000). Time and experience have allowed refinement so that the LMS's specific programme can be prepared, facilitated, enjoyed and adjusted with minimum technological problems (Godwin-Jones, 2003; Kern, 2006; Thorne & Black, 2007).

Though often used for distance learning courses or as part of blended learning initiatives, a carefully configured LMS can become a very flexible, portable, custom-built SAC. It can be a resource-rich one-stop-shop, "supermarket" (Gardner & Miller, 1999, p. 140) for language learning, available via the Internet on any computer. It usually has functionalities or tools which facilitate collaboration including discussion boards, instant messenger and email. Moreover, the tracking of action and recording of verbal acts can be conducted quite unobtrusively on a LSM. Privacy issues tend to be safer compared to use of various other online means (Bateson & Daniels, 2012). For all these reasons a LMS can offer multiple opportunities as a SAC while also functioning as an ideal research site with its automatic recording of participates' individual use.

By incorporating an online advisor, in addition to content, the LMS can furnish all the pedagogical learner supports mentioned in the Evaluative Framework for technological SACs outlined by Lázaro and Reinders (2006). These supports are: language learning materials, learning activities, computer-mediated language advice, needs analysis tools, learning process planning tools, learner training, learning process monitoring tools, and assessment. While the authors found that most of the 45 SACs surveyed internationally were using only a few of the eight pedagogical learning supports of the Framework, my "FLUACC," the online SAC used for this research, includes all of them. (See Appendix A

for screen shots.) FLUACC could also be described as a full interaction model OWL because dialogue was invited through email, chats, messaging, forums, blogs and assignment review tool.

Borrowing from Benson's (2011b) framework for autonomy regarding outside-the-classroom learning, the location of my study is defined as an online SAC. The mode of practice (concerning pedagogy and control) was defined as being mostly unstructured, even unanticipated, since the learners' themselves were expected to make the best use of the situation. Opportunities for self-direction were available, materials were often instructional, an advisor could be accessed for more semiformal instructional help and a structured part of autonomy was introduced to one of two groups using the site.

2.7 Summary of Literature Review

Tertiary English academic writing for L2 learners was the construct and language skill students required help in. Problems in academic writing proficiency for L2 writers are compounded due to the expectations of a standard on par with monolingual native speakers. The inherent complexity of L2 academic writing is because it is a new kind of language on top of the general English still being learnt. L2 Writing teachers have been encouraged to use eclectic approaches to provide all the diverse knowledge and help that students require. To do well in L2 academic writing, students need to be developing general competency in L2 also.

Difficulties can also stem from students' underdeveloped high school writing in L1, fossilization and the time it takes to acquire L2 cognitive academic language thinking. Students need individual feedback on their writing to improve and progress autonomously. How to make teachers' feedback to individuals work efficiently to encourage student writing proficiency is an ongoing research challenge. In addition to the challenges already mentioned, a history of rote learning and predominance of oral use of L1 can add to the difficulties experienced by Arab L2 academic writers.

Second language learning autonomy, another main construct of my study, was shown to be complex and multidimensional. Therefore a workable definition was provided to be able to explore the learner autonomy of my Arab participants and its development.

Specific L2 cultures have been stereotyped, with some research positioning them adverse to a western version of autonomy, including the Middle Eastern region of my research. For cultural sensitivity, recognition of a strong version and a reactive form of autonomy have been advocated.

There has been a dearth of literature recognizing Arab autonomy and examining its positive development. A rich environment of resources and technology has not generally engendered autonomy without some extra support.

Various frameworks have been constructed to foster learner autonomy development. For my study, Benson's (2001) and Oxford's (2003) frameworks were meshed providing a non-linear continuum of levels and perspectives encompassing the multidimensional nature of the autonomy construct and their associated areas of control. This framework includes a technical perspective with self-management, a psychological perspective with cognitive processing control, a sociocultural perspective with mediation or advisement and a political-critical perspective with content control.

Control of affect in its various forms has been made an important if under-acknowledged part of the framework as well. Effectiveness of a framework depends a lot on context. More credible empirical evidence is needed of autonomy's evaluation and its development. This should involve multiple perspectives over time on local situations – another gap sought to be fulfilled in this Arab study. Autonomy's place in aiding L2 academic writing development needs further research as well.

Besides the constructs of autonomy and academic writing, the independent learning centre context in out-of-class time was taken into account. SACs monopolizing in L2 resources and how to learn materials provide development opportunities but research continues with guidance or blending with classwork seeming to help counter inefficiencies. WCs specializing in writing and advisory sessions stem from North America and aiding L1 writers successfully. This success has not transferred easily to L2 writers with continued research needed.

Online SACs/OWLs, the focus of my study, seem to be able to supply resources with effect equal to or even more efficiently than their physical equivalents – SACs and WCs. However, fully interactive sites offering advisory sessions remain a minority with more research needed to confirm their worth and to build a convincing model that compares well with F2F sessions.

Advisement as the final construct drew from other forms of independent learning centres as well. Initial support with therapeutic skills to establish rapport and direction were seen to be significant by all centre types, but with increased importance for the more impersonal online forms. Evidence of monitoring and systematic record keeping are yet to occur much in online environments, though practically speaking this should be easier than offline. A research gap was found in a structured induction into autonomy given by an online advisor as well as follow-up monitoring sessions.

Autonomy skills are more explicitly focused on by SAC advisors with a linkage to a language skill while WC advisors seem to demand fully developed autonomy in the form of control while explicitly

focusing on writing skills. The latter does not work well for L2 writers with some WC advisors adopting a more flexible directive approach for them. More scholarship regarding L2 writers' predicaments with advisement is needed – there is considerably less compared to L1 scholarship.

Though advisory online SACs and OWLs have copied their prototypes, recently online writing courses for L1 writers have shown empirical evidence for the need of advisor directedness, adding weight for the argument of directive approaches for L2 writers in OWLs. Emerging and continuous research are needed for online SAC and OWL advisory services for L2 writers regarding the balance of directive and non-directive approaches, autonomy versus writing help, resources versus advisement use, academic writing versus language help, use of L1 versus L2 in a session, old L1 versus a newer L2 ideological basis, and comprehensive versus focused feedback. Much of this reflects back as well on research gaps in academic writing and autonomy for L2 learners in onsite centres and the classroom. The mode of advisement these online sites with full interactivity (supplying communication between students and advisor) use can be asynchronous or synchronous with the availability of both being advocated for inclusiveness. Despite some advantages being apparent with these modes, more research with adaptations from onsite methods is needed to enrich these niches for maximum learning.

Overall, ongoing research is needed on the local level to help increase our understanding of how an online SAC/OWL might operate to work best in the situation for development of academic writing and autonomy from a situated perspective. Empirical evidence of effectiveness is needed in terms of many balances mentioned. Perspectives of advisees as well as advisors need to be taken into account. Scant research is available for specific EFL communities particularly concerning these balances, as opposed to L1 or ESL situations. This paucity of research extends to Arab learners in English medium Universities in the Middle East. Below are the research questions derived from a comprehensive examination of the literature, refined during the research process. The methodology section follows, explaining how my study explores and attempts to find some solutions to these issues at a local level.

2.8 My Research Questions

The general research question for the project is:

> How can learner autonomy and L2 English writing proficiency be developed for Arab academic writing learners via an online SAC?

To help answer this question, four specific sub-questions were articulated:

1 How did the participants use the online SAC environment?

2 What were the participants' perceptions of the usefulness of an online SAC for becoming an autonomous learner and a more proficient L2 writer?

3 How can a structured advisory component to an online SAC help with developing autonomous learning and written L2 language proficiency?

4 What are the main aspects affecting the success of an online SAC for developing autonomy and L2 writing proficiency?

Chapter 3: Methodology

The methodology chapter seeks to explain how and why my study was undertaken. Decision points and choices are discussed.

The chapter focuses first on my project's methodology of action research (AR). The philosophical paradigms that underpinned my AR are outlined. AR is a suitable methodology, matching the exploratory nature of my study. The attributes of the specific form of AR, broadly seen as the teacher as researcher, are described emphasizing the teacher-researcher's emic role. Subsequently, a Figure accompanied by step-by-step explanations illustrates the sequence of the overall research process for the two AR cycles from the initial Institutional Review Board (IRB) ethics approval to the final post reflections and evaluations linked to the analysis of both Cycles. A second Figure classifies the 14 data sources from the research into four clear sets, and identifies the research question(s) each helped answer. This Figure introduces the presentation of sources of data. Each source is uniformly laid out covering aim (linked with the research questions), collection method, data type, analysis and credibility. A third Figure summarizes two major analyses that led to two significant secondary sources. Finally, an indication of the major assumptions and limitations of the study is presented.

3.1 Action Research

This section discusses the chosen AR within explicit philosophical paradigms. Consequently, the reasons for choosing AR are clarified, including its ability to address the research of questions that cannot easily be answered by other paradigms and approaches. Furthermore, the specific type of action research used in this project, namely a teacher as researcher model, is rationalized.

3.1.1. Philosophical paradigms. The AR approach used in this study stems mainly from the paradigm of constructivism, but includes the paradigm of critical theory inquiry. Guba and Lincoln (2000) argued that this blurring of boundaries between paradigms is allowable in the case of alternative research paradigms and fulfills the need for emergent paradigms to keep up with actual situations in order to provide the most comprehensible research results (Guba & Lincoln, 2000). Pine (2009) argued that this crossing of boundaries is specifically a strength of AR.

The constructivism paradigm that informed my research is interpretative and dialectical (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). There is a focus on what meanings individuals attribute to actions, experiences and practices. Gray (2004) called this process symbolic interactionism, recognizing that humans have the

active quality of continually processing and constructing meaning in relation to objects and through being influenced by others.

People's interactions, language and negotiation are both complex and important (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Accordingly, my study considers multiple perspectives, collecting data from recorded dialogues, observations and participant-produced documents (Gray, 2004; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). As the action researcher, I participated in the situation in my direct emic position, whereby I was able to understand and maintain the integrity of the interaction (Cohen et al., 2000). The constructivist paradigm is well suited to continual flux and adaptation to change, allowing emergent-type theory and insider-researcher-type AR as described later.

The basic assumptions of a constructivism paradigm stem from an associated ontology based in relativism rather than realism. This is because any of the realities studied involve changing constructions and perceptions among the individuals and groups in their various interactional experiences, depending on the local conditions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Regarding the epistemology of constructivism, it is transactional and subjective as it involves ongoing interactions affected by human values, coloured by the insider informers (Guba & Lincoln, 2000). As Sikes (2004) says each participant brings their own experiences, uniqueness, and personality to the situation. With the constant creation of data, reality is changing too, merging ontology and epistemology because of the relativity of interactions (Burns, 2005b; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Axiology adds another explanatory dimension, since values have a significant place in the research assumptions (Creswell, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 2000; Pine, 2009). Thus, it is accepted that "facts and values are inextricably intertwined" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p.425). However, the constructivism perspective, although it recognizes the creation of meaning in individuals' actions, has been criticized for being insulated from the effects of encroaching external agents that act on the situation (Cohen et al., 2000). This shortcoming was addressed in my study by adding a secondary paradigm.

The secondary paradigm I used in my study is critical theory in order to incorporate dialogic and dialectical interaction with the intent to critique and transform my findings (Gray, 2004). Critical theory applied to the data collected can provide greater understanding of any constraints that are unfair or unnecessary that occur between outside knowledge, researcher and participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Action research has strong associations with this theory with its emphasis on critical reflection and bringing about social and educational change (Cohen et al., 2000).

The ontology associated with this critical theory informs historic realism, where influences of the past, including ideologies, culture, imperialism or outdated methods of pedagogy, are exposed as

constraints to development (Bailey, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Thus, in the reality that participants inhabit, unexamined dominating or repressive factors may instinctively hold them back; yet the researcher (in my case in a participant role) can help them overcome these impediments through discussion with the participants to facilitate improved conditions and achievements (Cohen et al., 2000). The epistemology of critical theory is transactional and subjective with outcomes developing and merging with ontology, as in constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Axiology or a kind of meta-ethics is important where the freedom of participants is paramount. Thus human well-being and flourishing are brought to the forefront, with research for students' gain being of primary importance (Pine, 2009; Reason & Bradbury, 2001).

Critical theory informs the autonomy and L2 writing expectation in my study, where culturally-sensitive learner-centred techniques were used rather than imposing western L1 methods. A problem has been identified from using education methods exported from the West without accommodation, as adaptations to the new context can pose difficulties, with special reference to historic realism. My study was strongly guided by a broad goal of implementing a culturally-sensitive methodology, aimed at giving students choices, opportunities and control. On another level, the approach used is also congruent with the formal critical requirements expected for educational research (Habermas cited in Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

3.1.2. Why action research? AR methodologies rooted in postmodern paradigms, do not adhere to the more objective, solely quantitative and statistical experimental methodologies. Though these traditional methodologies are indispensable in some areas of research, they cannot address all the questions involved in social science situations (Gray, 2004; McDonough & McDonough, 2005). My research on language proficiency and autonomy falls within such a situation. According to Guba and Lincoln (2005), inadequacies in scientific paradigms derive from extracting circumstances from reality by decontextualizing them, as well as excluding any possibility of creativity or change once the research has started. An individual's problems or insider (emic) observer knowledge are considered invalid as data sources in these paradigms. Cohen et al. (2000) also confirmed that these scientific paradigms miss important information such as the uniqueness of the individual, creativity, discovery and values.

However AR, with its more subjective perspective and attributes, can investigate and even specialize in methods that address many of the gaps in more traditional methodologies. These include gaining meaning and understanding of problems in complex social situations (Burns, 2005b). AR can conduct such inquiry with rigour, qualitative research's equivalent of validity and reliability (see 3.4).

Perhaps another methodology could address some of these gaps but certainly AR has sufficient versatility and strength of scope, incorporating the perspectives of both the paradigms of constructivism and critical theory (Dick, 1993; Levin, 2012).

3.1.2.1. Basic characteristics of action research. As AR methodologies are quite diverse (Hollingsworth, 1997 cited in Waters-Adams, 2006), various means of classification have been proposed. Burns (2005b) associated them with main belief paradigm types ranging from "technical", of the scientific paradigm, and "practical", of the constructivist paradigm, to "critical", of the critical theory paradigm (p.58). ARs' methodologies also vary by their degree of collaboration, ranging from the isolated researcher to collaboration with others. Herr and Anderson (2005) thus classify AR according to the researcher's positionality, from insider studying his/her own practice to outsider studying insiders as well as intermediate positions.

I chose AR for my study mainly for some shared key characteristics of many AR methodologies, namely: action is allied with research; the research is data driven; focus is on a natural context; the process involved is cyclical; multi-methods are used; and scientific rigour is maintained.

The use of action and research going hand in hand as a valid inquiry methodology was first argued by one of its forerunners, Kurt Lewin, in the 1940s (Burns, 2005a). The "action" part can be said to correspond to the implementation of a plan to fix a problem or make a situation more effective. The "research" part occurs with the systematic collection of data in response to the action, with continual reflection and interpretation of this data (Burns, 2005b). This action followed by research is central (Taylor, Wilkie & Basen, 2006). AR is fundamentally useful since it can be very responsive and flexible with the potential to effect the status quo and efficiently reach a solution (Dick, 2000). These factors combined made AR an ideal methodology for my study to explore and improve a particular Arab online SAC learning situation.

Closely associated with the AR linked partnership is the fact that AR tends to be data driven rather than theory driven, where data precedes theory (Johnson, 1993; Swepson, 1995). If improvement or better understanding is not demonstrated by the data then adjustments can be made to the action until a positive difference or meaning is verified. As Dick (2000) stated, "let…the data drive both the improvement of the process and the growing understanding of the research situation" (para. 11). Because the AR approach provided the ability to adjust actions as indicated with emergent awareness, it aligned with the exploratory nature of my study.

AR's practical focus on applications in natural settings is another common attribute. As a research methodology, it has a functional use in the complex situation of work and community in real-life localized contexts (Dick, 1993; McNiff, 2002, O'Brien, 2001; Waters-Adams, 2006). This practical approach for collecting data and consolidating research was encouraged by Dewey in the early 1900s, and much later enacted by Stenhouse in the 1970s in the classroom context of education for curriculum studies (Burns, 2005b). It has even been adopted within other social sectors besides education (e.g. health, business, industry, social services), to help solve problems identified or improve circumstances and performance within their situations (Burns, 2005b; Koshy, 2010).

Because AR takes place exactly where the improvement is sought, no time delays have to occur between trial and actual practice, meaning the application of research results occurs directly (Burns, 2005b). Also, even though AR is primarily practical, it seeks to discover new knowledge and theory too consistent with the major purpose of most other research methodologies (Dick, 1993). In fact, it allows research to be conducted in natural situations where some other research methodologies that require the isolation of variables could prove too difficult to deploy (Dick & Swepson, 1997). The online SAC in my study, though new, operated as a fully natural self-help system for the local tertiary situation, so the AR was directed at improving a natural situation.

An additional characteristic of much AR is its cyclical process of gathering evidence and reflecting on this (Dick, 1993; Water-Adams, 2006). This cycle takes place differently depending on the research situation. A common depiction is the AR four-step cyclic model, involving planning, action (implementation), observing (data collection) and reflection (evaluation) as specified by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). After the first Cycle, another Cycle or Cycles can be repeated, albeit sometimes with a related but fresh, redirected focus arising from the evaluation of the former Cycle(s). Confirming and disconfirming the data from one Cycle to the next are both important processes to determine any adjustments needed (Dick, 2000). The cyclic process is claimed to be an effective way to actively learn and increase understanding, forcing systematic reflection (Kolb, 1984; Schön, 1987). Thus, my study used a double Cycle, in in its simplest form depicted in Figure 2 below and adapted from McNiff (2002).

In reality any cyclic model adopted in AR is not rigid, for as Burns (2005b) said AR is "messier" than any pre-set model (p. 59) because it adapts to specific situations, circumstances and participants so answers can be found. AR's responsiveness is one of its main strengths (Dick, 1993). Therefore, sub-steps may intervene between steps or spontaneous diversions and pathways can present themselves (McNiff, 1988). Creswell (2005) described it as "a dynamic process of spiraling back and forth among reflection, data collection and action" (p. 14) and the very scope of the project may need to be increased

(Burns, 2005a). Thus, within my research project, the cycles provided the outline but the formative process had some dynamic circles within circles as problems were pursued. These are recounted in the findings.

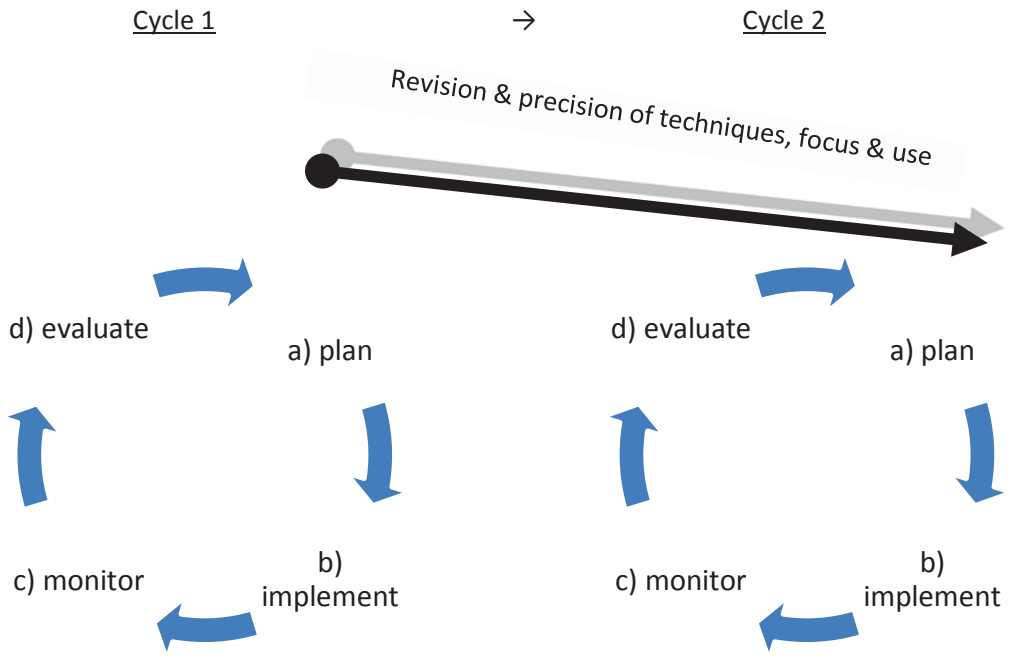


Figure 2. Double cycle adapted from McNiff (2002)

AR is also characterized by multi-methods (Creswell, 2012; Pine, 2009), rather than limited or characterized by set methods (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Methods can be mixed and matched according to the AR inquiry itself (Dick, 2000). Multi-methods are advocated for AR to validate data and to gain a better overview of events. My project had a number of sources for these reasons (14 in fact). Mixed methods, referring to qualitative and quantitative, were one form of multi-methods used in my study. The quantitative measures gave it more research objectivity and less bias than it would otherwise have (McDonough & McDonough, 2005) and aided clarity in reporting (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Though AR is strong in qualitative measures, yet that does not mean it cannot embrace quantitative measures too.

Using mixed methods may seem to conflict with the paradigms I chose for my AR as paradigms that embrace a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods can be controversial since quantitative measures are often associated with objectivism and positivism (Cohen et al., 2000; Creswell, 2002; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; McDonough & McDonough, 2005). However, the quantitative/qualitative argument is nullified when it is put in its place down at the methods rather than the paradigm level.

Thus, mixed methods can be appropriate for the alternative paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), where they can provide triangulation as per other multi-methods (McDonough & McDonough, 2005). AR researchers argue that paradigm choice should not govern whether quantitative or qualitative methods be used solely, or offer a definitive overview of reality, so much as address the practical problem in hand (Pine, 2009). In fact Dick (2000) expressed such a position as stemming from an ontology where "truth is what works best" (p. 4), a very practical reality and important to the local context and the needs of the participants in AR. This practicality also relates to constructivism, where reality is relative and subject to constant improvement from the multi-perspectives of those concerned and their context (Crotty, 1998; Gray, 2004). Guba and Lincoln (2005) seemed to echo this with their judgment of reality as that which is meaningful and useful. Mixed methods allow the flexibility of pragmatism – of practical outcomes (Oxford, 2011).

A final key point about AR that made this methodology the choice for my study is that it maintains rigour as an authentic research methodology. Methods in any AR project can be diverse but overall rigour and validity is maintained by triangulating the methods and data, repeating a cyclic process by building on evidence from each previous Cycle, verifying agreements, seeking and explaining disagreements along with the longitudinal nature of a project (rather than a biased cross-section) and the non-intrusiveness but declared visibility of any participatory teacher–researcher (Burns, 2005b; Dick, 1999; Eikeman, 2006; Gray, 2004; Levin, 2012).

Critical reflection is also a major part of each AR Cycle, increasing scientific rigour. It assumes the reflective distance and careful analysis needed for research to develop out of/during the action (Dick, 2000; McDonough & McDonough, 2005). Critical reflection should take place throughout each Cycle, not just at the end (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). The rigour of critical reflection must also occur through comparison with literature.

Overall, to maintain a high standard of rigour, there needs to be more equality with the proportion of action to research. Action followed too closely by action without critical reflection can destroy the rigour needed for research (Dick, 2000). Also, AR research maintains quality rigour not just by how it is done, but by comprehensible reporting (Dick, 2000; Feldman, 2007). A reader must be able to understand how all the parts of the research were undertaken. Accordingly, my research project safeguarded against lack of rigour in six ways: 1) by using triangulation; 2) having a double Cycle; 3) being longitudinal, with changes observable over time as opposed to just a snap shot (Gray, 2004); 4) incorporating critical reflection; 5) comparing with the literature; 6) reporting processes clearly.

With all its positive attributes, AR stands up among other qualitative and mixed-methods research. AR validity is based on the positivist validity of generalizability, reliability and objectivity but rather on new forms of judgement, such as meaningfulness, trustworthiness, credibility and authenticity, since its goals are to gain understanding and rich detail in local contexts (McDonough & McDonough, 2005). The researcher and readers can then utilize reports of such AR studies, adapting suitable parts for future studies and other contexts (Burns, 2005b).

3.1.3. Research Approach. As the basic characteristics of AR methodologies have been identified and discussed, the forms of teacher as researcher AR will be explained in this section. Then, the attributes of this AR are described and rationalized for this study, with special emphasis on the insider-researcher role, followed by other aspects that were adapted. A reflexive account of me for eligibility and transparency in my emic role is provided. I will argue that the specific online setting of my project is commensurate with the teacher as researcher methodology. Finally, the initial pilot study is reported.

3.1.3.1. Teacher as researcher AR. Teacher as researcher AR can take the form of individual outsider teachers, collaborating with researcher(s) and other teachers, school-wide participation and more. It has been situated in paradigms of positivism, constructivism and critical theory (Burns, 2005a), especially the last because education has so many hidden agendas, like past policies and incidental changes (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Moreover, it can be driven by insider individual teachers, an outside researcher associated with an insider teacher, or collaboration among several teachers (Creswell, 2005). Also, a school-wide or district-wide participation of teachers and stakeholders occur (Pine, 2009). Overall, teacher as researcher AR involving collaboration has been considered the strongest form of participation with regard to validity through group dialogue, reflection and evaluation (Ferrance, 2000; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; McDonough & McDonough, 2005; Pine, 2009). However, my study will reserve the term “teacher as researcher AR” for an individual teacher doing action research in his/her classroom - in my case, a newly formed, virtual, voluntary self-access location (see section 3.2.3). Other terms describing this can be “participator–researcher” and “insider-researcher”. In such situations, teacher as researcher AR implies that the research takes place in a classroom where the AR is defined, designed and implemented by the teacher, with the teacher having the sole responsibility for it (Johnson, 1993).

A practitioner in this position bridges the gap between theory, research and practice since the three are integrated in the one place by the one person. Systematic, conscious reflection during practice makes the research possible (Dick, 1993). I adopted AR for the basic characteristics discussed above: action is allied with research; the research is data driven; focus is on a natural context; the process involved is cyclic; multi-methods are used; and scientific rigour is maintained. To this are added the attributes of teacher as researcher AR.

3.1.3.2. Adopted attributes of teacher as researcher AR. During my study, the attributes I adopted of teacher as researcher AR were: having the teacher as an insider-researcher, ensuring the participants benefit by participating, and collecting their endeavours, perceptions and evaluations as data. The first attribute I adopted was having the teacher as an insider-researcher. As such, the teacher comes with pre-understandings since the situation and participants have some closeness, accessibility, familiarity to the teacher which can be built on (Coghlan & Shani, 2008; Greene, 2014). Chavez (2008) defines the insider's positionality as "the aspects of an insider-researcher's self or identity which is aligned or shared with participants" (p. 455) Total insiders or indigenous insiders share multiple identities, values and experiences (Greene, 2014), but my western heritage, compared to the participants' Arab heritage, and lecturer status, versus their student status, made me more a partial insider.

During research, a pre-understanding of the knowledge and experience as an insider informant can add much value since the teacher supplies a direct source of data of much essential evidence for understanding an authentic, complex situation (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Costley, Elliott and Gibbs (2010) add that this pre-understanding also provides a possibility for an issue to be investigated with depth and thoroughness, for ambiguous problems to be comprehended, for changes to be more likely to be made after trial, and for the status-quo to be confronted knowledgably. Rooney (2005) adds to this list the potential to aid validity through extra richness, integrity and commitment.

However, Coghlan and Shani (2008) argue that distance is also needed in order to see things with a critical eye to facilitate change. Familiarity can impede change with insensitivity to nuances. Therefore, care needs to be taken to remain alert and not take things for granted. Ethically, the insider-researcher has to appreciate the subjective nature of researching within one's own organization, guarding against partiality, false suppositions and vested interest in particular results (Rooney, 2005) (see ethics approval, section 3.2.2.). Preventing such bias includes: considering all the feedback from participants; gathering data via multi-methods (Coghlan & Shani, 2008); maintaining rigour as per

section 3.1.2.1; and ensuring the qualitative conditions of verification as per section 3.4 (Greene, 2014). The insider-researcher is encouraged to use a narrative style to record and to reflect on the research process in an ongoing manner, including formative as well as summative findings (Herr & Anderson, 2005). It is suggested that these field notes should also include self-reflexive comments regarding biases and validity (Coghlan & Shani, 2008; Costley et al., 2010).

Furthermore, as an insider-researcher, the teacher acts as a bridge between the two roles, implementing action/changes as needed (teacher) and informing on what is happening (researcher). I adopted a dual role as a participant in the capacity of the advisor helping the student participants, at the same time I was the researcher. Thus, I was partly the research subject and researcher. This kind of entanglement has met opposition (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Victoria, 2011) but it allows more thorough work and enhancement of research outcomes (Bryan & Deyhle, 2000; Kanuha, 2000).

A dual role can extend further as an organizational member role and action researcher role. This can cause tensions and ambiguities in handling, yet justice can be done to both roles as learning takes place, enabling both to be managed well (Coghlan & Shani, 2008). In my case, I was working full time as lecturer plus simultaneously performing in my action researcher role, which involved everyday advising on the online SAC, maintaining the website, as well as collecting information, reflecting, evaluating and theorizing. Both roles were highly work-intensity and dynamic.

Allowing the dual role tensions to come out in a section of the field notes is a part of the fundamental principles in qualitative research, which encourage understanding of insider-ness and the researcher-self. Writing these field notes lessens biases through encouraging an awareness of blind spots, balance of insider-outsider perspective and reflection in, on and through action (Ellingson, 2009). One's role with one's colleagues and the institution can change and grow because of one's researcher status and the activities undertaken (Coghlan and Shani, 2008).

The second attribute of teacher as researcher AR I adopted involved ensuring the student participants benefited from participating. As the goal of the teacher as researcher AR is for improvement in practice and learning, it is ethically "moral" for participants to benefit, in contrast to some other types of research where participants are to be used without receiving something useful for themselves. Ethics are "intrinsic" where students' understanding is the starting point and the working point throughout the interactions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 115).

Participants can receive an advantage from other kinds of AR, but particularly when provided by the localized teacher-researcher where students in their own classroom reap the benefit of improvements by participating (Dick, 2000; Mills, 2003). Students would have good reason to

participate and appreciate this benefit. In my case, the participants all joined the program firstly because it would help them with their writing, not because it was a research program. Pine (2009) advocated this beneficial aspect, noting the teacher as researcher AR has the noble aim of "human flourishing" of well-being in all aspects and "emancipatory learning" (p. 71), thereby linking it with critical theory.

Further, the teacher as researcher AR can affect the kind and amount of participation of the student participants and hence the amount of data collected from them. This variation falls on a continuum ranging from only the students' work documents collected as data, to the students being co-researchers (Dick, 2000; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). In my role as advisor-researcher, my approach fell in between these extremes with the students as informants being valued, not just for their educational endeavours in written texts, but also for their perceptions, feelings, suggestions and evaluations, as per the constructivist paradigm. Their level of participation was quite high although since most of the data came from the writing and autonomy development process, they might not have noticed how they were a part of the research. Non-intrusion is important in the teacher-researcher approach since the teacher is researching on the job. The literature concerning the AR methods suggests that the research should occur as a natural beneficial practice for the students as much as possible. Any intrusive techniques, like questionnaires, should be kept short or aid normal evaluation (Wallace, 1998).

Moreover, good ethical practices were also followed where I respected any individual's choice not to follow through with all the compulsory elements of the research, even though it meant me settling for less student participation than I would have liked in some cases. However, a high level of student participation can naturally emanate from the teacher-researcher's valuing of students' voices and can also ensure that the students stand to gain from being involved (Dick, 2000). This was the case with my study, despite the freedom to withdraw. The attributes I adopted from the individual teacher as researcher AR model have been discussed so now the adaptations made to several attributes are described. The following paragraphs first name the attribute and then outline my modification.

3.1.3.3. Adapted attributes of teacher as researcher AR. Usually the individual teacher-researcher uses his/her normal class(es) when performing AR (Creswell, 2012; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; McDonough & McDonough, 2005). Nevertheless, I purposely did not use my own existing classes to allow for added objectiveness and in an effort to reduce bias. According to Herr and Anderson (2005), there are different positionalities in teacher as researcher AR. While normal to use one's own class, the positionality can be other hybrids, like another class in one's own setting. If this setting is a new class,

the researcher's positionality changes within a study as he/she grows to know the students more. Also, Erikson (as cited in McDonough & McDonough, 2005) explained that an everyday teacher might have a problem in using his/her own class for this kind of research since familiarity can breed insensitivity to what is happening.

Overall, my situation was similar to having a new class of my own thereby giving it still the teacher-researcher in class aspect, but with the added positional difference that my so-called class was operating as a SAC where students were not coming for a course. Instead, the SAC was a supplementary drop-in-when-you-want facility, where I was an advisor. Yet, participants were informed that I was a normal teacher at the university, and I was not new to the context, having been and still working in a number of English writing classes at this particular university. This made me familiar with a range of student types and the many English writing challenges faced by them. Another reason for adopting this setting, was that this university had not previously run an online SAC. I took up this challenge as it satisfied the focus on the specific needs my work context presented and the outcomes would benefit student participants and my university.

In addition, the teacher-researcher often decides on AR from encountering a problem he/she would like to address in their class, where a solution or improvement is being sought for the specific, localized classroom. It can be very much a personal class problem, and the knowledge once gained might not proceed outside of that classroom (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; McDonough & McDonough, 2005).

My case, however, was initially activated by several gaps I had identified in language learning and the educational technology literature that I wished to pursue. Firstly, I had found no attempt to supply a structured autonomy aid, via a human advisor, as part of online modes of SACs/OWLs. Likewise, there was a dearth of research on best practice for online SACs/OWLs for Arab EFL university students, or even any EFL students. Nevertheless, through my own classes, I had also become aware of the huge effort and knowledge students required to produce suitable academic writing in their mandatory English courses and their majors, so this part of the problem interested me as a true teacher-researcher. In overview too, the literature acknowledged the several pronged foci of the study as areas that could best be addressed by small localized inquiries via action research (for autonomy Benson, 2011a; for SACs Gardner & Miller, 1999; for advisement Karlsson et al, 2007; Victori, 2007; for technology Warschauer, 2000; for second language writing Leki et al., 2008). Thus a variety of routes had led me to teacher as researcher AR.

Besides addressing specific problems, teacher as researcher AR can be "practical" for evaluating and improving practices. Thus, it is frequently used to authenticate pilot projects, investigate new practices and improve and make more effective present practices of setting, teaching and learning (Creswell, 2005; Mills, 2003). Authenticating, investigating and improving equate with my study to a notable extent. In addition, with me coming into a somewhat unknown situation as regards new students and newness of an OWL to the university, I decided to make full avail of AR's flexibility as a methodology for exploratory research, where I was prepared to learn, adapt and change with the evolving situation, AR being very much driven by the research data.

Therefore, as suggested by some AR academics (teacher-researchers and others), even my initial research questions were tentative with the final questions evolving inductively from the developing research and situation (Burns, 2005b; Dick, 1999; Johnson, 2002; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Dick (1993) stipulated that deferring allows outcomes to be achieved inline with participants' concerns, making AR the methodology of choice in my case. As Arab learner autonomy is one of the main constructs of the whole study, I did not want to be limited to preconceptions or stereotypes as regards ideas about this construct in this learning context.

3.1.3.4. My regular university role and pre-understandings. At the time of my study, I worked at the university as a Post Foundation Lecturer for the mandatory English undergraduate courses, English 202 and 203, at both the men's and women's campuses. This experience made me quite aware of the students' writing problems and the low state of their writing. Much work was invested to lift many students to a pass grade. As all staff are expected to participate in research and community service, I had an open door to set up my research and provide help for writing problems via an online writing SAC intervention. In my more administrative role during my research, I obtained a wider overview of numerous classes' and stakeholders' problems, yet I was always involved and grounded in a proportion of real classroom teaching myself.

I am also an official IELTS speaking and writing examiner, firstly for the IELTS exam section at the University and also, time permitting, at the main British Council section. Such fortnightly, if not weekly, work provides me awareness of the many different EFL speaking, thinking and writing problems that preparatory tertiary students and Arab people are struggling with. I have also been endeavouring to learn the Arabic language the last few years, and many of the differences between English and Arabic that can cause learning difficulties have become more apparent as a result. Also, my wide background

in working in numerous countries with L2 students has been important, as I have had to adjust curriculum and methods to specific cultures, institutions and individuals throughout this time.

3.1.3.5. Online teacher as researcher. My research specifically suited the teacher as researcher AR methodology given not just the cultural context and Arab autonomy issues but also for the online context and make up. The name of the online SAC site I constructed is, as mentioned previously, FLUACC, an acronym from "fluency" and "accuracy". Based on a Moodle learning management system, the programme was limited to a certain number of participants for a large part of two semesters. These groups could be considered my classes as they were a comfortable L2 size, which is ideally a maximum of 15 students (Horning, 2007; CCCC, 2009). I was the acting teacher-facilitator or advisor as well as the insider-researcher as per the teacher-researcher AR model. For clarity in this thesis, henceforth I will refer to my position as advisor-researcher.

FLUACC provided many resources for information, teaching and practice arranged attractively and hierarchically according to difficulty for students' benefit. Individual records of the resources accessed were kept automatically. Online lines of communication available in the form of asynchronous emails, assignment reviews, forums and instant messenger as well as synchronous chats were again automatically individually recorded, in this case word for word. These important lines of communication helped the research to be data driven as per AR while the automatic recordings also benefited the participants' development in writing and autonomy as per the teacher as researcher AR model.

3.1.3.6. Site piloting. The website had been piloted for usability twice. This means user-friendliness was established, problems were resolved and approvals were sought from a user's standpoint regarding the website's access, set-up, navigability, information, support services and tools. The first piloting was done successfully by a group of Bruneian adults as part of a hybrid EFL course in 2006. With the writing specificities for this research, the website was further successfully piloted six weeks before this research started, by a mixture of former L2 students and co-workers. In addition, during the project's two Cycles, adaptations were implemented ad-hoc when needed as part of the action research methodology adopted to constantly work for improved practices.

3.2 Research Process

The research questions, repeated below, were the foci of my methods. Their ordering evolved as part of the ongoing research, for example, there were two questions regarding the students' use and

perception of the site and the question comparing the structured and unstructured groups fell down to third place. This reordering occurred because, though the two distinct groups are clearly shown in the research diagram (Figure 3), the low numbers of students undertaking the structured part, rendered this section less important than originally planned. Also, the last question involving aspects of success gained complexity as it drew from the multiple data sources.

The rest of this methodology chapter has been divided into five main sections for clarity. First a synopsis of the research process is presented followed by an overview diagram of the dynamic research process with matching detailed descriptions (starting at 3.2.1). Then, headed by a sources diagram, there is a section for each of the data collection sources combined with the analysis procedures (3.3). Finally, smaller sections including limitations (3.4) and a methodology summary (3.5) close the chapter.

The general research question for the project is:

> How can learner autonomy and L2 writing proficiency be developed for Arab academic writing learners via an online SAC?

Specific questions are:

1. How did the participants use the online SAC environment?
2. What were the participants' perceptions of the usefulness of an online SAC for becoming an autonomous learner and a more proficient L2 writer?
3. How can a structured advisory component to an online SAC help with developing autonomous learning and written L2 language proficiency?
4. What are the main aspects affecting the success of an online SAC for developing autonomy and L2 writing proficiency?

3.2.1. Synopsis of the research process. An overview of the research process is shown in Figure 3 with an overall double iterative action research cycle emphasized. The initial step (first white box) prior to the action research was ethics approval. Following this, recruitment for Cycle 1 participants took place. Participants were divided equally into two groups, either an unstructured or structured autonomy group (first green and yellow box respectively). The structured group was to be given extra sequenced instructions as regards autonomy development as opposed to the unstructured group. At this early stage the side bars (thick grey arrows) of the diagram denote that I, in my role as insider-

researcher, began making field notes from the onset of the research process. Access was granted to all participants to the online SAC, FLUACC, where they could attain writing help at will.

Upon first access to the website, all participants were encouraged to do two initial steps, a pre-metacognitive questionnaire and pre-IELTS essay test (second green and yellow boxes). Afterward, both groups had access to many self-access resources for the next ten weeks as well as the advisor whenever needed (tall green and yellow boxes). One group was provided an additional structured autonomy section accompaniment (far right tall yellow box divided into three parts). This structured autonomy accompaniment was to extend over the entire Cycle of 10 weeks of a semester, but in both Cycles only the first phase was attempted (hence phase 2 and 3 are only dotted in). The side bars of the diagram extending around this time denote that I continued making field notes throughout.

At the end of the first 10-week Cycle, participants from both groups were encouraged to complete three final steps: post-metacognitive questionnaire, post IELTS essay and evaluation questionnaire (last green and yellow boxes). It had been planned for the structured autonomy group to additionally fill out a post self-assessment, but this did not get done (with only the initial part of this programme executed), hence the corresponding yellow box is only dotted in.

After the participants' final steps, there was a three-week planned gap for me to complete the post reflections and evaluate the whole Cycle, including all the data and to make any changes necessary (second to bottom white box). Hence, in this research the action was the whole site – from planning to execution and evaluation. It was during evaluation that the decision was made to allow returnee participants into Cycle 2 also. This is acceptable in AR when the additional time and incorporation of improvements learnt from Cycle 1 are helpful to participants and research results (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

This Cycle 2 (second page of Figure 3 research process diagram), with action involving improved adaptions, commenced with the recruitment of new participants and reentry of returnees (first green and yellow boxes). Differences and changes made between the Cycles are discussed individually in the sections that follow: 3.2, 3.2.3.4, 3.2.5, 4.3.1.2, 4.3.2, 4.4.4, 4.4.5.3, and 4.4.7. Apart from the addition of some of the Cycle 1 participants (returnees) with the new round of participants, these differences did not change the appearance of the Cycle 2 diagram in comparison to the Cycle 1. Procedures similar to Cycle 1 were followed resulting in the analyses and comparison of both Cycles.

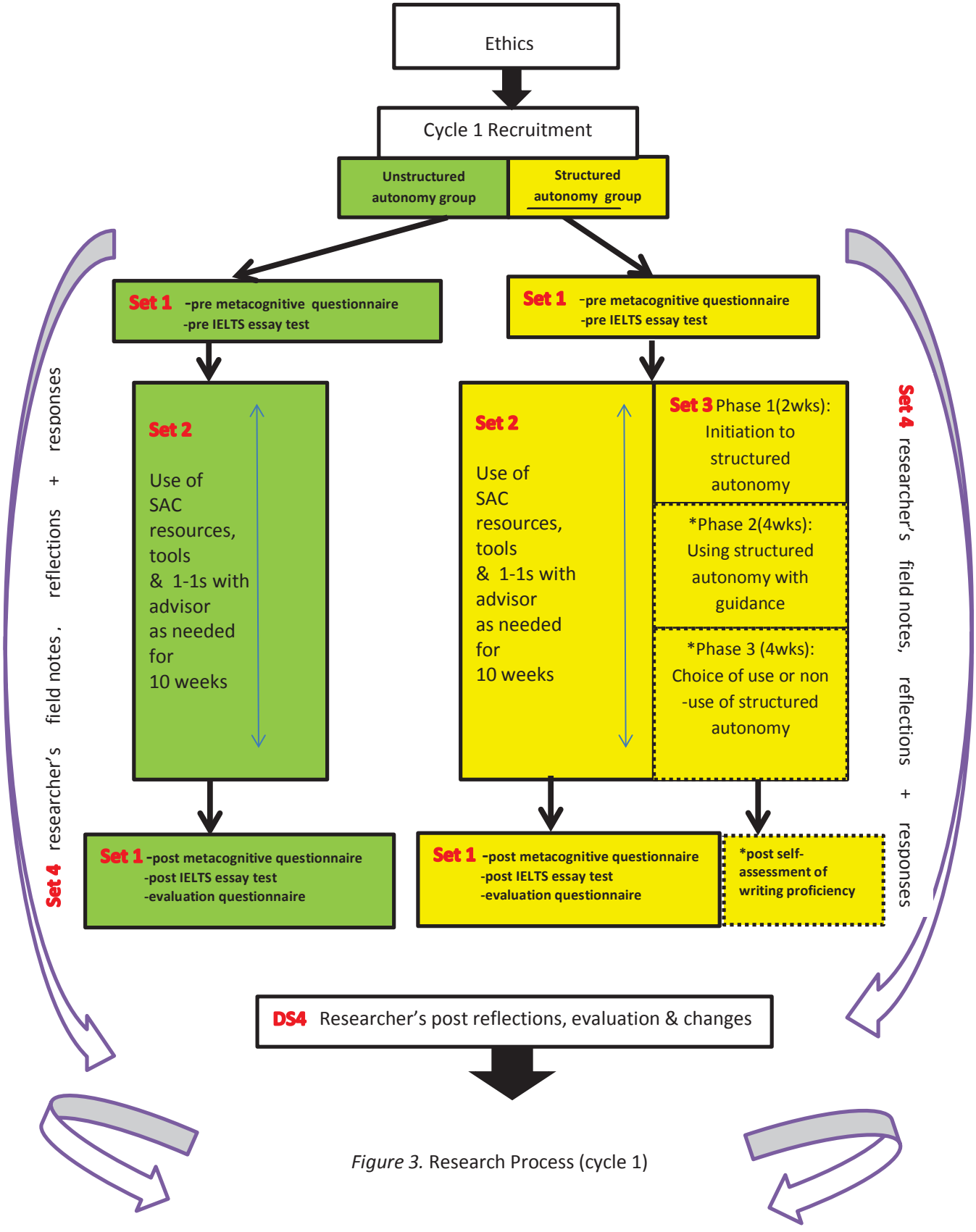
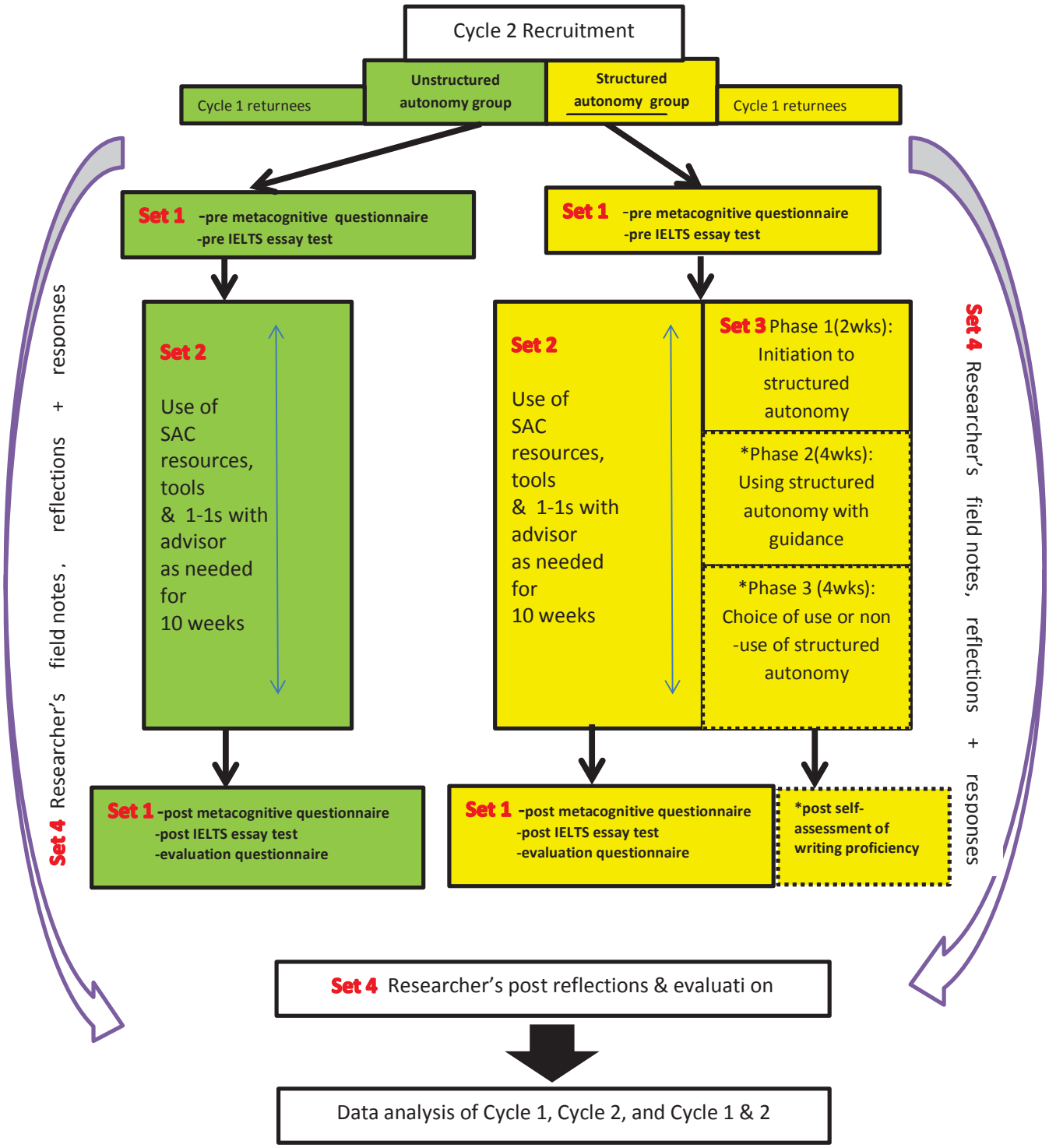


Figure 3. Research Process (cycle 1)



Set 1-4 = data sources grouped according to their part in the research process
* = these activities were planned but not actually used in research

Figure 3 continued. Research Process (cycle 2)

3.2.2. Ethics approval. The research process starts with ethics approval. Initially ethics approval was sought from the university in Qatar the research participants attended (and the advisor-researcher taught), followed by approval from Massey University. The Qatari university's Office of Academic Research gave approval to undertake this research, granting exemption from full Ethics Committee Review as members from the ethics board were satisfied with an initial Human Subjects application regarding the research project, accompanied with the various documents that would be used for my research. The Committee requested one additional form.

Ethics approval was obtained from Massey University via a full ethics application. Participants signed a written consent form after having been informed in a fully understandable manner (information was provided in their L1, Arabic) about all aspects or concerns of the study via an information sheet. Students were given the option at this stage to talk face to face with a fully briefed Arabic English lecturer (a colleague who was a native Arabic speaker) about the study if they wanted any clarification or more information.

Confidentiality of all the research data collected from the participants was assured, the recruitment procedure explained, the reporting of results would protect the participants' identities with anonymity/coded names (a letter plus a number -see Appendix D), and participants had the right to withdraw at any time (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Mackey & Gass, 2005).

The target language (English – L2) was used for reflections and questionnaires as a special case (nevertheless L1 was given as an option for these to anyone who was not comfortable with doing them in L2) because of the benefits it provides for L2 writing and the development of autonomy for the learners (Hauck & Stickler, 2006; Karlsson et al., 2007; Little, 2007; Victori, 2007). However, the metacognitive and evaluation questionnaires contained questions side by side (Arabic and English) on the same sheets (Refer Appendix B).

The advisor-researcher's emic role, which could create bias but has distinctive benefits as well, was also addressed (Dick, 1999; Nunan, 2002; McNiff, 2002; Pine, 2009; Wallace, 1998). Refer to section 3.1.3.2. My eligibility for this role was presented in section 3.1.3.4. Etic adjustments were also made, specifically, I did not allow my own existing classes to participate, did not recruit the participants directly, and used an interrater to verify the subjective pre- and post-test scoring of IELTS essay tests. Interrater reliability was checked for acceptability using the correlation coefficient (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Also, the interrater, translator (required when students wrote in Arabic) and Arabic advisor each signed a confidentiality agreement.

A mild form of deception was used as I did not inform the participants of the existence or role of the group that they were not in (whether it was the unstructured "lime" group or the structured "lemon" group). This blindness was induced so as not to upset or complicate group selection. It likewise allowed the provision of an Information sheet for each learner that remained a reasonable length by only outlining the role of the membership group instead of both groups. The extra autonomy tools and descriptions were displayed on the website for all participants as "Optional extra autonomy tools" and unique learning strategies were highlighted throughout. The unstructured group only missed the structured 1-1 chat help provided to promote the use of these tools and strategies. At the end of each cycle the existence and difference between the groups was briefly explained to both groups with an offer to contact me if they would like more information. Furthermore, the unstructured group participants were invited to contact me if they wanted to change groups for the following semester to avail themselves of the extra support that those in the structured group could receive. Section 3.2.4.3 further explains the reality of differences between the two groups as the research proceeded.

Permission to disseminate and declare findings along the way was sought, as the problem being addressed was of interest to some stakeholders at the university, and certain personnel responsible for L2 composition in Qatar, the Gulf as well as African and Asian regions. In fact, as L2 literature on this topic is very sparse but needed, an even wider audience might potentially be interested in these results.

3.2.3. Recruitment and participants. After the ethics approval, the next step in the research process was recruitment. The procedure used is described below, followed by some background about the Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 participants.

3.2.3.1. Recruitment process. Recruitment took place via advertising in several venues. A4 size advertisements were placed on the noticeboards around both the men's and women's campuses. The supervisor of the writing centres also promoted it as a new alternative writing help method for the semester. In addition, the teachers of mandatory English courses were informed regarding the research programme and, once FLUACC's capabilities were demonstrated to interested teachers, they were given guest access to advocate the site to their students if desired. No undue influential power relationship existed with me over the teachers as I was a fairly new member of the teaching staff. Student needs were the driving force because many foundation teachers had students in their classes requiring extra help to get a qualifying IELTS score (5.5) for entry into their undergraduate major, while some post foundation teachers had students in their classes who were very weak in writing and needed extra outside-class assistance. Moreover, the demands especially of the latter academic English courses,

made it normal for average students to require extra help to obtain reasonable passes with their assignments. Despite all these means of advertising, the main recruitment came via word of mouth and social media from satisfied participants.

Potential participants expressed their interest by requesting "More FLUACC info" at my university email address. By return email, I fully informed students about the project through a participant's information sheet written in Arabic with attached consent form. Consent forms were returned as email attachments or via their class teachers to my physical university mailbox by those students who wanted to go ahead with participating. An access key to FLUACC with initial instructions was then speedily sent to participants online.

The whole process used in recruiting participants for Cycle 2 was similar to that of Cycle 1, with some streamlining stemming from experience. Only the two main successful ways of advertising were used, which were distributing A4 size advertisements around the campus plus approaching a satisfied participant from the Cycle 1 to issue an invitation with recommendation via social media. The Cycle 1 instructions that were sent with the access key to participants were edited for Cycle 2 to make them more user-friendly.

3.2.3.2. Division into groups. Upon recruitment, the new participants for each Cycle were split into two groups. This was done by placing each student alternatively, in order of application, in the 'unstructured autonomy' group and the 'structured autonomy' group as per a systematic non-random method (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Though distinguished by structure in this write-up, only the terms "limes" and "lemons" were used respectively with the learners for simplicity and to construe no bias. Using two groups was especially helpful for investigating research question 3 regarding the usefulness of a structured autonomy programme provided online in developing autonomy, something hitherto unanswered in the general literature. Refer to section 3.2.2 regarding the ethics of this. Accordingly also, repeaters in Cycle 2 chose which group they wanted to be in having been enlightened regarding both groups.

3.2.3.3. Cycle 1 participants. For the action research Cycle 1, the learners participating were at the upper levels of the preparatory Foundation English courses and in the two mandatory undergraduate English writing courses. The English proficiency of these students ranged from the pre-intermediate to upper intermediate levels. At these levels, students could read instructions and express themselves in English to a reasonable extent (although an Arabic alternative was offered as well). The

Foundation students had 20 hours per week of intensive English face-to-face instruction and were seeking to gain a minimum of 5.5 IELTS score to start their undergraduate degree. Meanwhile, the undergraduate English students were each taking a compulsory three-credit English Academic Writing course of three instructional hours weekly along with four to five other undergraduate courses for their major.

Although many students applied and still more could have because there were over 2000 students fulfilling my criteria, the study limit was set at 14 participants. I anticipated that the rich data that would be created could not have been suitably analyzed in the time available if the total number of participants had been much bigger and quality was the focus of the study. Other similar studies have involved such a low number of participants. For example, Thonus (2002) and McGraw (2007) both used just 12 participants to assess, respectively, the success of academic writing sessions in a WC from participants' perspectives and the writing needs of students with reference to the quality of an OWL.

Specific demographic information was collected from the Cycle 1 participants to establish the diversity of the students. The 14 students included Qataris, Palestinians, a Mauritanian and four of undeclared nationality. All were females except one. Age was difficult to discern online, but with most foundation students and undergraduates at this university ranging from 18-24 years, I could only surmise the same.

Several females indicated they had very young children. One had no internet connection at home, and thus used FLUACC only while on campus, limiting accessibility.

3.2.3.4. Cycle 2 participants. Cycle 2 was opened to a wider spectrum of participants. This change to the initial research design resulted because, as an advisor, I had found no problem managing the range of competencies needed in Cycle 1. Some participants were returning even after completing the two mandatory English courses to work solely on their major courses, others requested to use the programme as well. The results of a more diverse representation would be more meaningful to the university.

Also, the programme had become known, by word of mouth and student social media, as a worthwhile place to get writing help. As with Cycle 1, Cycle 2 was limited to 14 new recruits, but another 9 returnees from Cycle 1 were allowed in the belief that a longer time should allow them to achieve more progress. The students also expressed a great desire to continue. Several returnees expressed interest in changing from the unstructured group to the structured group when the nature of the two groups was explained to them at the end of Cycle one. This explanation was given to them per

the Ethics Approval section so that they could avail themselves of the extra opportunity offered to the structured group in the second Cycle if desired. With the addition of the returnees, the total complement of participants for Cycle 2 was 23 (10 in unstructured group, 13 in structured group).

Regarding specific demographics of student diversity, Cycle 2 showed more diversity than Cycle 1. Participants included Qataris, Palestinians, Egyptians, a Mauritanian, a Sudanese, an Iraqi, a Syrian, a Yemeni and four of undeclared nationality. Interestingly, the proportion of Qatari does not reflect the 60% proportion of the whole university and the proportion of Palestinians was high. Also, the university in 2010 had a 3:1 gender ratio of female to male, whereas FLUACC's gender ratio was 13:1 in Cycle 1 and 5:1 in Cycle 2. The low male proportion might mean aspects where there was a gender differences were not clearly represented, for example male authoritarianism - a typical cultural aspect of the region. This Cycle 2 also included a mature student with a grown-up family preparing for her masters.

3.2.4. Both groups' use and interactions for 10 weeks. There were mainly similarities in what both groups did (see Figure 3) as explained below.

3.2.4.1. Pre questionnaire and test. Individuals from both groups were asked to fill out an initial pre-metacognitive questionnaire and a pre-IELTS essay test. In Cycle 1, the pre-metacognitive questionnaire was completed by 10 of the 14 participants (4 unstructured, 6 structured), while in the Cycle 2 group it was completed by 14 of the 23 participants (5 unstructured, 9 structured). As regards the pre-IELTS essay test, in Cycle 1 this was done by only 4 of the 14 participants (1 unstructured, 3 structured), while in Cycle 2, it was done by 12 (4 unstructured, 8 structured). With proportionally fewer unstructured participants completing these pre-tests and following pro-tests (3.2.4.4), comparison of both groups' progress for research question 3 was not as dependable as desirable.

3.2.4.2. Main ten-week phase. Aside from the pre-questionnaire and pre-essay, no other requirements were imposed upon those in the unstructured autonomy group for 10 weeks. Members had free range of FLUACC from the start and throughout a 10-week Cycle. They could access resources and tools for writing, autonomy and collaborative help. Also, they could contact me, the advisor-researcher, via 1-1 asynchronous means if they felt inclined. The structured autonomy group's members had the same freedom to all that was available to the unstructured group.

3.2.4.3. Structured autonomy group's extra structured help. In addition, the structured group was to be involved in a three-phase structured programme over the 10 weeks (as outlined in Figure 3),

after the initial pre-questionnaire and test. This structured autonomy programme for the structured group participants was summarized on FLUACC. This explanation included illustrations and hyperlinks for user friendliness and easy comprehension. Though the first phase provided for a formal sequence, subsequent adaptations and flexibility in terms of ordering, pace, and content were expected according to each participant's abilities and needs. As participants only partially completed phase one of this structure, just that completed portion is described in the following paragraph. Moreover, the structured programme was only initiated by three participants in Cycle 1 and four in Cycle 2 (a portion only of the seven and 10 structured participants in each respective Cycle).

The structured programme involved an initial 1-1 synchronous chat with me (in English). In preparation for their first chat, the structured autonomy group students were encouraged to read about and access some structured support items on FLUACC for helping to improve their learning. These items provided a "needs analysis" to help them identify their writing needs, a "strategies" explanation to know why to use and where to find appropriate ones on the site, a "language learning process diagram" presented as a flow chart to increase their understanding of the learning process, and a "goal setting" tool to enable them to address their writing needs, targeting a few goals at a time (see Appendix C for these items). In the first chat, we discussed how to learn as stemming from their past techniques, adding the items above they had read. Finally, they were encouraged to actually save the filled-in "needs analysis" and "goal setting" tools on their blog and start acting on their goals.

A second chat to discuss progress and problems from the first chat was part of the first phase of the structured programme as well. However, the second chat was only done in Cycle 2 by repeaters of Cycle 1. After this chat, these repeaters filled out fresh "needs analysis" and "goal setting" tools for Cycle 2.

3.2.4.4. Post questionnaires and tests. At the end of the 10 weeks, individuals from both groups were asked to do a post-metacognitive questionnaire, a post-IELTS essay test and an evaluation questionnaire. The first two items were to compare with the equivalent pretests (see 3.2.4.1), while the evaluation was to serve as a way of learning participants' perceptions of the usefulness of their time on FLUACC and their self-management processes. In Cycle 1, of 14 participants, 10 completed the post-metacognitive questionnaire (4 unstructured, 6 structured), 6 wrote the post-IELTS essay test (3 unstructured, 3 structured), and 10 filled in the evaluation questionnaire (4 unstructured, 6 structured). In Cycle 2, with 23 participants, 15 completed the post-metacognitive questionnaire (3 unstructured, 12

structured), 4 took the post-IELTS essay test (1 unstructured, 3 structured), and 16 filled in the evaluation questionnaire (4 unstructured, 12 structured).

3.2.5. My formative field notes and post reflections. As advisor-researcher, I took field notes continuously throughout each Cycle, including observations, reflections and responses both on specific individuals as well as on general trends. These notes included comparisons, points of interest, discrepancies, evaluations and overviews according to activity, both quantitative and qualitative. They also involved responses in the form of minor adjustments on the website, wording, resources and methods as dictated by participant need (see section 4.4.7).

After each 10 week Cycle, there was time for me to reflect on and evaluate the whole preceding Cycle with all the formative and final data in hand. At the end of Cycle 1, I could make any changes necessary for greater effectiveness before the new recruitment and Cycle 2 started. Changes for Cycle 2 involved bigger adjustments to the learning supports, resources, and methods involving quality and quantity than during Cycle 1, as well as refinements to the foci of the research questions.

Some adjustments were pragmatic. The first steps (pre-tests) were more emphasized on FLUACC to encourage more students to complete them, as this had been a problem in Cycle 1. Removing the pre-IELTs essay test was considered as most students were finding this too burdensome to do when they needed so much essential help with their university assignments. However, it had proved an unexpected stimulating autonomy aid to some students, so it was left in. Checking writing proficiency progress less intrusively, by comparing students' drafts of their first assignments to the drafts of their last assignments of the Cycle, was implemented to aid credibility.

I also sent additional proactive messages during Cycle 2 since students had reacted positively when this was tested in a limited manner in Cycle 1. Returnees were allowed as participants in Cycle 2, as mentioned previously and I also made the decision to open the SAC up to an unrestricted range of students for extended and more useful results. I considered removing the structured group programme option because of the low response in engaging it in Cycle 1. However, the results from Cycle 1 from the few participants who had undertaken it had been very positive and some returning students wanted to change to this group when informed about it. Nevertheless, with students having shown unexpected interest in the asynchronous 1-1s, I had to consider refining the methods.

The research on the structured part of the programme was thus limited to only RQ 3, downgraded in terms of priority as, in reality, it had not become as dominant a feature as projected in Figure 3. The effect on students in reacting to the research, changing the emphasis to suit their needs

and perspectives, assumed greater importance, as expressed in RQ 1 and 2. Speculating on the success factors whether positive or negative would be the multifaceted final question, RQ 4 which still involved combing and integrating the data for inhibitors and catalysts, expected and unexpected – where emergent data could be confirmed and supplemented in Cycle 2.

At the end of Cycle 2, comparison of both Cycles was made, with future changes speculated. The action research composed of iterative Cycles, reflective time, responsive changes during each Cycle and between Cycles, evolved both in terms of theory and research questions. Teacher as researcher AR is seen in the insider-researcher and the dynamics of ensuring participants' perceptions were collected with their needs and interests paramount. Below are the details about the data sources collected during the research process and their analyses.

3.3 Data Collection Sources and Analyses

Situated in a learning management system (LMS), FLUACC provided many potential sources from which to draw data. However, only the 14 data sources which were specifically suitable for the project's aim were used, grouped in sets according to the main parts of each research process Cycle. Sets 1-4 are shown in Figures 3 and 4, indicating where the data sources come from.

A descriptive heading for each Set is displayed in Figure 4 creating: Set 1 "unstructured and structured groups pre and post items"; Set 2 "unstructured and structured groups' use"; Set 3 "structured group's structured use" and Set 4 "researcher". Set 1 includes the pre- and post-data sources from both groups of participants. Set 2 encompasses interaction types, resources and tools available to both groups during each 10-week Cycle, with external assessments comprising the specific data shared by students during interactions. In Set 3, the interaction types and tools exclusively available to the structured autonomy group are classified. Finally, Set 4 comprises my field note records as "researcher", both formative and post. Each data source in these sets is uniquely identified by a letter of the alphabet (a-n) for clarity.

However, though Figure 4 is able to display all the data sources in a simple manner, there is a complexity regarding how the different sources fed into the four different research questions, represented by RQ 1-4 in Figure 4. The findings from data sources overlap according to the research question they were designed to, or inherently helped, answer.

Triangulation of the different data sources also enriched and gave depth and rigour to the findings as is normal with action research. Quantitative and qualitative data were selected to complement each other. Thus, all these RQs used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data with

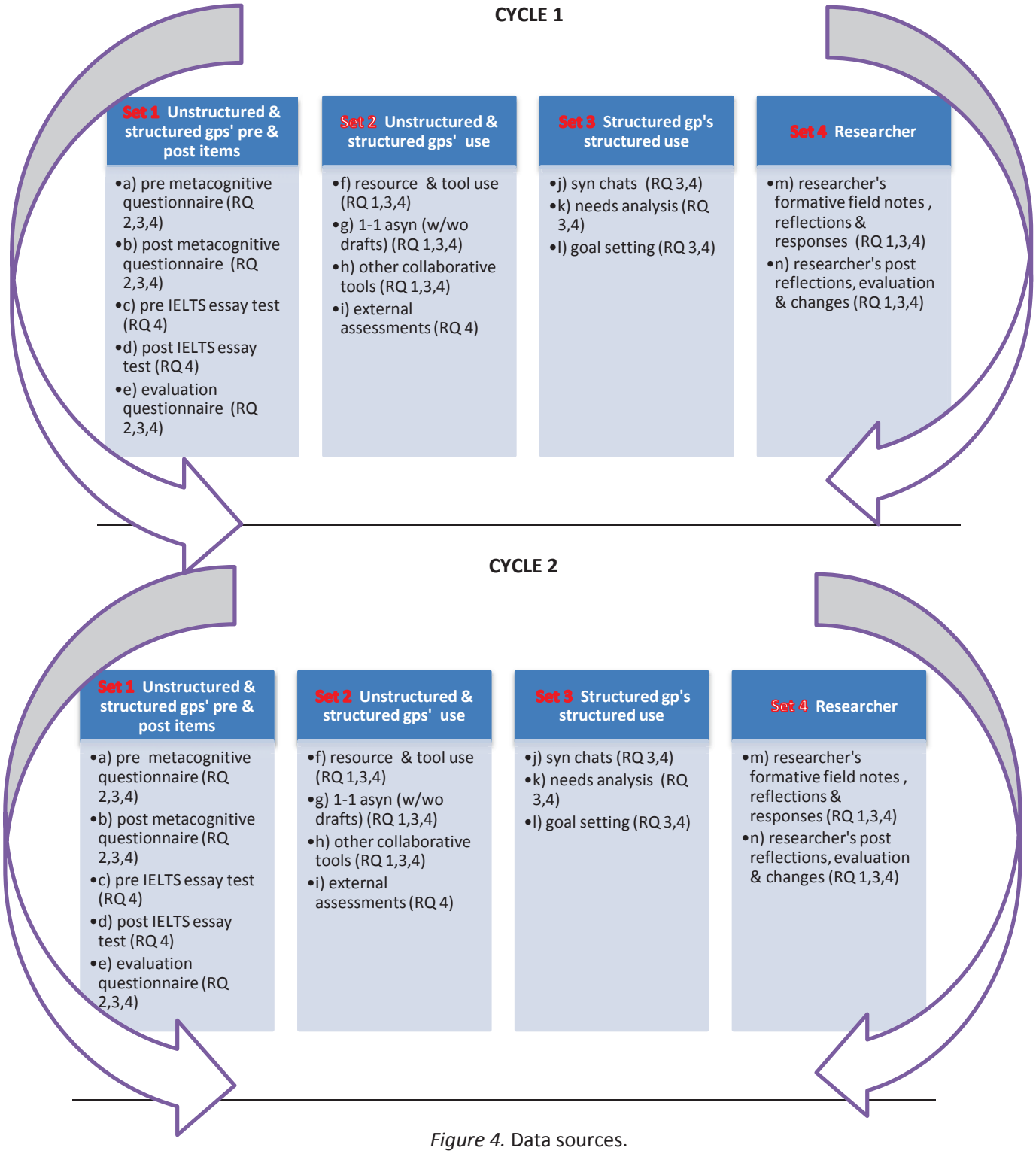


Figure 4. Data sources.

particular qualitative emphasis in RQ 3 and 4. In fact, the sheer amount of qualitative data necessitated culling to ensure manageability, as explained below.

A complex back and forward checking took place among the data sources during analyses for each question, which is typical in action research (Creswell, 2005). All the data sources were combined to answer RQ4 and many were used for RQ1. This process will be described in fuller detail in 3.3.5.

Secondary sources (o) and (p) were created where individual case summaries (o) were formed then divided into nine appropriate content analysis themes (p). These (o) were not case studies but rather a simple way of analyzing the data, where each participant's activities, many or few, were summarized methodically. Then, to analyze these case summaries individually and collectively, content analysis was performed for (p).

The details of each other data source (a-n) and their analyses are described below according to Figure 4 in progression from Set 1 to Set 4. Each data source is detailed overtly, naming the categories: aim, how, data type, extra details, participant completion, analysis and credibility. The RQ/s addressed by each data source is/are placed alongside the aims' description.

3.3.1 Set 1: Unstructured and structured groups pre and post sources. These are the data sources coming from the initial and final steps which all participants from both groups were asked to complete at the beginning and end of each Cycle. In the section below I explain these steps, which included the data sources: the pre- and post-metacognitive questionnaires (a, b), the pre and post IELTS essay tests (c, d) and the evaluation questionnaire (e).

3.3.1.1 Pre and post metacognitive questionnaires (a, b)

- Aims: To ascertain what the participants' perceptions of the different aspects of their own metacognition were. To compare how these perceptions had changed over the duration of the Cycle. The latter is an indirect way of gaining participants' perceptions of the usefulness of the online SAC for developing autonomy, leaving room for uncertainty. (RQs 2, 3, 4)
- How: Participants were encouraged to fill out on the website a seven prompt questionnaire as one of the first and last steps of the project (the same questionnaire each time – see Appendix B).
- Data type: Seven statements were turned into questions, rated via a 5 point Likert scale where 1 = "strongly disagree", 5 = "strongly agree" and 3 was neutral. The statements covered the students' planning, monitoring, and evaluation of learning; as well as their understanding of themselves as learners and their capability of learning without a teacher. The highest score

would indicate participants felt very positive about their metacognition capability, whereas the lowest would indicate they felt very negative and incapable.

- Extra details: The questionnaire was a modified version of that used by Cotterall & Murray (2009), with some modifications for focusing wholly on writing (rather than learning English generally) and removal of three statements that focused on identity rather than metacognition. The English and Arabic versions were on the left and the right of the page respectively. The questionnaire was user friendly in terms of time to answer (5 minutes) and having a low number of questions of the closed type. The limitation of such a questionnaire is that respondents may vary in their degree of caution when they must choose between "agree" and "strongly agree" (McDonough & McDonough, 2005). Using a small number of questions was intended to counter this skew to some measure, with participants probably remaining alert rather than getting tired.
- Participant completion: In Cycle 1, 9 of the 14 participants completed both pre- and post-questionnaires (64%). In Cycle 2, 9 out of 23 (39%) completed with 4 of these being returnee participants, therefore the same students. The low completion rate in Cycle 2 was because some students initially joined the project in an urgent state of writing needs from class assignments, wanting immediate help rather than undertaking the website's initial research steps including the pre-questionnaire. This meant their post-questionnaires could not be compared in the data analysis.
- Analysis: A table was made of individuals' answers to each question using a Likert scale 1-5. This showed individuals' perceived level of pre and post metacognition for each aspect plus individuals' differences in these levels –the latter indirectly indicated how useful the SAC environment had been to a student to aid development of metacognition, a main aspect of autonomy. Descriptive statistics via mean scores were used to show this indication for the total number of students who completed both pre- and post-questionnaires for each Cycle as well as per group (unstructured and structured). Bar graphs were then used to represent these statistics.
- Credibility: Comparison with other quantitative and qualitative measures could be made, including with evaluation questionnaires, 1-1 interactions with advisor, and FLUACC use (see, for example, findings sections 4.22, 4.23, 4.41, 4.42, 4.43).

3.3.1.2 Pre and post IELTS essay tests (c, d)

- Aim: To gauge and encourage writing proficiency development including accuracy of students' writing over the 10 weeks of a Cycle. (RQ 4)
- How: Writing proficiency development was measured via a comparison at the end of each Cycle of the pre and post 250-word IELTS essay tests administered as one of the first and last steps on the website. Essay prompts were about different social issues and varied in type according to the three main IELTS types. Prompts were changed for Cycle 2 for validity since there were repeater students in Cycle 2. Since essay prompts could cause variable results, this effect was lessened by choosing topics relevant to Qatari residents, such as money spent on international sports competitions and reading books versus using other media to get information. Students would hopefully value the holistic score and any feedback from these essays. Student responses upheld this goal in general but with the pressure and difficulty of their course written assignments on top of this essay, many considered the essay a burden especially compared to the quick metacognitive questionnaire (see 4.4.7 and the supplementary analysis done in 4.4.5.2 to aid measurement of writing proficiency development).

  Also, a simple 100-word error count (syntactical, mechanical and lexical errors) on a random body paragraph of each essay was conducted with a score out of 100. Although a whole essay error count followed by an error rate calculation out of 100 would have been more reliable (Nation, 2005), the smaller portion was chosen for speed and so that students were not overwhelmed by the number of errors (Rilling, 2005). The error count and feedback on 100 words for the pre-essay morphed into a quick, useful way to gauge error needs of mechanical and grammatical nature whereby I could encourage participants to set goals and use resources on FLUACC to see improvement. Feedback on major or frequent errors could be provided. Adjusting the action in relation to emergent awareness (responsiveness) like this is a feature of action research (Dick, 1993).
- Data type: A score on a scale of 1 to 9 for each essay was given (equating to the IELTS proficiency levels known by students) but also strength and weakness comments regarding the four areas that made up the score -task achievement, coherence and cohesion, lexical knowledge and accuracy. The 100-word error count was accompanied by a summary of repetitive errors that if targeted for explicit learning could raise a participant's level of accuracy considerably. Errors were coded on the essay so a student could see where they were occurring. Feedback was given regarding high order concern problems and patterns of some

low order concern problems thought to be in their Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). This was done in the form of comments linked to associated text and end summaries. Participants' responses and what they did because of the feedback became additional data recorded in 1-1 asynchronous interactions (g) and my field notes (m).

- Extra details: IELTS is an international high stakes exam. Students were familiar with its format as it was used as an entry level test to the undergraduate courses and also extensively taught in the Foundation program. The IELTS essay test is a standard 250-word essay, whose rubrics are available on the public website to help with standardizing evaluations. In this study, an interrater, who was a colleague familiar with the IELTS marking scale, also scored the essays. Acceptable ratings were verified using a correlation coefficient (Mackey & Gass, 2005).
- Participant completion: Only 3 participants from Cycle 1 and 4 from Cycle 2 completed both a pre and post essay test for writing development comparison. However, the pre-essay with feedback was written by 4 participants in Cycle 1 and by 12 in Cycle 2.
- Analysis: A table compared individuals' pre and post IELTS scores and their pre and post 100 word sample error scores. Descriptive statistics via mean scores from both Cycles' participants combined were deduced. Bar graphs showed individual and mean writing development over the time of the project (see Figures 20 & 21). With more participants taking just the pre-essay test, their perspectives and reactions regarding the feedback were captured in 1-1 interactions (g), logs (f) and my field notes (m) as well as in the individuals' case summaries (o) and the content analysis themes (p).
- Credibility: Triangulation was used to help support the findings. Rich data with "careful and detailed descriptions" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 162) can help to substantiate the value of the results. In this study, these forms mentioned were used along with the feedback regarding pre-essays. Furthermore, various draft texts submitted by students in 1-1s verified improvement and some participants sat the official IELTS exam.

3.3.1.3 Evaluation questionnaire (e)

- Aim: To ascertain participants' perspectives of FLUACC for its usefulness, support for developing writing proficiency, and the self-management part of autonomy. (RQs 2, 3, 4)
- How: Participants were encouraged to fill out this questionnaire as one of the last steps on the website after each ten-week cycle. See Appendix B for the questionnaire.

- Data type: A 5-point Likert scale was used for the 9 closed questions and there were 4 open questions, the latter being mostly contingency questions to gain more useful information regarding a closed answer response. Responses to the closed questions ranged from "yes, absolutely" to the last being respectively 4 - "no" and 5 - "I don't know." 3 was not neutral but rather positive representing "a little." One of the closed questions used a 5-point Likert scale of 1 - "not at all useful" to 5 - "very useful."
- Extra details: The questionnaire was a modified version of that used and validated by Reinders (2007a) in a similar study but for a physical SAC in the four language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing), and with face-to-face advising. In contrast, my research involved an online SAC, for writing skills specifically, and with online advising. Therefore, I shortened the length by over half, leaving out irrelevant, repetitive and some lengthy questions. Response rate and quality of responses are best for questionnaires that are short so that fatigue is not a factor. It is also more likely that each question is answered thoughtfully, and short questions are less likely to be read ambiguously (Fanning, 2005). Succinctness and simplicity is needed online as complexity is not tolerated by participants (Miller-Cochran & Rodrigo, 2006). Also, I omitted a special section about advisory sessions included in Reinders'(2007a) original questionnaire, choosing rather that students could voluntarily identify such sessions as being useful with no special weighting on such sessions above any other support mechanism. Additions to the questionnaire were an Arabic translation which was placed beside the English version, on the same page, that had an initial explanation to gain demographic knowledge of students' level of English, nationality and first language. With the whole questionnaire fitting on three pages, only four questions being open, and being administered at the relaxing end of a semester after exams, it should not have been burdensome to the participants.
- Participant completion: For Cycle 1, 10 out of the 14 participants completed it, while in Cycle 2, 16 of the 23 did.
- Analysis: A table was prepared using the individuals' answers to each closed question in Likert scale number form 1-5 for each Cycle. Descriptive statistics of the mean scores of participants were calculated for each question. Bar graphs represented these statistics (see Figures 11 & 12). One of the closed questions checking "frequency of site use" used a 4-point Likert scale, so this was not included in the graphs to avoid skewing results. Instead results to this question are simply commented on after the analysis. Two participants who answered the questionnaires had not used the site, so their answer to the open question regarding why they had not were

taken into account rather than their answers to the closed questions (since they could not answer the latter properly without using the site). The self-management questions (5-9, 11, 12) were cross-tabulated to reveal different strengths and weaknesses such as trying new strategies and assessing one's own progress.

- Credibility: The credibility of the self-management question results was increased by comparison to the metacognitive questionnaire scores (a, b). Answers to open questions (2, 4, 10, 13) were correlated according to question. Closed questions 1, 3, and 9 were validated by corresponding open contingency questions 2, 4 and 10. Triangulation offsets separate quantitative and qualitative weaknesses and accentuates convergences and divergences (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Other quantitative and qualitative data were compared from the 1-1 interactions with the advisor, and the use of FLUACC.

3.3.2. Set 2: Unstructured & structured groups' use. Both groups could access FLUACC freely over the 10-week Cycle. The AR action was the implementation of the website. As such, the elements participants made use of on the site became data source components, including the non-collaborative resources and tools (f), asynchronous interactions with the advisor (g) and other collaborative tools (h). Each of these items was to aid autonomy and writing development. Their effectiveness would be associated with how often they were used, how long they were used and what students learnt from them during this time.

3.3.2.1 Resource & tool use (f)

- Aim: To aid autonomy and writing development. To evaluate the time spent, frequency and nature of use that participants made of various non-collaborative aids (no human contact) on the website. To identify resource and tool effectiveness for autonomy and writing development. (RQs 1, 3, 4)
- How: The LMS automatically kept a record and displayed what each participant had been using.
- Data type: Logs of time individuals spent on site; the kinds of resources and tools on the site they visited or frequented for aid, such as grammar help, thesis statement formation, electronic paper raters or feedback.
- Extra details: As the advisor and designer of the Learner Management System FLUACC, I had administrative access to the platform, with the ability to check each participant's log, and with the condensed or detailed view of the resource and tool usage records that were automatically

recorded on the system. I checked these at least every third day, never noticeably intruding on the participants. I had access as well to the final logs and records in the documentation regarding each participant. In addition, I took offline notes of regular occurrences and discrepancies, and also cumulative facts and interpretations every 2-3 weeks, as part of the formative evaluation overview of the researcher (m & n – data sources described later in section 3.3.4). It was helpful to gain this perspective as sometimes modifications could be implemented to allow the subsequent Cycle elements to work better.

- Participant use: In Cycle 1, 12 of the 14 participants used resources and tools, while in Cycle 2, 20 out of 24 did.
- Analysis: A "website action" table was used to record individuals' final logs for each Cycle (Appendix D), to note the total time spent accessing non-collaborative aids. This time was compared among individuals and some descriptive statistics created by calculating what percentage of users made "little," "appreciable" and "quite extensive" use of the website for such aid. Also, what students were doing with their time was revealed by tracing individuals' activities on their computerized, full reports. The same table of logs also recorded the number of times the other elements, 1-1 asynchronous, and other collaborative tools, were used. This table allowed generalizations and discrepancies to be identified. Also, it was easy to ascertain how each/all participant(s) had used the online SAC environment quantitatively with regard to the different elements, compare the various participants' use, and determine a participant's retention (continued use of site).
- Credibility: Triangulation from student perspective via evaluation questionnaire (e), 1-1 asynchronous (g) and synchronous chats (j) and researcher perspective via field notes and reflections (m, n).

3.3.2.2 One to one asynchronous (with/without drafts) (g)

- Aim: To give individual advisory sessions to foster autonomy and promote development in writing proficiency. To notice how these were being used and to consider the effectiveness of these. (RQs 1, 3, 4)
- How: The student had two ways for asking and receiving help asynchronously from the advisor regarding writing needs, via emails and using the site's assignment review tool (where the advisor and student could view and review a specific student's written text as an opened document). Email interactions sometimes involved just questions and answers about a

student's specific writing assignment, but most frequently the student's text involved was attached as part of a draft or a whole draft. Comments could be written before, alongside or after the text as well as specific changes/needs shown within the text. Emails were activated from the website but once this link was established, many accessed further emailing directly from their email accounts as needed. These were tabulated and counted as part of FLUACC activity, being directly related to the function of a SAC.

- Data type: The full transcript record of these interactions and dates, with the drafts in their various states of revision saved automatically (as emails and site assignment postings).
- Extra details: These asynchronous advisory sessions reflected an openness to discover the individuals' progress regarding autonomy, using the strong version of autonomy as per Smith (2003), and acknowledged reactive as well as proactive forms, according to Littlewood (1996). These provided terms of analysis as well. A balancing act was sought between the students' writing concerns and autonomy development, leaning more towards the newer L2-friendlier stance and philosophy of some WCs and OWLs, with an advisor who could eclectively change hats as needed (Bruce & Raforth, 2004; Lefort, 2010; Thonus, 1993; Williams & Severino, 2004). At the end of the semester some unstructured post interviews (unplanned as regarding specific questions) took place via email as/after students posted their evaluations. These happened fairly naturally as students contacted me to thank me and/or to ask for inclusion in the next semester. The few questions I asked applied specifically to their experience, fitting in with the normal kind of communication used throughout. In retrospect, there would have been value in data checking, with greater understanding of the reasons for choices and confirmation or negation of my assumptions. Students generally gave permission via a check-box in the evaluation questionnaire. However, what the students voluntarily noted as appreciated and needful had great and more immediate value.
- Participant use: In Cycle 1, asynchronous interactions with the advisor were used by 10 of the 14 participants, while in Cycle 2 this ratio was 21 out of 24. This compares .71 to .88 respectively, indicating participant use was greater in cycle 2. Cycle 2 included repeaters who had previously made good use of the asynchronous interactions (n=7), so this result is expected.
- Analysis: The tables (Appendix D) recorded the number of 1-1 asynchronous interactions per participant plus the number of full texts discussed (separate extracts and drafts relating to the same text were counted only as one text). The quantities of interactions and text assistance were compared by individuals and some descriptive statistics were calculated as the percentage

of users interacting for writing help and the percentage interacting at various rates. The analysis of the nature of the interaction narratives, composition of drafts and use of feedback was interpreted via case summaries and content analysis.

- Credibility: Triangulation using the quantitative and qualitative methods above. Multiple interactions with most participants. Other data sources including the evaluation questionnaire (e) and advisor-researcher's notes (m, n).

3.3.2.3 Other collaborative tools (h)

- Aim: To encourage collaboration and community in multiple ways for the development of autonomy and writing. To notice the use and effectiveness of these tools. (RQs 1, 3, 4)
- How: Use of forums, instant messaging, blogs and profiles.
- Data type: These were automatically recorded as tools in a learner management system and stored on FLUACC in full transcript.
- Extra details: Forums included asynchronous discussions that could be started by students or the advisor on each main topic on the website. Another unique forum was just for social conversation. A "news" forum could only be activated by me to send messages via email to all the students registered on the website as well as being recorded on the site. Also, individual's blogs could be made public or kept private, with the default being private, to support reflective and evaluative autonomy, yielding much pedagogical data if made public (McDonough & McDonough, 2005). Unfortunately, except for a fleeting sharing with me by a couple of participants, the student blogs were kept private. Student profiles were entirely voluntary, with a space for sharing a picture, something about oneself and one's interests. If a profile was filled out, it was there for all participants to view. Finally, in each of the Cycles, one or two students came to visit me face to face, which was unplanned. The visits are recorded in a retrospective summary in my field notes, made shortly after each incidence.
- Participant use: In Cycle 1, forums were used by 1, profiles by 1 and face to face by 1 of the 14 participants; while in Cycle 2 forums were used by 1, profiles by 4 and face to face by 2 of the 23 participants.
- Analysis: The tables (Appendix D) recorded the number and kind of these collaborative tools used per participant. These were compared for individuals and overall. The nature and composition of use were analysed individually (since there were few) but also via case

summaries and content analysis. The few blogs that were made public were associated with Set 3 data sources below.

- Credibility: Triangulation via other data sources including metacognitive questionnaires (a, b), evaluative questionnaire (e), 1-1 asynchronous (g), synchronous chats (j), and advisor researcher notes (m, n).

3.3.2.4 External assessments (i)

- Aim: To confirm writing proficiency achievement and even autonomy development. (RQ 4)
- How: Students' assignments and essays were evaluated by their course lecturers (whose scoring was moderated using set rubrics), or in the case of official IELTS exams by official paid examiners (who are monitored and re-standardized regularly).
- Data type: Grades, percentages, feedback in the form of comments, and official IELTS scores reported by the students.
- Extra details: Apart from the pre- and post-IELTS essay tests, I did not grade the written work by the students when giving them feedback during the Cycles, but students often shared the final marks for their assignments, essays, courses or the official outside IELTS exam as part of their asynchronous interactions. Such marks may confirm to students their own autonomous endeavours and work on writing proficiency, motivating them further (Reinders & Lázaro, 2007b).
- Participants shared: 15 from over both Cycles.
- Analysis: These were included in the researcher's field notes, case summaries and content analysis and offered an objective perspective on students' attainment and indirectly FLUACC's usefulness compared to the more subjective data from student and advisor perspectives (triangulation).

3.3.3. Set 3: Structured group's structured use. A supplementary structured autonomy fostering program on the website with specific elements was open only to the participants in the structured autonomy group. As previously, the AR action was the implementation of the website. The elements participants utilized, whose aim was to encourage autonomy and writing development, became data source components. Those elements actually used as data sources comprised of synchronous chats (j), a needs analysis (k), and a goal setting template (l).

3.3.3.1 Synchronous chats (j)

- Aim: To provide initial individual advisory sessions in writing autonomy in a structured way. These were to make participants aware of the direction, purpose, tools and methods. To assess the use and effectiveness of these sessions. (RQs 3, 4)
- How: Use of synchronous written chat tool on FLUACC.
- Data type: Each advisory session was automatically saved as a scripted dialogue on the site with the total number of interactions per participant per session given also. These data provided a very accurate source for evaluating the coverage and effectiveness of the sessions.
- Extra details: The structured nature of these sessions was already discussed in prior section 3.2.4.3. The planned advisory sessions were based on the Helsinki University model developed from over 10 years of continual action research with three initial and two monitoring sessions (Karlsson et al., 2007). However, I also incorporated the "strong autonomy" model (Smith, 2003) and made situational adjustments for sensitivity to individuality, cultural background and inherent autonomy. Some adaptations took place because the electronic medium presented differences compared to F2F delivery. Most modifications involved succinctness, visual aids and simplicity, as complex instructions/long texts are not easily tolerated by students online (Miller-Cochran & Rodrigo, 2006). In some F2F SACs, mandatory initiation sessions have been given by advisors prior to students being allowed to use a SAC (Davis, 2004), but I immediately provided the same freedom to the structured autonomy students to use the website, as the unstructured group, for motivation, familiarization, development of rapport and for me to view their inherent autonomy. These insights compensated for a F2F session. When the learners were more settled in using FLUACC, the initial chats took place. After the synchronous session, learners completed a needs analysis and a goal setting template.
- Participant use: Three from Cycle 1 and four from Cycle 2.
- Analysis: The tables (Appendix D) were used to record the number of these synchronous chats per participant and the student: advisor contributions for each chat. The latter could hint at the type of relationship in terms of balance of power. However, the main data from the interaction were in the transcripts and any field notes I made during or after each chat. These were analysed further via case summaries and content analysis. Finally, some descriptive statistics were compared on the structured versus the unstructured group as regards the use of the environment, and answers to the metacognitive and evaluation questionnaires. These

comparisons were made to identify any differences that the extra structured aid might have effectuated on its participants.

3.3.3.2 Needs analysis form (k)

- Aim: To help participants identify their writing needs and therefore be aware of possible goals. To assess the use and effectiveness of this form. (RQs 3, 4)
- How: The aim was explained to participants in their initial chats. They were instructed to mark any areas they needed help with and, among those, identify one or two areas they needed help with the most. The form was then to be saved by students and uploaded on their blog.
- Data type: The needs analysis form was based on the university's Writing Center's referral form, essentially a checklist of writing needs broken into upper order (writing skills) and lower order (grammar, vocabulary and mechanics) ones. It covered writing needs representing those problems which students of the university and of the participants' levels often had trouble with. The individual's needs could easily be seen. See Appendix C.
- Extra details: Though intended to be used autonomously by students, guidance at first from the advisor might be needed so that the identified needs might be addressed. The form could be revisited again when the one or two of the greatest needs were surpassed, allowing other needs to have special attention. Many of these needs matched the FLUACC layout of hierarchical topics and subtopics. Thus, once their needs were identified, the participants could easily reference the helpful resources on the website.
- Participant use: Two from each of Cycle 1 and 2.
- Analysis: The tables (Appendix D) record the students who used the needs analysis form. These forms, the synchronous chat transcripts, and the field notes I made during or after each chat, contained the evidence of how each needs analysis was implemented. Evidence of participants acting on these needs is part of the next source's use.

3.3.3.3 Goal setting template (l)

- Aim: To help participants set and achieve their writing goals. To assess the use and effectiveness of the template. (RQs 3, 4)
- How: The aim of the template and how to use it was explained to participants in their initial chats. It was referred to as "Goal Setting and Getting form" to remind them of its intended use. Once filled out online, it was to be saved and uploaded onto their blog. The template was a

simple three step form with accompanying dates for them to note: 1) their next target(s); 2) how well they achieved them; 3) what they had learned about themselves and how they learn. See Appendix C. Student record-keeping encourages reflective autonomy (Karlsson et al., 2007). Thus, the template could be revisited overtime and another one used after satisfactory attainment of the first goal(s).

- Data type: An individual would need to share his/her blog in order for his goal-setting record to be seen.
- Extra details: This is an important autonomous activity that might need advisor guidance at first. The template was based on one of a number of trialled examples used with the Common European Framework of Reference and the European Language Portfolio (Little & Simpson, 2003) – internationally recognized goal setting and achievement templates. A free form blog could be used by students instead if they preferred, once they had got the idea of setting specific goals.
- Participant use: Two from Cycles 1 and 2.
- Analysis: The tables (Appendix D) recorded who used the goal setting template. The participant templates and the field notes I made during or after each chat contained evidence of how these were used.

3.3.4. Set 4: Researcher. As advisor-researcher, I took continuous field notes including reflections and evaluations throughout each Cycle. Finally, after each 10-week Cycle, I made post reflections and an evaluation of the whole Cycle and at the end, the combined Cycles. All this correlates with my role in action research and as an advisor-researcher.

3.3.4.1 Formative field notes, reflections and responses (m)

- Aim: To provide an insider's narrative of events, observations, summaries, problems, reflections and interpretations of what was happening on the website and with participants. (RQs 1, 3, 4)
- How: As the advisor-researcher, I could view all the data as it was produced. From the time of recruitment and usually daily through the 10 weeks of each Cycle, I kept handwritten chronologically dated field notes in exercise books that grew in number over the research (5x100 pages). Observations of and reflection on the action on the website were on-going. Major evaluation overviews and interpretations were made every 2-3 weeks, or more frequently when needed.

- Data type: The entries varied in length depending on how busy the website was. Notes were taken on each participant who used FLUACC each day using their coded name (for privacy as described in Appendix D) as a subheading. Notes were usually written as summaries because full details of the resources and tools used were automatically recorded on the system. The students' synchronous and asynchronous 1-1s plus draft attachments and my feedback (triangulation) were also summarized. Sometimes a direct quote accented a point or direction well, in which case it was entered in the notes in full. I tried to be candid and open to all the information without judging anything as useless. Habits and discrepancies were recorded; for example: "A3 accessing every day," "T1 seems to do nothing when on site." Intermingled with these summaries yet distinguishable from them were my thoughts and interpretations of incidents, especially regarding the study's themes of autonomy and writing support. These two constructs were the focal points and observations about them were recorded and reflected in my custom-made system (Mackey & Gass, 2005). This type of continuous critical reflection is part of the responsiveness and research in action research (Dick, 2000). Cumulative data, meaning building on what had gone before, were interpreted in increased depth and range. Some entries, mostly latterly, included emerging patterns and growth. Any changes made to the website or the way of doing things were noted too along with reasons.
- Extra details: Diaries or field notes are often used in teacher as researcher AR. These rich data are considered "important introspective tools" (Nunan, 2002, p.118), providing insights into what is happening and the learning processes which might not be obtained in other ways. Introspection involves a very close relation with what is going on – "a getting under the skin" and picking up "psychological, social and affective factors" (McDonough & McDonough, 2005, p. 135). Though some would call this too subjective, as the insider-researcher is influencing and being influenced by the research, the triangulation sources are strong, being the exact, automated exact records of specific actions and interactions. These records were checked before, during, and after taking notes. When records were checked after, the notes were adjusted to reflect the recorded facts. Reflection and interpretation are the expected, constant staples of the research part of action research coming from an interpretative constructivist, critical perspective.
- Analysis: The data analysis strategies of the notes involved the continuous reflection and responsiveness of action research, correlated with the contextual exploratory nature of the project, the copious qualitative and quantitative data, and the many data sources. I did much

mulling in the form of informal non-linear steps which Maxwell (2005) described as " that reading and thinking about …[all the various data] developing coding categories and applying these to your data, and analysing narrative structure and contextual relationships …all important types of data analysis" (p. 96). The query "What's going on?" is always the main thrust of data analysis, but also because of action research "How can I make this more effective?" drove the strategies. This process culminated in utilizing the case summaries and content analyses as best suited for interpreting such mass data (3.3.5.1 & 3.3.5.2).

- Credibility: Since I was the advisor-researcher in the project, there is no denying the inherent bias. Objectivity is nearly impossible. Wells (2010) names the greatest obstacle as "resisting the success narrative.. [where an inside researcher] is inclined to create a picture that ignores flaws and highlights ...[the research's] advantages." (p. 88). This narrative may be tempting to believe, but it is obviously ethically problematic. What I did to stay grounded was to: daily record the data aligned to automatic sources of direct actions (such as use of resources and content of emails); include the discrepancies, include individuals' experience and immediate and long term goals; and continue discussing the evolving situation with my supervisors.

3.3.4.2. Post reflections, evaluation and changes (n)

- Aim: To have an insider's narrative of overall successes and problems on site and with participants. Changes and adjustments could then be made accordingly. (RQs 1, 3, 4)
- How: As all the data collection for each Cycle came to a standstill with the closing of the website (although just for a few weeks between Cycles), I made further reflections and evaluations, with the privilege of being an insider. Since I had no everyday SAC business to attend to at the same time, I was able to undertake more objective reflection coming from a critical theory perspective. As per the formative reflections, I recorded much as handwritten dated field notes under categories of students' coded names, autonomy themes, writing themes, and problems.
- Data type: Emerging patterns were noted, as were inconsistencies (Dick, 2000), such as poor results. Incidences of and reasons for any changes made to the website or methods were recorded here too.
- Analysis & Credibility: As in 3.3.4.1 above.

3.3.5 Further stages of reflection, analyses and mixed sources. Answers to the research questions came directly from my analysis of the considerable amount of data (a-n) at the end of each cycle. I used different data sources to confirm, negate and deepen the answers via triangulation. Reflection was

ongoing in order to have the best oversight of the data and to know what was happening and what could be learnt from what was happening as regards helping students with their writing and autonomy development. RQ4 especially needed multiple perspectives in looking at what influenced success on the site. Thus all data were grouped under individuals' names, condensed, ordered into themes and reconnected to all students, requiring much reading, rereading and reflection. To make maximum use of all the action that had occurred over both Cycles coupled with systematic reflection (action research), making case summaries and performing content analysis were two main stages of these further analyses.

These secondary data sources, made from all the primary data sources (a-n), are termed case summaries (o) and content analysis content (p) in the descriptions below. Figure 5 attempts to portray the complexity of these processes simply showing the continued back and forth in these condensed mixed sources to the original data source components (a-n). This iterative checking and analysis is indicative of action research (Creswell, 2005), and is described further in 3.3.5.1 and 3.3.5.2. There was a case summary for each individual and the content analysis yielded nine themes (A-I).

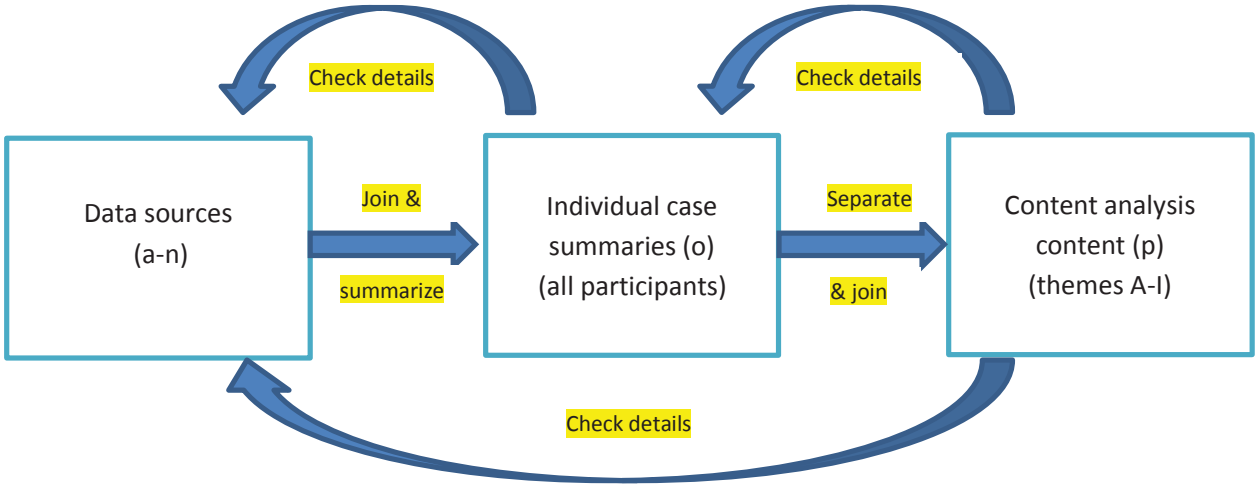


Figure 5. Further analyses.

3.3.5.1 Case Summaries (o)

- Aim: To have comprehensive yet concise evidence of all that individuals did during a Cycle. To appreciate the unique individuality of each one's development. (RQ 1, 4)
- How: Data from data sources (a-n) concerning each individual were combined to make comprehensive individual case summaries (o). This had already been done to some degree as

little partial summaries throughout my field notes for formative understanding of what was going on during the Cycles. Once all the partial summaries concerning each individual were joined together, they were checked, adjusted and extended by referring to all the different data sources with reference to the individual. Repeated acts were represented by numbers to help the summarizing process. Chronological order was kept to evade impulsive grouping of data that might bias further analysis (Morrison, 2008). Again, it should be noted that the case summaries are not case studies but rather a useful secondary source and means of analysis.

- Analysis: The interplay of various factors for individuals could be interpreted with the fuller pictures provided. Pertinent and discrepant parts set in the whole summary might point back to investigating specific raw data. Diversity among case summaries could be compared.
- Credibility: A full picture is more informative than any part.

3.3.5.2 Content Analysis Content (p)

- Aim: To analyze the large amount and variety of data in case summaries into different aspects of success (where failure as negative success is included too). (RQ 4)
- How: RQ 4 featured as the guide where there was a seeking to identify aspects affecting the success of an online SAC for developing autonomy and L2 writing proficiency in this specific context. Comprehensive coding was conducted with the help of NVivo's free nodes – Nvivo being software for aiding storage and analysis of qualitative data. All content was viewed openly as empirical evidence without preconceptions as much as possible (Denscombe, 2007). By reading and rereading all the individuals' summaries from both cycles as an iterative process, some recurring codes were apparent, which could be clumped into themes (or "aspects" - using RQ4's term).

  Codes and themes were revisited and adjusted several times as more cases and the second action research Cycle was finished. Explicit content was coded as well as latent (inferred) content (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), which is why I chose to use NVivo strictly as free node containers for manual coding. Manual coding counters the limitations of the decontextualization, with underlying meanings and conceptual decisions unable to be made by a computer programme (Denscombe, 2007). The majority of each case summary was covered by the final themes showing that they were well chosen or exhaustive (Gratton & Jones, 2003). As specific content might be aligned with more than one theme, deciding what theme was manifested to the exclusion of another was not performed; rather, the interrelatedness of

each theme to other themes was noted. Though Gratton and Jones (2003) discourage this, saying codes "should be mutually exclusive" meaning "distinct" from each other (p. 265), my research deals with multi-dimensional constructs where cross-over categories have already been defined, and reliability as well as validity should be increased this way.

- Analysis: The final themes are shown in the findings. They connected the various case summaries. The themes could be further applied to draw in valuable confirmatory general data from my field notes and evaluations (m, n). Some of the themes dovetailed into RQ 1 too adding further data for its interpretation. Pertinent and discrepant factors as regards each theme or interplaying between themes could be identified. In turn this might refer back to investigation of specific raw data.
- Credibility: Thick data, different kinds of data, and using all participants and advisor's contributions aid validity.

3.4 Assumptions and Limitations

As an exploratory action research study using mixed methods with both qualitative and quantitative data collected from a limited number of students in largely uncontrolled circumstances (compared to a classroom), this research has limitations due to the ultimate validity and generalizability of the qualitative research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). As qualitative research, the conditions of verification are purposively different from those of positivist, quantitative studies, which generally entertain far larger sample sets, thereby enabling statistical interpretation and suitable mathematical modeling. Some qualitative researchers still use the terms "validity" and "reliability" (ibid.) while others adopt different terms (MacKay & Gass, 2005).

Where qualitative research is concerned, appropriate substitute terms and criteria for those used in quantitative research can be: credibility for validity, dependability for reliability, transferability for generalizability, and confirmability for objectivity (Denscombe, 2007). In my project, credibility was enhanced through triangulation of methods and data, checking findings with participants through dialogue, the longitudinal nature of the study, thick findings and the double action research Cycle. Dependability was enhanced by presenting an audit trail for readers to evaluate, including explicit details of methods, analyses and decisions. Transferability meant recognizing the uniqueness of the situation, but nonetheless encouraging readers' critical judgment and thinking regarding how far and with what adjustments this study might be transferred to other comparable situations. Details of context, ethnicity, and past history as well as the thick data descriptions have therefore been supplied to

this end. Confirmability meant recognizing the value of the emic view as a vital resource, but supplying a reflexive autobiographic report of the researcher's self, portraying possible influences and detachments.

3.5 Methodology Summary

Action research was selected as a suitable methodology for this study, where I created an online SAC within the context of an Arab university where the research took place. Framing it within constructivist and critical theory paradigms, allowed me to concentrate on understanding and improving the dynamics within the everyday life of a SAC. AR is data-driven, closely knitting action with research in its cyclical process. Crucially, AR furnished a repertoire of means to maintain empirical rigour within the framework of mixed methods research.

The specific AR model selected was that of the individual teacher as researcher. This model allowed me to define, design and implement my research with my medium class-size of online participants. I was a direct data source as an insider-researcher with an important emic role as regards to gathering information. The student participants benefited from the online SAC being authenticated, explored and improved while they were using it, as per the practicableness of a teacher as researcher model. Flexibility was purposively incorporated, responding to the need to work inductively to firm up the research questions as the research proceeded, and to facilitate a degree of responsiveness to the data as they emerged. Multi-methods were used to validate the research and to gain a wide, comprehensive understanding of the evolving situation. Participating students were conceived in the roles of informants, whose documents, activities, perceptions, feelings, suggestions and evaluations were all forms of key data. My modest adaptation to the usual teacher as researcher AR model was in using participants unknown to me for some added objectivity rather than using my own familiar classes; and in working initially from the starting point of an identified research gap in the literature - rather than simply a problem derived from solely my own classes.

The student participants using this online SAC were volunteers from a university in Qatar who expressed a desire for such a service to aid them in their academic writing. Cycle 1 of the action research had a more limited range of 14 participants compared to Cycles 2 with 23. Participants in both cycles were divided into a structured autonomy group and an unstructured autonomy group in order to study how supplementary structured autonomy promoting activities received online might influence autonomy development. Nevertheless, the general usefulness of the online SAC with all its tools, and

ways to make it more effective for the Arab situation, was the major thrust of the research. Each Cycle was 10 weeks long over the latter two thirds of consecutive semesters. The research project was granted exemption from full ethics review by the Qatari university and given ethical approval via a full ethics review by Massey University.

Many resources used and interactions made in the daily life of the SAC became data sources, and special pre- and post-tests were used as well. Data collecting methods included online synchronous chats, 1-1 asynchronous interactions, forums, student drafts, participation frequencies, blogs, field notes and pre- and post-questionnaires and essays. These were analyzed in various ways including combining and separating under case summaries and content analysis content. Correlating with the mixed methods, participant numbers and qualitative data used, assumptions and limitations of research methods were discussed. The Findings section that follows combines and disseminates the analyses according to the four research questions.

Chapter 4: Findings

Collectively, the findings presented in this chapter address the overarching research question of the investigation: How can learner autonomy and L2 writing proficiency be developed for Arab academic writing learners via an online SAC? Though in this research the action was the whole FLUACC site, only the pertinent data sources (a-n) from each Cycle were used to answer the research questions. The action research structure allowed me to be flexible with the flow of data (Dick, 2000). It was possible to engage with the emergent eddies of thickening or interesting data with further analyses rather than being confined strictly to a simple preplanned Cycle (Burns, 2005b). Exploring and coming to a greater understanding of the never-ending complexities of real circumstances was paramount (McDonough & McDonough, 2005).

The findings are organized in sub-sections in the same sequence as the Research Questions 1- 4:

RQ1: How did the participants use the online SAC environment?

RQ2: What were the participants' perceptions of the usefulness of an online SAC for becoming an autonomous learner and a more proficient L2 writer?

RQ3: How can a structured advisory component in an online SAC help with developing autonomous learning and written language proficiency?

RQ4: What are the main aspects affecting the success of an online SAC for developing autonomy and L2 writing proficiency?

Figure 6 below matches Research Questions 1 to 4 with the combination of data sources a-n that were used for analysis. Each specific sub-section for a research question, initially explains which data sources were used, giving reasons for their inclusion. The analyses are described and presented in the order they were unpacked. Other specific minor analyses were made to address each research question more fully, as described in relation to the relevant question. A summary is offered for the main findings for each question.

Research Question 4 was handled somewhat differently as it generated the most data. A compilation of all the data sources (a-n) in case summaries (o) for each participant produced additional content analysis (p). The high degree of reflection needed amidst complex constructs as part of the research side of action research produced this format (Taylor, Wilkie & Basen, 2006). Nine themes evolved from the content analysis of the individual case summaries of all participants. These are further discussed under RQ4 in section 4.4. The case summaries (o) were then also applied as relevant to the other research questions as well, with specific importance to the analysis for RQ1.

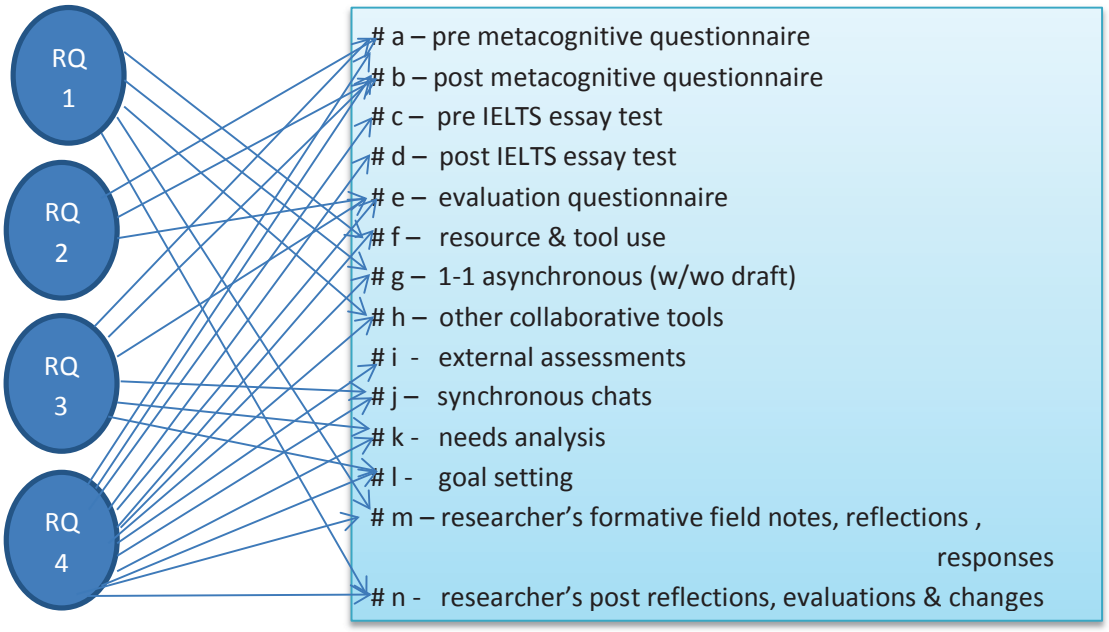


Figure 6. Research questions matched with the data sources.

4.1. Research Question 1: How did the participants use the online SAC environment?

The records showing the type and frequency of use for the main elements of the online SAC site by all participants were analyzed quantitatively to determine the range and popularity of the elements used for help. These elements were 1-1 asynchronous interactions (g), resources and tools (f), and other collaborative tools (h). All participants had free access to these elements to aid their writing and autonomy development. Cycle 1 and 2 results are compared by each element to demonstrate any trends. The unstructured autonomy group also had access to some extra elements, which will be described under RQ3.

Subsequently, whether specific aspects of one participant's usage are typical or atypical across the entire cohort is commented upon, by comparison with all other case summaries(o).

4.1.1. Type and frequency of use. The type of elements used as well as frequency of their use are important indicators for characterizing how students used the online environment. Each 10-week period showed that learners mainly used the SAC for fulfilling their immediate needs in preparing course assignments or for outside exams. Usage is summarized quantitatively, from the element of most frequent use to least. Then students' use of combined elements is examined as well as the continued use over a cycle.

The elements most frequently used in both Cycles were (g), 1- 1 asynchronous advisor-to-student interactions (with/without a student's draft text). Figures 7 and 8 indicate they were used by 10 (71%) of the participants in Cycle 1, and 21 (91%) in Cycle 2. Six participants had over 20 1-1 interactions in Cycles 1 and five did in Cycle 2.

Regarding this specific use, students' drafts were usually shared and reviewed as attachments to the email interactions. The number of whole assignments discussed for any one person was as many as seven in Cycle 1, and five in Cycle 2, although many of these drafts came in two or more parts. Participants included their instructions or requests in the body of their email with regard to their draft attachments though sometimes questions were asked without any accompanying draft, especially at the beginning or end of a drafting process.

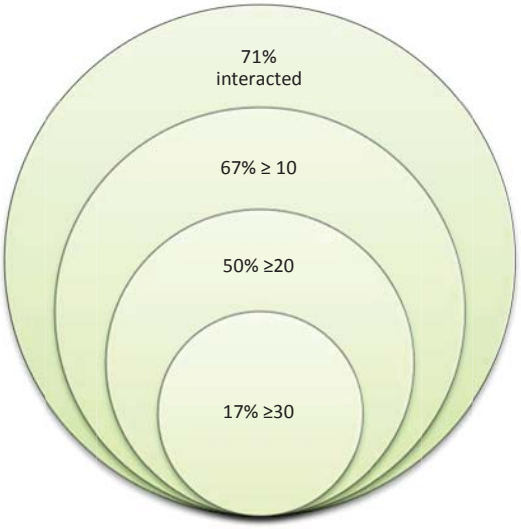


Figure 7. Cycle 1 frequency of 1-1 asynchronous use.

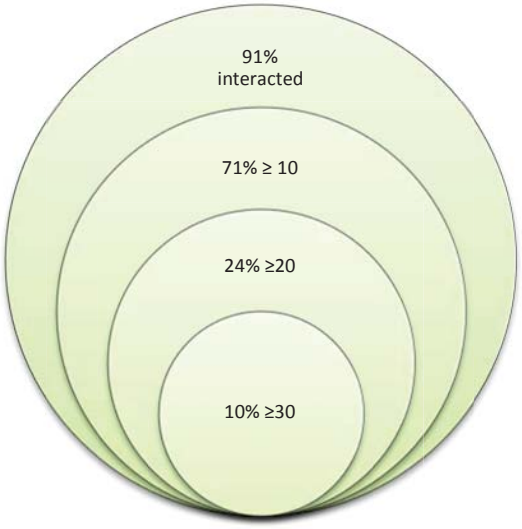


Figure 8. Cycle 2 frequency of 1-1 asynchronous use

The electronic resource and tool use (f) was next in terms of popularity of use in the online environment with 86% of participants using them in Cycle 1, and 91% in Cycle 2. The use of (g)1-1 asynchronous appears to be similar to, or even less in Cycle 1, but not if frequency per person is taken into account. Thus, in Cycle 1 only eight (57%) students used the support of resources and tools (f) to an appreciable degree (over 75 logs), and four of those (29 %) used them extensively (over 150 logs). In Cycle 2, this compares with nine (39%) using resources and tools to an appreciable degree, and three (13%) of these using them extensively. This means that useful resources and tools though available were only used by about half of the participants at least to an appreciable degree with few of these using them extensively. In Cycle 2, particularly, with its even wider range of participants, the extensive

users tended to be using resources I specifically had added at their express need. The announcements I made regarding these relevant additions probably promoted this trend in usage.

Regarding use of (h), other collaborative tools, these were either not much used or their use could not be confirmed. The site's forums were used sparingly. In Cycle 1, one student used them three times for collaboration, but did not get any response from her peers. Hence, I had to resort to answering them. In Cycle 2, another participant tried using a forum once with similar results. Profiles were used sparingly. One learner shared a detailed profile of herself as part of setting herself up as a member when initially logging on in Cycle 1, compared to three in Cycle 2. Blog use was generally affirmed by students in their evaluation questionnaire (e), but not made public or available for the researcher to confirm (see 3.3.2.3).

Mostly, students used a combination of main elements (f) and (g). Figures 9 and 10 summarize the combinations of participants' (f) resource and tool use and (g)1-1 asynchronous support, the two most used elements on the website. Three (21%) of the participants in Cycle 1, and three (13%) in Cycle 2 accessed mostly electronic resources as opposed to the advisor-researcher's support, while two (9%) of the participants in Cycle 2 used asynchronous 1-1s only, and one (7%) did this in Cycle 1. The majority of participants used a combination of 1-1s with electronic resources as a supplementary additive - nine (65%) in Cycle 1, and 17 (74%) in Cycle 2.

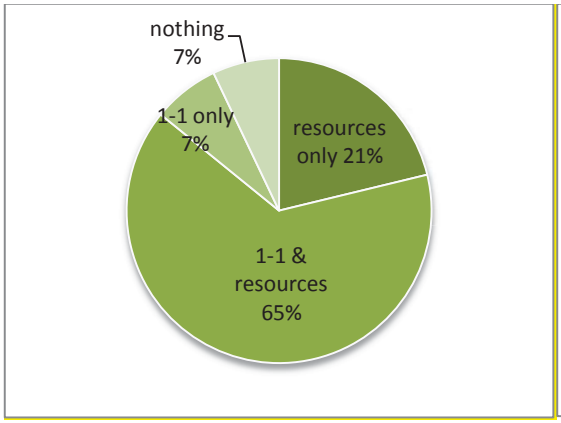


Figure 9. Cycle 1 Main Uses of SAC.

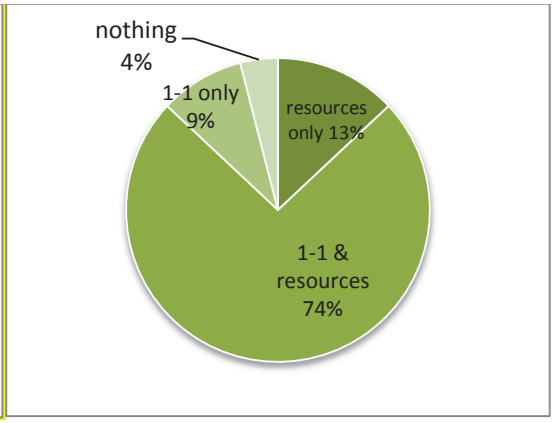


Figure 10. Cycle 2 Main Uses of SAC.

Finally, frequency of use of elements is examined whereby continued use of the site over a Cycle (by f, g or h use) is displayed. This is an important frequency because it shows student retention. In Cycle 1, 11 (79%) of participants kept using FLUACC throughout the 10 week time while in Cycle 2, 19 (83%) did. The increase may have been partly due to the repeaters in Cycle 2. With the program

structure of an online SAC being very loose to non-existent (as the name "self–access" implies), one could expect much lower rates with ad-hoc appearances and disappearances (no constancy). Therefore, this result can be considered quite high.

4.1.2. Individual detailed use compared with general trends. The participant noted as A3 in Cycle 1 was chosen as the benchmark as she used a wide and diverse range of offerings, demonstrating the possibilities available. Sometimes in the following account, the general trend of participants' use is noted against her benchmark usage for demonstration purposes. Data came from case summaries(o).

A3 made the most frequent access to resources and tools (f) and 1-1 asynchronous (g) of any participant. She created 332 logs accessing FLUACC usually more than twice a week, whereas the participants averaged 1-2 times a week. She participated in views and activities almost daily in the first 4 weeks. Electronic records showed she checked out the "socializing forum" and "independent start", showing an interest in communicating with others and helping herself. She viewed resources on "optional extra support" seven times and "extra help for lemons" two times. This was normal for quite a few of the structured group, of which she was a member. These resources were specifically to help students develop their autonomy and to understand the extra structured tools available to them.

Specific sub-topics of resources that A3 checked out, and therefore possibly used for self-help, were, named intuitively, "easy grammar," "haha grammar," "easy vocab," "learning these words," "paragraph common problems," "writing process," "searching for sources," "thesis statement," "APA," "synthesizing," and a computerized paper rater under "how good is my writing." She checked out the last one twice, but all the other resources, except for the autonomy ones, she only checked out once. Her pattern suggests she had at least investigated quite a variety of resources compared to many other students, but it is noticeable that most of these were only visited once. This differed from some other users who went back to one or two resources multiple times, possibly indicating they were using, practicing, or monitoring their development in one or more aspects of language as per A6 (see 4.4.8).

Another point to note was that, when A3 was on FLUACC, she was always interested in the interaction, viewing forums and blogs (h), chats (j), students' assignments posted on the website (g), and the other users online. Her participation here was passive, as a lurker. This "lurking" was normal for new and regular students, especially right after logging on each visit. However, sometimes this was all A3 did on her visits to FLUACC.

Regarding 1-1 interaction (g) with me as advisor, A3 used "easy essay assignment review" (one of the onsite places to post assignments for asynchronous feedback) to submit one of her essays for

feedback (1-1s), but after that she reverted to using emails. She was very good at describing the context of her assignments and identifying where in her diverse texts she specifically needed feedback. An example was:

> *I made some correct which you recommend me to change it but I do not know if it is*
> *my change is correct or not, so I noticed the changes as a red color to be easy for you.*
> *Also I want to know if it is my citation correct or no .*

Such clarity of needs was not common with many participants. More often than not, she highlighted her emails with high importance status showing her determination to get help. Overall, she sent seven items for checking (some of these coming in multiple parts), thereby involving a number of interactions back and forth – 45 in total, not including initial enrolment and final evaluation communication. One message counted as one interaction from individual student to advisor, or vice versa. A3's total use of 1-1 asynchronous interactions was the highest in Cycle 1 of all participants. Nevertheless, it was the norm for a number of interactions regarding any specific assignment to occur – not just a minimum dialogue of two (from student-to-advisor and back).

4.1.3. Summary of RQ1 findings. Taking participants from both Cycles into consideration, 1-1 asynchronous advisor-to-learner interactions (g) were shown to be popular with the majority of participants. A few participants, though, chose almost totally to rely on accessing resources and tools (f), but most used a mixture of 1-1 asynchronous advisor help plus accessing resources and tools. Only a few made extensive use of the electronic resources even though many were available. Regarding other collaborative tools(h), the forums were used insufficiently for peer to peer aid (n=2) and the blogs, being kept in privacy mode, were hard to confirm. Retention rate of participants over the 10-week period, demonstrated by their continual use of FLUACC, was high for such a voluntary programme.

One participant, described in 4.1.2, accessed quite a number and a variety of material resources and tools but this utilization of the diversity of resources available was uncommon to most participants. She also lurked to view what other participants had been doing, which was common among others as well. She used the 1-1s continually for writing help, usually with multiple interactions for any one paper, actions that were common with others, though not so frequent.

4.2. Research Question 2: What were the participants' perceptions of the usefulness of an online SAC for becoming an autonomous learner and a more proficient L2 writer?

The students' perceptions of learning support usefulness of the site for writing development and autonomy after exposure to the site for 10 weeks were surveyed using two different questionnaires (see 3.3.1 and Appendix B). First, the evaluation questionnaire (e) given at the end of each Cycle ascertained participants' perspectives of FLUACC for their usefulness, support for developing writing proficiency, and the self-management part of autonomy. Closed and open questions allowed statistical as well as descriptive analysis. Second, the pre- and post-metacognitive questionnaires (a, b) given at the beginning and the end of each Cycle were compared to determine how students perceived different aspects of their metacognition (autonomy) had changed over the 10-week period using the SAC. Cycle 1 is compared to Cycle 2 for each data source for confirmation of any trends. Other perceptions gathered from other data source components are analyzed later under RQs 3 and 4.

4.2.1. Students' perceptions from evaluation questionnaire. The evaluation questionnaire (e) contained a number of items that tested whether the overall 10 week experience using FLUACC supports was useful, supportive, and helped learners' development of writing proficiency and autonomy. The response rate was at least 70%; in Cycle 1, 10 (71%) of the students completed the questionnaire, while in Cycle 2, 16 (70%) did. However, only 14 responses (61%) from Cycle 2 were counted (two did not use FLUACC enough to provide valid evaluations; however, their comments were utilized where they explained why they did not make use of the platform). The following sections show the general statistics from the nine closed questions before the specific results of the four open questions are described.

4.2.1.1. Closed questions. The first closed question related to frequency of use, with the average use of FLUACC resulting as once to twice a week for both Cycles. A graph of the mean score for the other eight closed questions can be seen in Figures 11 and 12 below for Cycle 1 and 2 respectively with a short synopsis preceding each.

In Cycle 1, as shown in Figure 11, all the averages were in the positive realm of 3-5 of the five point Likert scale. High average ratings (four and above) were given for the "usefulness of FLUACC to learn English writing," its "future usefulness in helping them to learn by themselves," the perception that "through using FLUACC they were able to focus on what they wanted to improve in their writing," and the perception that it "gave them enough support to learn written English easily." The perceived usefulness in helping to develop writing proficiency was apparent. Lower ratings (3.8-3.4), but still positive, were given for the other questions regarding "setting manageable goals", "assessing progress",

"learning new strategies", and "blog reflection". Notably, these are the items most pertinent to self-management strategies of autonomy.

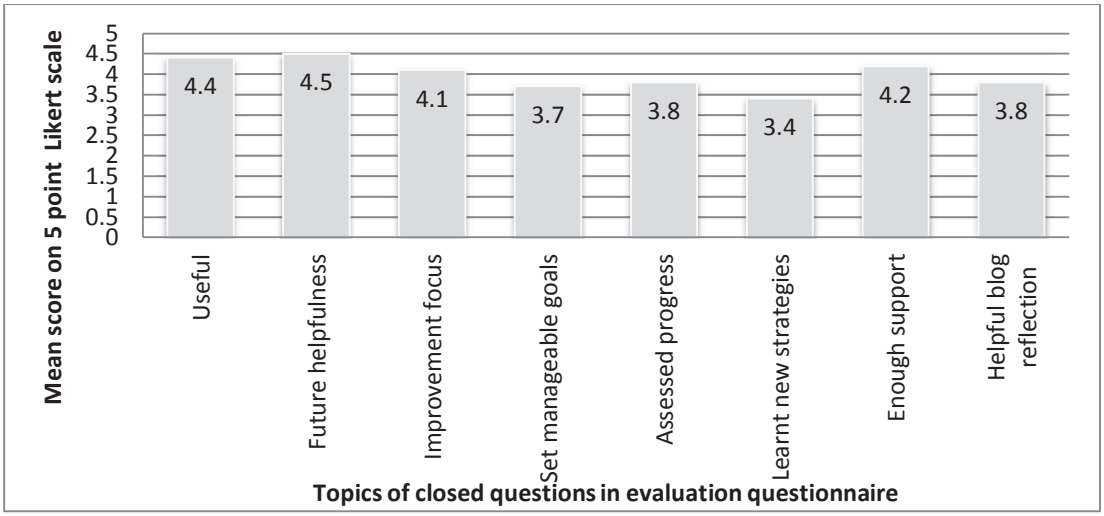


Figure 11. Cycle 1 Students' perceptions from evaluation questionnaire

For Cycle 2, as shown in Figure 12, all averages were in the positive realm of 3 to 5, with more in the high positive rating (four and above) than in the Cycle 1 (see Figure 11). Only two of the self-management aspects were rated on average below a 4; thus, the website's usefulness in helping with developing self-management as well as writing proficiency as perceived by students was confirmed. The average taken of all the self-management aspect questions was a creditable 4, a high rating. Cycle 2 contained responses from five repeaters. Also, the site and its elements had been undergoing adjustments and improvements for effectiveness and increased efficiency both in an ongoing way and

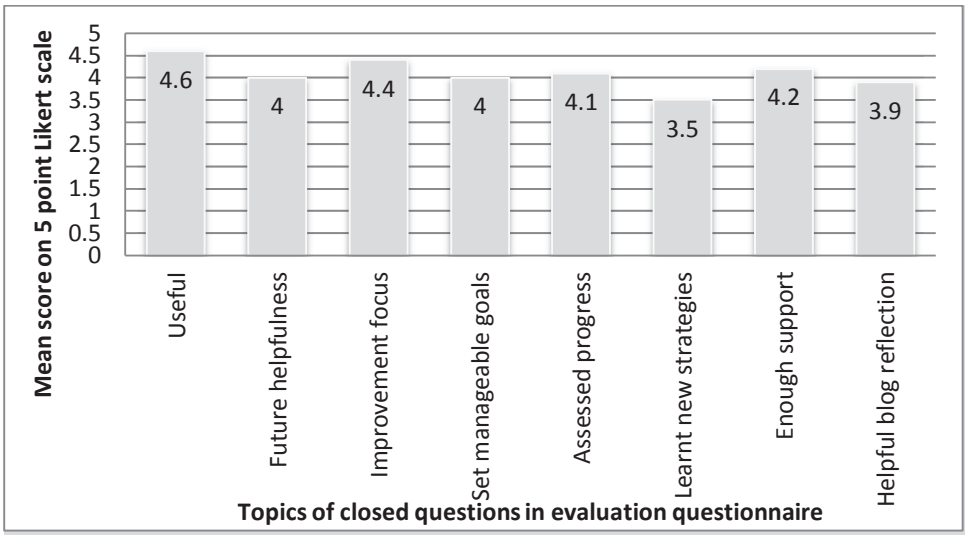


Figure 12. Cycle 2 Students' perceptions from evaluation questionnaire.

between Cycles as detailed in a later section. These could account for the increase over Cycle 1. Explicit remarks made in answering the four open questions of the evaluation questionnaire are considered in the following section for reinforcement, discrepancies, and extra details regarding the analysis of the closed questions.

4.2.1.2 Open questions. Personal testimonies from the evaluation questionnaire's four open questions of Cycles 1 and 2 indicated that students perceived the online platform as useful. How that related to their writing and autonomous learning aims was captured in their unique remarks, especially in answer to the question "What (if anything) did you find particularly useful about FLUACC?" Answers from M4 and S3 respectively included:

" Focus on different areas which relate to writing (such as: Grammar-Vocabulary-Organisation…)"

"*Help me learn new words, how to write good essays, and save my time."*

There was an appreciation of many of the topics and subtopics of FLUACC's resources.

The perceived usefulness of the 1-1s featured strongly in answer to this same question as well. The remarks from D3, M1 and M5 below are considered typical:

"Discussing our writing with advisor was so helpful"

"*the teacher's role in supporting students*"

"The greatest thing in FLUACC is that when the teacher correct the mistakes she told us why and how to make sound better. The comments were very very helpful"

"The most important thing was the fast answering of our questions."

The comments most repeated pertained to the helpfulness of teacher comments, answers to questions, discussions, explanations, giving support and allowing improvement. In the additional comments, M2 compared her past writing experiences to writing with FLUACC:

"…*They [her high school teachers] would not courage [encourage] us to create our own essay or be self -correct…[like FLUACC]."* (Words in brackets are added for comprehension.)

Another open question was the offshoot of the closed question about whether they had tried any new learning strategies. The follow-up was "If so, what strategies were they?" Many elaborated on some strategies they had tried out via the platform. Some of these had been signaled as a strategy on FLUACC while others they had tried on their own. For example, the strategies reported by M2 included:

"more careful about simple mistakes"

"I try to practice new words to have a variety of words.."

N2 made a discovery for herself:

> *"The strategy is to write a lot in many topics in order to improve my vocabulary and my writing skills."*

The usefulness of the online environment as a strategy is remarked by S4:

> *"I found that practicing English (online) is easy and helpful. So, I'm trying to practice it more in my free time as an online practice."*

With students actually stating strategies in these terms, it is very likely that enactment rather than just perceptions are occurring (Sinclair, 1999).

The closed question regarding strategies conflicted somewhat with the open question. While the students affirmed new strategies that they had learned in the open question, the new strategies recorded in the low positive value on the Likert scale in the closed questions. This is a discrepancy that is hard to explain, except that other aspects in the questionnaire were more important to students.

A third open question solicited reasons for rarely/never using FLUACC. Half the answers contained the common theme of lacking time (five of 10 answers over both Cycles). Remarks from M2 and S4 respectively were typical:

> *"I was busy with 18 hours = 6 subjects in my university"*
>
> *"there were lots of assignments to do …and I couldn't find time to practice English."*

A final open question asked students for any suggestions for improving FLUACC. Two suggested more instructions to use the site to maximum benefit (M2 & D4), and two others felt a weekly quiz/exercise for measuring their writing improvement would be helpful (A3 & H1). Most reported their satisfaction, such as A11 and M8 below:

> *"everything in the site useful and comprehensive everything"*
>
> *"the programme is awesome"*

Thus, the personal testimonies in open and closed questioning were overall highly positive.

4.2.2. Students' perceptions from metacognitive questionnaires. Participants' perceptions of the usefulness of an online SAC for developing autonomy were derived indirectly by comparing their pre- and post-perceptions of various metacognitive aspects via the seven question metacognitive questionnaires (a, b). The seven questions are summarized on the horizontal axis of Figure 13 below. For Cycle 1, n = 9 (64%) of the students completed both pre- and post-questionnaires and for Cycle 2, n = 9 (39%). The mean results are presented below in Figures 13 and 14 respectively. The degree of

average positivity for each item (above 3 on the 5 point scale) can be seen and a pre- versus post-comparison of the growth/decline in metacognitive aspects is shown as well.

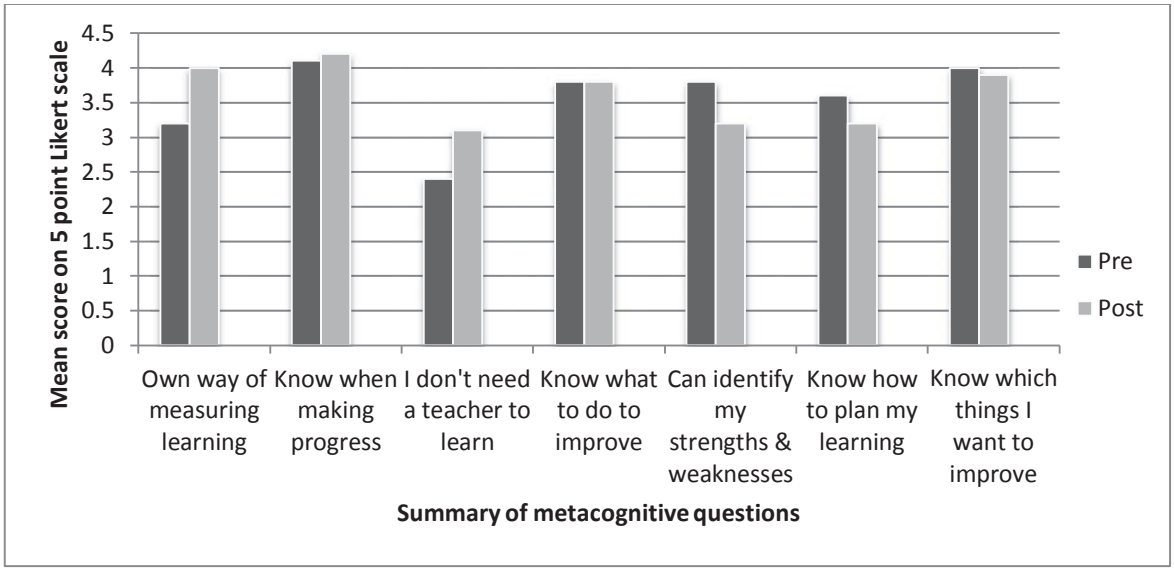


Figure 13. Cycle 1 pre versus post metacognitive perceptions.

In Cycle 1 (see Figure 13), aspects of all the various metacognitive abilities were rated positively to begin with, except for the negative statement "I don't need a teacher to learn" (worded positively in the questionnaire but reversed for scoring purposes). At the end of the Cycle, ratings remained positive as well, and "not needing a teacher" had now joined them. The perception of "Not needing a teacher" showed the second biggest increase, second only to "having their own way of measuring how much they had learned." No change had occurred over time with "I know what to do to improve," and scores for the last three questions "can identify my strengths and weaknesses", "know how to plan my learning" and "know what things I want to improve" decreased. Nevertheless, overall there was a mean sum increase of 0.5 for Cycle 1. Though small, this increase indicates that autonomy was achieved as a gradual phenomenon (Benson, 2011a).

For Cycle 2 (see Figure 14), aspects of all the various metacognitive abilities were rated positively to begin with, except again for "I don't need a teacher to learn." They remained positive at the end of the research period, except "I don't need a teacher to learn." The results that differed from Cycle 1 were that every aspect increased positively by the end of the programme, except "I know when I am making progress," which remained stable at a high level (4+). The biggest increases were seen in "I know how to plan my learning," and "I know what I need to do to improve." Overall, there was a mean

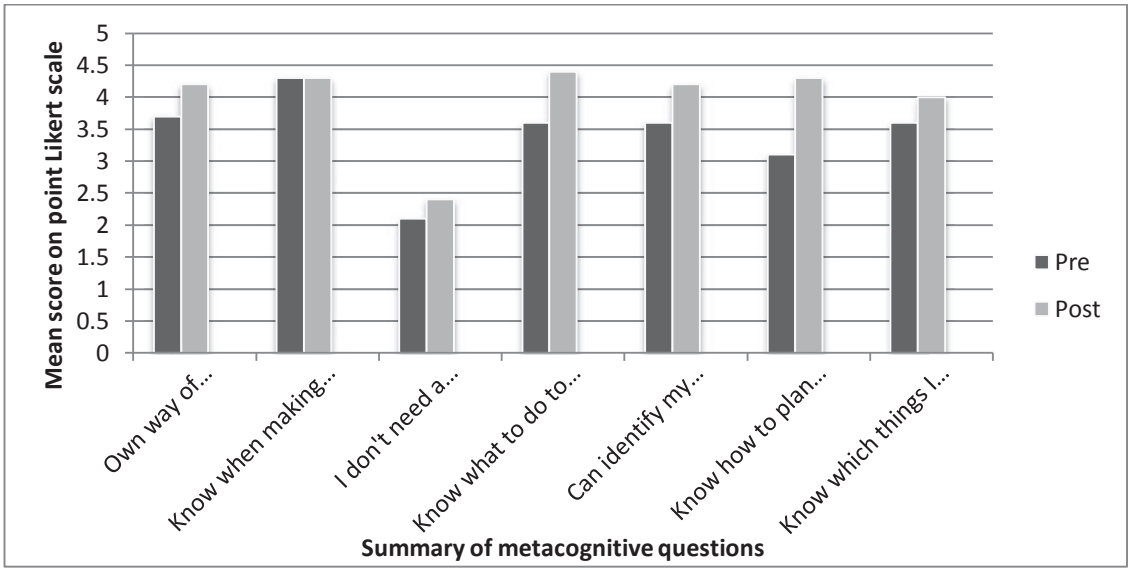


Figure 14. Cycle 2 pre- versus post-metacognitive perceptions.

sum increase of 4.3, which compared to Cycle 1's 0.5 represents a great improvement. Cycle 2 had repeaters who came in with familiarity with the various ways in which to improve themselves, might have been influential in the greater positive effect.

Overall, for each Cycle, a positive increase in metacognitive skills was perceived by the students. Also, for each Cycle, the combined results of the evaluation questionnaires' self-management scores and the pre- and post-beliefs in the metacognitive questionnaires showed increased positive direction in students' perception of their capacity for autonomous learning.

4.2.3. Summary of RQ2 findings. Two types of questionnaires (the evaluation as well as the pre- and post-metacognitive questionnaires) were used to determine participants' perceptions of the usefulness of FLUACC for becoming an autonomous learner and a more proficient writer. In the evaluation questionnaire, the total results showed positive ratings regarding FLUACC for every aspect queried in both Cycles. "Usefulness" and "giving enough support" received the highest ratings and self-management items also recorded positive values, more notably in Cycle 2. Students' comments revealed that 1-1s with the advisor were particularly useful as well as the different topics and resources available on the website. Comparison of the pre- and post-metacognitive questionnaire findings showed an increase in metacognition overall, even though most individual aspects had been positive to begin with. Crucially, this would appear to indicate a positive growth in students' perception of their autonomy over the research period. Overall, both questionnaires combined indicate students'

perception of the usefulness of their period of engagement with FLUACC for aiding their autonomy and writing development.

4.3. Research Question 3: How can a structured advisory programme help with autonomous learning and written language proficiency?

All the participants enrolled in a Cycle were divided into two groups: unstructured autonomy, and structured autonomy group. Both groups had access to FLUACC including electronic resources, tools, 1-1 asynchronous interactions and other collaborative tools. The structured autonomy group was also offered a structured autonomy programme to help members better improve their autonomy and writing development.

This additional aid included 1-1 synchronous written chats (j) with me for becoming more aware of how to help oneself, how to learn to learn, and how to monitor one's learning. Other additional aids offered included needs analysis forms (k), goal setting templates (l), an independent learning process diagram, and explanations of the use of strategies (see Appendix C).

The actual frequency of use of this structured autonomy programme is briefly described in the following paragraphs, with an analysis of the 1-1 synchronous chats (j) to show what happened during these interactions. Comparison of both groups' attainment follows to show the differences which may be attributed to having the structured autonomy programme. Specific comparison is made of each group's use of the environment via resources and tools (f), 1-1 asynchronous (g), metacognitive questionnaires (a, b) and evaluation questionnaire (e) data. This is done concomitantly with the action research tasks being data driven (Johnson, 1993) because of the marked differences noticed between the groups' data when analyzed.

4.3.1. Use of the structured autonomy programme. Though three phases were planned for the structured programme in each Cycle, only Phase 1 was used by a total of four participants in each Cycle (with one of the four from Cycle 1 lurking rather than actively participating in the synchronous chat stage). Thus, the structured programme was not taken very far by any participant in any Cycle.

One of the conditions for individuals when signing up for research in the structured autonomy group was to participate in the structured programme. The intention was for the structured group students to start this programme soon after they accessed FLUACC to enable them to have time to gradually develop their autonomy. Though many of the structured group participants accessed FLUACC where the programme was described, the chats did not occur until midway through the programme

when significant rapport had developed via the asynchronous 1-1s. The main reason the participants expressed for their lack of participation was a busy schedule. Students have many immediate needs in the form of assignments for their credit-based courses just a few weeks after starting a semester. 1-1 asynchronous advisory sessions were proving a help with these. However, the individuals' detailed evidence below supports the conclusion that the structured autonomy time, though little used, was important.

4.3.1.1 Analysis of Cycle 1 synchronous chats (j) data. In the first Cycle, although only the first round of synchronous chats were held with three participants, the data provided for analysis was plentiful. These chats demonstrated student control of interactions, the structure became flexible, and the teacher's knowledge of students increased. Though there were at times synchronous difficulties, the fostering of autonomous behaviour and support for specific needs clearly emerged.

Student Control of Interactions: First, the number of student to advisor interactions (number per student/number per advisor) for all three chats recorded were 37/25, 51/42, and 30/17. In each case the students' contributions outnumbered the advisor's. Clearly there was minimally a balance of power in the interaction with indications of the direction coming from the students, rather than a monopoly of instruction and direction from the advisor. The record of the chat dialogues showed that students were beginning to take autonomy into their own hands by being responsible for control. For example:

A3: *"i will choose the impact of theory on child development , curriculum, and teaching method"*

Advisor: *"Excellent - and limit it to elementary education?"*

A3: *"I have an idea that would be easier."*

Advisor: *"Looks like you're more than half way there! You can check with me your final TS anytime."*

A3: *"i can write argumentive esaay."*

A3: *"about Piagrt theory in general and Criticism."*

A3: *"i think it is easier than impact."*

Flexibility of Structure: Though the plan was designed to provide steps and special structured resources to the structured group (Figure 3 in Chapter 3), the focus of the research never depended on rigid adherence to the plan, but with an overarching framework to proceed flexibly, in accordance with the needs of each student. Adaptability and identifying the most suitable procedures in the actual circumstances is very much a part of action research (Dick, 2000). The students seemed to find this

venue amenable for asking about and discussing their problems, and I could provide encouragement, suggestions and both planned structured and spontaneous help for individual problems. Indeed, with N2, whose time with me was restricted (having requested a chat with me at an awkward time where I could only offer 15 minutes), her immediate needs took precedence over deploying any preplanned structured part of the programme. Plenty of the structured stages were covered with M5 and A3 including "needs analysis (k)," "goal setting (l)," and getting, "the language learning process," "strategies" implanted in FLUACC, and other ways and resources to help oneself on FLUACC.

All three of these participants were extremely thankful for the whole programme and expressed this gratitude spontaneously right from the start of the chat as seen in the example below:

M5: *"I really want to thank you for your efforts to help students."*

Advisor: *"Has FLUACC been a help?"*

M5: *"Yes, it's very useful."*

This positive start, coming from the students, might not have taken place if our synchronous chats started at the very beginning of the Cycle as planned. By being patient in our asynchronous 1-1s (g) and delaying these chats until the students were ready; I had an established rapport with them already, based on addressing their practical needs. I felt such a rapport allowed me to easily encourage students in their autonomy.

Knowledge of Students: The students' context and position became known to me more through these synchronous chats, than from any asynchronous communication with them. I felt I understood them and their unique circumstances more personally, and therefore could guide them more effectively.

Synchronous Chat Difficulties: Synchronizing time for a chat with M5 had proved troublesome at first. All participants though seemed to cope with the small, but confusing, time differences between writing and sending of the synchronous chat mode. They finished one topic before beginning the next, as the following dialogue shows:

Advisor: *"What subjects are you doing this semester?"*

N2: *"on sunday"*

N2: *"classroom management"*

N2: *"application in second language"*

N2: *"morphology"*

Advisor: *"Do you enjoy them all?"*

N2: *"and children's literature"*

N2: *"yes,"*

Advisor: *"Your English is doing well."*

N2: *"morphology is so exciting"*

N2: *"In shallah"*

Autonomous Behavior: Self-motivation, eagerness to learn, and displays of autonomy were apparent. Both M5 and A3 did more than was requested to prepare themselves for the chat; they not only did some pre-reading regarding autonomous elements, but also had already completed the needs analysis and goal setting forms. In addition, A3 mentioned generally regarding the website that she had:

" seen many things she wanted to read and apply."

She logged on the website more than twice a week and definitely improved her writing proficiency. Other displays of autonomy were the ease of interacting metalinguistically and metacognitively with participants. An example follows:

N2: *"Should I use transition paragraph"*

N2: *"between the cause and effect"*

N2: *"between the cause of creativity and the role of parents and teachers"*

N2: *"or no need?"*

Advisor: *"It does not need to be a paragraph - transition can occur at the end of the last body paragraph or the first of the second body."*

N2: *"ok thank you"*

A3 had a good habit of always going back and correcting her spelling errors immediately after submitting a chat discourse without being asked to – she was automatically self-correcting. Examples being:

A3: *" i am worry abiut this"*

Advisor: *"So what's your topic?"*

A3: *"about*"*

A3: *"and i studied alot about piagrt theory"*

A3: *"Piaget*"*

Fostering Autonomy: I noticed immediate results from these chats in the form of increased activity on the website directly afterwards where the students navigated the website, checked out appropriate parts, and accessed autonomy-fostering tools. As an advisor, I found the synchronous chats (j) were a refreshingly direct and fast mode to foster autonomy in students compared to the 1-1 asynchronous interactions (g). More ground was covered for time invested. Explicit instruction and checking of understanding could be provided for learning-to-learn to boost metacognitive awareness and self-responsibility for the learning process. An example was:

Advisor: *"If you read the 'Language Learning Process' in 'Optional extra & support' you will see how it works."*

M5: *"You mean I should focus on one thing"*

Advisor: *"Yes, probably one from the small needs eg spelling or vocab and one from the big needs eg part of an essay or a special kind of essay"*

M5: *"OK."*

Specific Needs: Specific writing skills and obstacles to autonomy development were covered. M5 mentioned her keenness to learn and address everything regarding her weaknesses. I suggested to her that to tackle a few items at a time would be more workable and she should see longer lasting results. A3 mentioned she did not like to do outlines or plans for her compositions, so I encouraged her just to make one that was simple, rather than an elaborate one, to help her write in an organized way.

4.3.1.2. Researcher's reflections on chats (m, n). My reflections on Cycle 1 chats were made during and after each Cycle. Only the first of the planned possible five structured synchronous chats for three participants took place, and that one half way through the Cycle. These chats covered some of the planned structured autonomy programme, but much was left undone. With most students (from both groups) having made an unpredictably high use of 1-1 asynchronous interaction to access the help tailored for their assignments, the extra autonomy aid from the structured programme did not present a prominent advantage.

Nonetheless, given the positive outcomes of these Cycle 1 chats, it seemed worthwhile to try the structured autonomy programme again in Cycle 2 using the evolved, modified form that allowed for students' unstructured questions too. However, given the unexpected popularity of the 1-1 asynchronous sessions in Cycle 1, I decided to more greatly promote the fostering of autonomy in these sessions than in Cycle 1 as much as possible. This plan did not involve the instruments provided in the structured programme, except for emphasizing appropriate strategies when needed as shown on the site under each topic, but through the "expect-correct" tactic (see section 4.4.3.2) and through additional comments exchanged in normal writing advice.

4.3.1.3. Analysis of Cycle 2 synchronous chats (j) data. Two participants of the unstructured group in Cycle 1 changed to the structured group in Cycle 2 as repeaters. Both attempted the first chat, but timing and technology frustratingly did not work out. What eventuated was a total of four

participants in Cycle 2 were involved in chats, three of these being repeaters from the first Cycle who had participated in synchronous chats in Cycle 1. No one completed more than the first chat. The first timer's is discussed in the following paragraph, followed by the repeaters' chats.

First Time Synchronous Chat: The single first timer's (H1) chat time took some time and encouragement to organize. As a person who was quietly accessing resources rather than engaging in 1-1 asynchronous exchanges, she queried what there was to talk about. Her chat was brief (30 minutes), not because of any reluctance on her part, but because of connection problems. I found out that she was only in the level 3 foundation preparatory programme, whereas from prior email contacts I had mistakenly judged she was a mature undergraduate. She noted she was trying hard to manage her writing improvement time for IELTS and also mentioned the specific help she had used. With time cut short, I followed up with an email regarding how to help her efficiency. Though her language proficiency was not at an undergraduate level yet, her autonomy level was inspiring in terms of independently making time regularly to access resource help to improve her writing.

Repeaters' Synchronous Chats: The results showed similarities with and differences from the first Cycle. A key similarity was that the students' contributions of interactions in each case outnumbered the advisor's – 111/74, 36/33, 70/32 and 23/19, again, a mark of learner autonomy. Two of the repeaters had a considerately longer chat than the first Cycle – two and three times as long respectively. With all three repeaters, noticeably more was covered than in their Cycle 1 chat because of their increased familiarity with their general situation. Thus, the big picture overview of their needs and learning could be discussed fairly quickly before the isolated problems they really wanted to talk about. They readily brought up some of their deep-seated fears regarding different aspects of the English required of them. An example follows of extracts of M5's expressed fear:

You can't imagine how is my war going with English Language !!!
.. I looking for native speakers to visit them or spend days with them >> like families
Because I'm really suffered from this language
but I can't speak at all .... really I can't say one and complete sentence !! I have to
think about it more than 3 minutes
The worst thing is saying things spontaneously
sometimes I have a lot of Ideas but I can't translate them .... even if I know that
I know the words ... I don't know why!!!

A3's deep fear concerned reading. In both cases I was able to individually organize FLUACC to help them address their fears.

4.3.1.4. Extra details regarding the structured autonomy programme. Needs analysis (k) and goal setting (l) forms were submitted before or after the chat by two participants (A3 and M5 for each Cycle) without any difficulty. They found them easy to use. Yet, I could not discern how much these were followed through within a Cycle since only one was completed per Cycle, and I could not tell if their goals were achieved. Their stated goals for Cycle 1 and 2 differed, hopefully indicating a fulfillment of needs in Cycle 1, and thus, a focus on new goals for Cycle 2. Technical problems hampered straightforward use or continued use of the synchronous chats by one or more participants in both Cycles. The following are some statistical comparisons regarding SAC use and autonomous behaviour from both groups.

4.3.2. Statistical comparison of both groups' SAC use and autonomy development. Given the low degree of participation in this structured autonomy part of the research (three participants in Cycle 1 and four in Cycle 2), any difference that might be seen between the structured and unstructured groups was not considered quantitatively significant. Generally, the overall experience had been more alike than different. Nevertheless, as part of the mulling reflectiveness of action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988), comparisons were made after each of the Cycles between the two groups' SAC use of the online environment, and their perception of how their time on FLUACC had helped their autonomy and writing development. The results were surprisingly prominent enough in both Cycles to augment the positivity of the structured group's experience.

4.3.2.1 Statistical comparison of groups' use of environment. A comparison was made of how the two groups (structured and unstructured) made use of the SAC environment in both Cycles. The quantitative data from the sources used in RQ1 was analyzed further, namely, the individual logs of resource and tool use (f) plus the number of 1-1 asynchronous interactions (g). The percentages of individuals from each group involved were compared for both Cycles.

An overview of the main differences is shown in Figure 15 below. The structured group stands out quite markedly on all counts regarding retention (continued use), (f) resource and tool use, and (g) 1-1 asynchronous use.

Retention in both Cycles for the whole duration of the Cycle was 100% of the structured group participants compared to about a 40% dropout rate for the unstructured group. A higher percentage of the structured group made an appreciable use of the resources (over 75 logs) compared to the

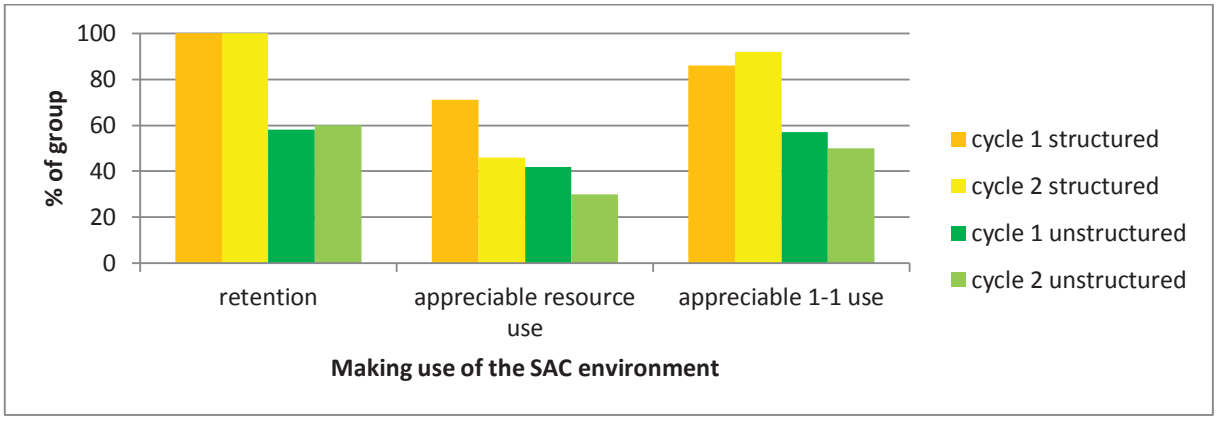


Figure 15. Main differences between both groups' use of the environment for Cycles 1 and 2.

unstructured group, although the difference was much greater in Cycle 1. For the 1-1s asynchronous interactions over both Cycles, appreciable dialogue (six or more interactions) was utilized by a higher percentage of the structured group than the unstructured group. This difference was greater in Cycle 2 when there were repeaters, two of whom had transferred from the unstructured group to the structured.

Although these are small samples (n = 14 for Cycle 1, n = 23 for Cycle 2), it could be hypothesized that the structured groups got something more than the unstructured groups which eventually showed up as resilience and diligence for writing development and autonomy. The only way the structured group's opportunities differed from the unstructured groups' was through being pedagogically socialized for understanding and applying the special structured autonomy program (N.B. Both groups could access the knowledge on the site). As mentioned already, only a few of the structured group participated in the chats and accompanying activities in each Cycle, and they only did part of phase one of the program. Nevertheless, it was noticed in FLUACC's resource and tool use records (f), that even those from the structured group who did not participate were accessing the written descriptions of the "special program for lemons" and the "optional support tools" that were available to all on FLUACC. In fact, these were revealed by these records to be a popular place to dip (2-8 times). The synchronous chat records, being automatically posted, were also a favorite place to browse.

4.3.2.2. Statistical comparison of both groups' metacognitive gain. Both groups' self-perceived metacognitive changes over the 10 week period of the research were compared from the pre- and post-metacognitive questionnaires (a, b). The results of each Cycle are equated to their perceived development of autonomy.

For Cycle 1 (Figure 16), the structured group initially rated their perception of their initial metacognition positively in all aspects except two, specifically "I have my own ways of measuring how much I have learned in English Writing" and "To learn English Writing I don't need a teacher." Perceptions of both these latter items progressed from negative to positive by the end of the Cycle. The biggest increase over time was in the item "I have my own ways of measuring how much I have learned." The only item that decreased was, "I can identify my strengths and weaknesses", although it was only half a scaled increment and was still positive.

Meanwhile, the unstructured group rated high initially in all except one aspect. Though this negative aspect represented the statement, "I don't need a teacher", indications of self-reliance increased greatly over the duration of the Cycle, equaling a stronger belief; still, it was still not a positive score (so, the move was from "I strongly need a teacher" to "I still need a teacher"). Drops were seen in three items that had been quite positive for the three items, "I know what to do to improve," "I can identify my own strengths and weaknesses," and "I know how to plan my learning", compared to a decrease in only one item for the structured group.

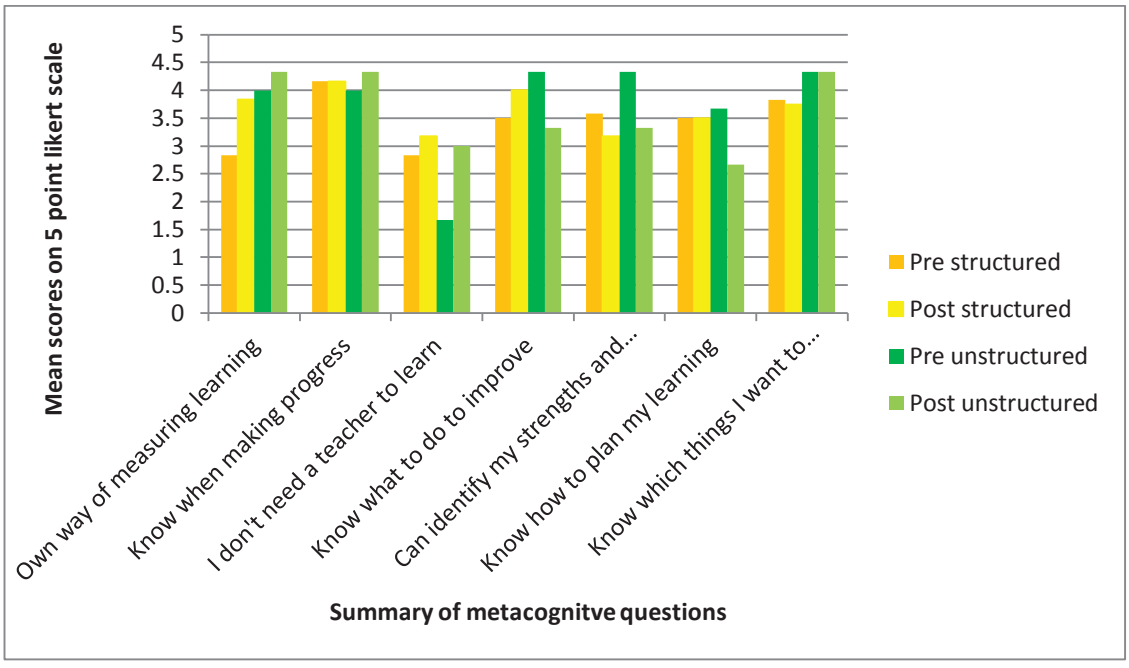


Figure 16. Cycle 1 groups' pre versus post metacognitive perceptions.

Overall, the structured autonomy group indicated improvement in perceived autonomy in the sum of all the items with an overall mean sum difference of +1.35 compared to the unstructured group's -1. The structured group's +1.35 increase in this study is a reasonable response for a program that was

accessed on average 1-2 times a week compared to Cotterall and Murray's (2009) more structured study outcome for a longer compulsory course (mean sum difference = +4.11) using a similar questionnaire.

Cycle 2's metacognitive change between groups could not be compared fairly because only one participant from the unstructured group completed both pre- and post-metacognitive questionnaires. Eight from the structured group completed them with a high overall mean gain of +4.47 over the Cycle, comparing quite favourably to Cotterall and Murray's (2009) research mentioned above. Compared with Cycle 1's structured group students, Cycle 2's structured group students perceived greater gains in metacognitive growth. Having repeaters (n=5) from Cycle 1, increased personalization, more resources, and refinement of advisement techniques could all have influenced this outcome.

4.3.2.3. Statistical comparison of groups' evaluation of usefulness. The results from the participants' evaluation questionnaires (e) of the 10 week experience using FLUACC, in terms of usefulness, supportiveness, and helpfulness towards their development of writing proficiency and autonomy, were compared between groups for their perceptions. The questionnaire was completed in Cycle 1 by n = 6 (85%) of the structured group members, and n = 4 (57%) of the unstructured group, and in Cycle 2 by n = 11 eleven (85%) of the structured group and n = 3 (30%) of the unstructured group. Overall, the structured group in both Cycles found their time on FLUACC more useful and supportive regarding writing development than the unstructured group and felt they were able to develop their self-management skills more during a Cycle. The Cycle 2 results are shown as an example below.

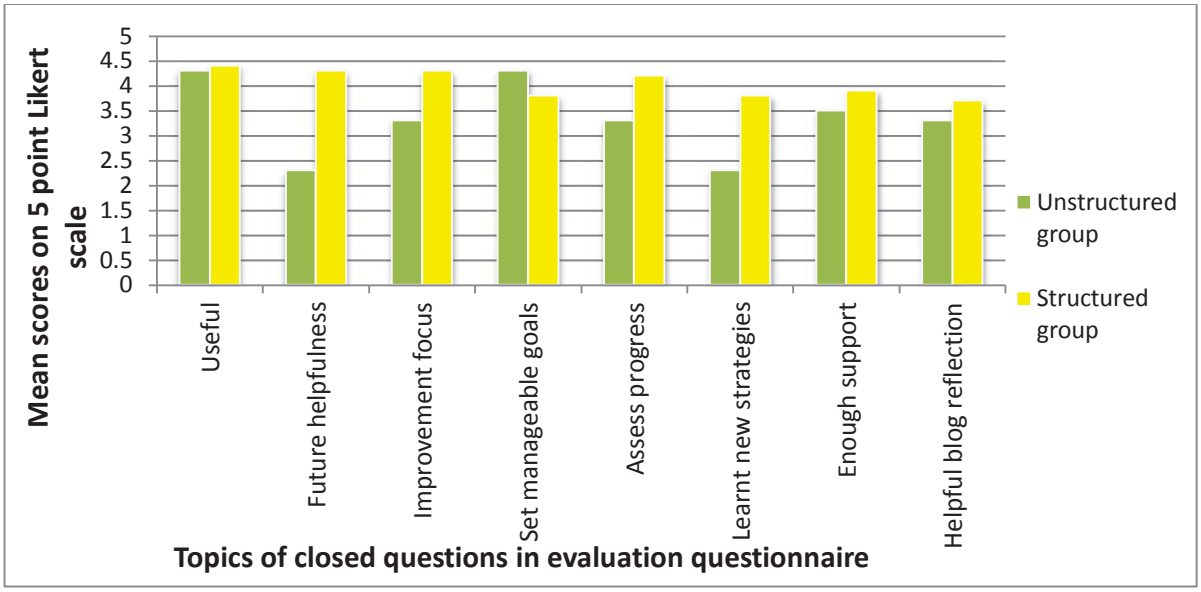


Figure 17. Cycle 2 students' perceptions from evaluation questionnaires.

Figure 17 contains a comparison of the mean values on a five point Likert scale for each closed question per group for Cycle 2. All answers were positive for the structured group, but not for the unstructured. Moreover, as shown in the graph, the structured group was more positive in their ratings of most questions (the exception was being "able to set manageable goals"). Also a big difference of 1-2 points on the Likert scale is seen for four aspects, three of them involving self-management (autonomy).

4.3.3 Summary of RQ 3 findings. The advisory programme for autonomy development offered to the structured group was only begun by a few participants in each Cycle. However, from the outset, participants immediately manifested control over interactions in a synchronous chat. Autonomy could be fostered through a structured yet flexible programme, with a new impetus given to both rapport and autonomy. This interaction (though minimal) may have helped students in the long term. A comparison of the descriptive statistics from the structured and unstructured group unexpectedly revealed that the structured group displayed greater retention in terms of continuing for each 10 week Cycle, and made higher use of the resources and the 1-1 asynchronous interactions. The structured group on average perceived greater autonomy development and higher usefulness of the resources and support. Overall, the structured group (even though only a few participated in the actual structured chats and aids) showed more evidence of autonomy development in writing than the unstructured group.

4.4. Research Question 4: What are the main aspects affecting the success of an online SAC for developing autonomy and L2 writing proficiency?

The pedagogical efficacy of a SAC is a combination of developing language proficiency and learner autonomy (Cotterall & Reinders, 2001). The efficacy, or success, of an online SAC should thus be determined by an evaluation of the language ("writing" in this situation), and the autonomy development that occurred through the use of this facility. However, the nature of SACs involves other considerations including whether L2 writers' full needs are being met, the realities of the local situation, and adaptations that work for both students and advisors (Harris, 2000; Lefort, 2010). For credible evaluation results, multi-perspectives (Gardner & Miller, 1999) and multi-methods are advocated (Champagne et al., 2001; Mynard, 2006).

The individual case summaries (o) were amassed from all the data source components (a-n). Content analysis of the case summaries was conducted to determine key aspects of success or deficiencies of the online SAC (see section 3.3.5). Content analysis produced nine themes that applied both individually and in total to the case summaries: (A) autonomous behaviour, (B) reflection, (C)

fostering autonomy, (D) community and interactions, (E) affect, (F) writing support, (G) usefulness, (H) student differences, and (I) problems (see Figure 18).

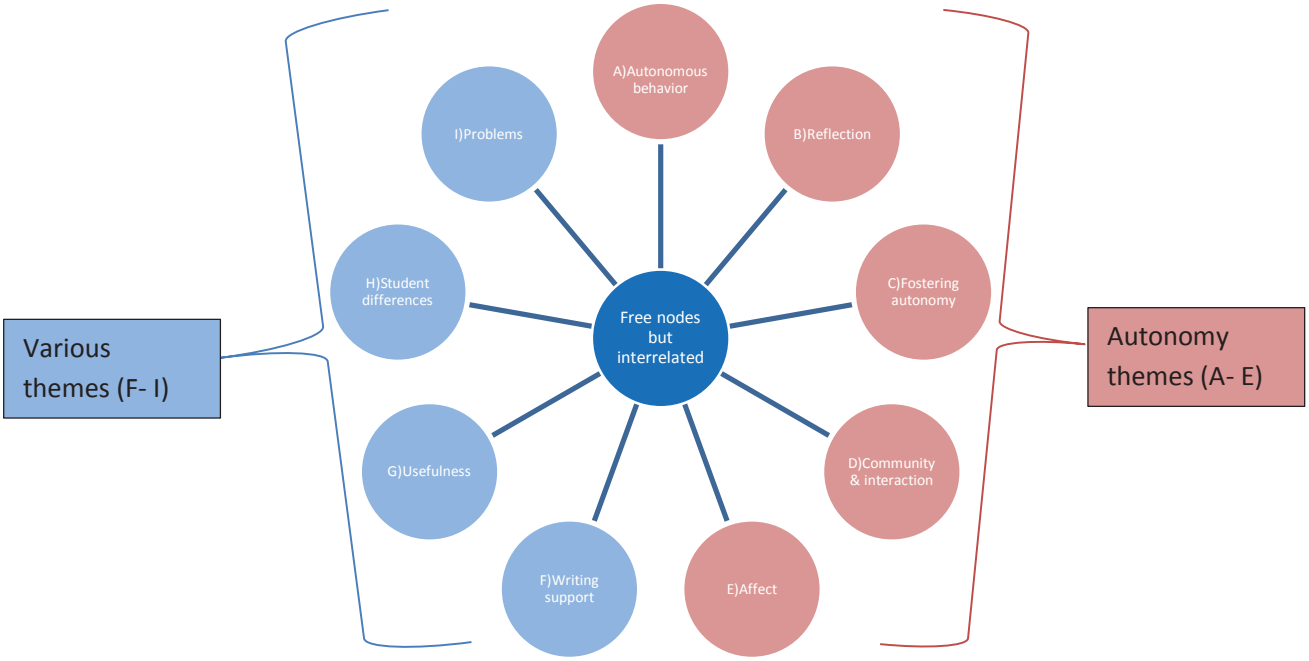


Figure 18. Content analysis themes.

These nine themes emerged from open content analysis, minus preconceptions to allow emergent themes (Denscombe, 2007), and were also checked and confirmed against other studies (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009) that had sought to gauge important success-related aspects of independent learning centres and distance learning. The themes from the content analysis "usefulness," "writing support," "fostering autonomy," "differences," and "problems" paralleled Reinder's (2007a) study. "Affect" has been affirmed as an underrated yet important aspect of autonomy and students' responses (Benson, 2001; Bown & White, 2010; Monk & Ozawak, 2005; Shea & Bidjerano, 2010); "autonomous behaviour" gathers displays of such behaviour (Sanprasert, 2010); "reflection" is a significant part of autonomy growth (Cotterall & Murray, 2009; Reinders, 2010; Thonus, 2002); and "community and interaction" classify data regarding the interdependent/social autonomy backbone (Jones et al., 2006; Sanprasert, 2010). Some research has included these themes in one multidimensional construct of autonomy (Reinders, 2010). However, in the findings presented here, the themes are treated separately to gain more awareness of each contributing dimension to the conceptual framework of autonomy in this situation of practice (Benson, 2011a).

The content of each theme emerges from the individual case summaries (o), which in turn stem from the data sources (a-n). In the process of identifying individual points of interest condensed in a content theme (p), I often returned to the same information in the case summaries (o) or the full versions in the original data source components (a-n). Thus, analysis of the case summaries (o) and the content analysis themes (p) involved a continued back and forward checking between the primary and secondary mixed data sources, a hallmark of action research reflection (Creswell, 2005), dynamically portrayed in Figure 5, section 3.3.5.

Also, as mentioned in Chapter 3, some data related to more than one theme due to the interrelatedness of the themes and the multi-dimensional constructs involved. In the process of interpreting the findings from each theme, sometimes further analysis was indicated. This continual re-referencing is characteristic of AR's responsiveness (Dick, 1993), and will be described as it occurred under each relevant theme. Similarly relevant, the two action research Cycles' results are summarized together or described consecutively according to the best sharing of findings for the specific aspects and sub-aspects of the RQ. Repeaters are mentioned separately in Cycle 2 when they influence results differently to first timers in Cycle 2. The themes associated with success are discussed in order from A to I with the autonomy themes first.

4.4.1. Autonomous behaviour (A). Autonomous behaviour is one of the main aspects both portraying the success of a SAC and also influencing the same. The way students use a SAC can be construed as evidence of their autonomous behaviour (Benson, 2001). The content analysis of theme (A) "autonomous behavior" identified the various autonomous behaviors displayed by participants.

The working definition of learner autonomy for this study was "the capacity and the willingness to take responsibility for some aspects of one's learning in a specific situation" (see section 2.2.1). The behaviours identified as autonomous were a mixture of the behaviours typically associated with autonomy in the literature (Benson, 2011a; Little, 1996; Sanprasert, 2010) and those context-specific to FLUACC, i.e., with its specific elements and participants. Whether the source of any particular autonomous behaviour was inherent, because of the nature of the website, or due to the explicit items for fostering autonomy in the programme design, the result of active autonomous learning portrayed success. This section discusses the initial autonomous behaviour required to access FLUACC and then reviews other forms of autonomy demonstrated during the course of both Cycles.

The act of applying for the online programme is itself a demonstrated act of autonomy, especially with the potential barrier of an additional comprehensive information sheet to read and a

consent form to fill out before any access was granted. In Cycle 1, over 60 students requested information about FLUACC, 30 returned the consent forms, and finally 18, upon receiving an access key, proceeded to access the online SAC. The attrition of this process might be ascribed to the human weakness of following through with our good intentions, but also the extra research elements required could have been daunting as well. Therefore, the participants who finally made it through this process already demonstrated evidence of autonomous behaviour by pursuing their goals despite the difficulties.

The autonomous behaviour observed during the use of the SAC is summarized in Table 2 below hierarchically, ranging from general autonomous behaviours #1to #6 (over half the participants, n › 7 in Cycle1, n › 11 in Cycle 2), to more unique behaviours #7 to #13 (n = 3, 2 or 1).

Table 2. *Various Autonomous Behaviours Demonstrated by Participants in Both Cycles*

1. **Sought help when needed**
2. **Viewed self with initial high metacognition**
3. **Initially helped her/himself fast on FLUACC**
4. **Accessed site regularly/prolifically**
5. **Identified own needs, weaknesses, goals**
6. **Matched resources to own needs & used**
7. **Accessed in preparation for outside exams**
8. **Sent reminder of needed feedback**
9. **Set specific goals voluntarily in their initial profiles**
10. **Gave warning about sending a draft soon**
11. **Pre-prepared structured autonomy step**
12. **Initiated forum discussions to get peers' views**
13. **Spontaneously self-corrected in chats**

Collectively the table displays a range of behaviours that portrayed autonomy with almost half, in their individual variety, being displayed by over half the participants. Discussion of some of these follows either by virtue of their significance in terms of being typically recognized in the literature or their uniqueness shaped by context. Thus, 5, 9, 13 and 2 are commented on in that order.

Over half the students in Cycles 1 and 2 "identified own needs" (behaviour # 5) specifically in varying amounts. The following examples of identifying own needs are quoted from (g) 1-1 asynchronous interactions. M2 commented:

"maybe problem with my writing speed modest quickly but not enough. My problem is grammar for both (speaking and writing). Forget (accuracy) when speak or write quickly."

She realized that she makes a lot of mistakes when writing fast and not checking. Another participant, M5, asked regarding her argumentative draft essay, referring specifically to the places where she needed help in her essay:

"tell me if I have good organization, spelling, arguing and good ideas, especially with the introduction and conclusion."

N2 was very specific about what she wanted help with, an instance being where she said:

"I want to write about …I want to add…So can I integrate between these two ideas".

These students named their needs themselves, demonstrating good proactive autonomy.

In Cycle 2, two students proactively "set specific goals voluntarily in their initial profiles" (behaviour #9) when accessing FLUACC for the first time. H1 wrote:

"My goal 6.5 on IELTS."

And A8 went on to give his real reasons, which were long term, for wanting to join FLUACC,

"… my aim is to improve my grade in Eng PF 2 …"

His introspection is acknowledged in the "Reflection" theme section below. Furthermore, H1 did actually attain her proficiency goal during Cycle 2 when she was using FLUACC.

The way that A3 uniquely "spontaneously self-corrected in chats" (behaviour #13), see section 4.3.1.1, clearly displays proactive autonomous behaviour. Unfortunately, how much self-editing was done by individual students on their own writing could not be assessed, as it would have necessitated an artificial separate step. The act of isolating it as a step would cause the process to become imposed, or reactive autonomy.

Most students "viewed self with initial high metacognition" (behaviour #2) via the metacognitive questionnaires(a); yet, from my perspective(m) as advisor/researcher, I could not agree with some students' perceptions of themselves. S2 marked her metacognition as particularly high (except for planning), yet, her behaviour contradicted this. Specifically, she indicated that she strongly disagreed that she needed a teacher to learn English writing, but she sought me out for F2Fs as well as making high use of 1-1s. She did show proactive autonomy in her use of the electronic resources and

valiantly argued with me as to why some elements of her writing seemed right even though I had identified them as problematic. Thus, she displayed a mixture of reactive and proactive autonomy.

Individual emancipation of political-critical autonomy was manifested in students' sharing of their unique pursuits in 1-1s. A8 wanted to hone his English by writing stories, M1 wanted to collaborate with peers regarding writing, A6 wanted to work on his own by using the website's resources after verifying his chief weakness, S2 wanted some F2F sessions at crucial times, and A3 suggested integrating other skills with writing.

Many personally asked for the FLUACC service to continue in following semesters. In fact, the 1-1s provided an easy way to support different forms of autonomy.

4.4.2. Reflection (B). Reflection, as a psychological dimension of autonomy, was another main aspect of the success of the SAC. Even though reflection is a largely internal process, some data still emerged. Capturing reflection through blogging is first discussed before reviewing the diversity of other ways reflection was displayed. The results of Cycle 1 and 2 have been combined as they were similar.

One primary way reflection was planned to be encouraged was by students writing blogs. Each participant on the FLUACC website had a blog tool. However, the Moodle hosting server presented a technical issue regarding privacy that could not be rectified, with the result that the blogs needed to be almost completely private. Blogging was encouraged as part of the structured autonomy programme, especially for goal setting and achieving. As the learners kept their blogs private, except for two students briefly sharing their needs analyses and goal setting with me after a chat, it cannot be proved how much use was made of blogs as a reflection tool from direct evidence.

Indirect evidence however showed up in the evaluation questionnaire (e) because one question specifically asked students about the helpfulness of reflecting on their blog. Most participants who completed this questionnaire (n = 10 in Cycle 1, n = 14 in Cycle 2) answered positively irrespective of group (90% in Cycle 1, 93% in Cycle 2). The outright "yes, absolutely" helpfulness of their blogging was noted by 20% in Cycle 1, and 29% in Cycle 2, while most other participants were positive in a milder way – "to a certain extent" (60% in Cycle 1, 50% in Cycle 2) and "a little" (10% in Cycle 1, 14% in Cycle 2). This indirect evidence of reflection is necessarily less reliable than direct proof would have been and is included here only for reference.

Various other reflective behaviours of students were evident via content analysis (p) feeding back into 1-1 asynchronous interactions (g) including comments with drafts, synchronous chats (j), and the evaluation questionnaire's (e) open questions. The criteria for establishing whether reflection was

occurring was whether there was evidence of some kind of detached or prolonged critical thinking about some knowledge or process (Little, 1991). The reflective behaviours identified matched this definition yet, as per autonomous behaviour in the previous section, presented a mixture of the behaviours typically associated with reflection in the literature (Benson, 2011a; Little, 1996; Sanprasert, 2010) and behaviours more context-specific to the research situation. The reflective range is presented in Table 3 from #1 to #15 that show general behaviour, such as "checked out learning how to learn tools" (about half the participants, n = 18 combined Cycles) to the more unique such as "initiated forum discussion…" (only manifested by a couple of participants). Behaviours #9 to #15 were manifested by just one or two students.

Table 3. *Reflective Behaviour by Participants in Both Cycles*

1. **Checked out learning how to learn tools**
2. **Showed interest in the writing process, not just the product (evidenced by plans/ chunks / reviews)**
3. **Checked out (lurking) others' chats, blogs, assignments, forum discussions, other users' activities**
4. **Allowed time for dialogue**
5. **Checked out site quite comprehensively**
6. **Asked reflective questions & created dialogue**
7. **Displayed critical thinking**
8. **Talked metacognitively & metalinguistically**
9. **Attempted self-editing (specifically mentioned)**
10. **Explained context and teacher's expectations of essay**
11. **Set the pace, going ahead of what was expected**
12. **Asked further questions regarding pointers given**
13. **Initiated forum discussion to get peers' perspective**
14. **Explained own perspective as to why one thought differently**
15. **Planned steps into the future, very long term**

Quite notably, almost half the participants "showed interest in the writing process, not just the product"(#2 above). They took time to develop their essay as a process with reflective thought, rather than just stringing ideas together as quickly as possible and never looking back. Some showed me a plan

or wrote to me about it, some wrote in sections of paragraphs with one to two main supporting ideas at a time, or mentioned having reviewed their writing. Reflection took place particularly when students were writing papers of over 500 words. They would no doubt have used this process in their writing classes and it served them well in their 1-1s via FLUACC too.

Another form of reflection, "allowed time for dialogue" (#4 above), showed up strongly in the analysis, along with "asked reflective questions and created dialogue" (#6). D3 demonstrates the latter by asking:

> *"My question is how can I integrate between these two topics and what type of esay I am going to use?"*

These aspects sometimes did not occur at first, but as rapport became more established with individuals, reflection was easier to encourage by asking questions that promoted #4 and #6 above. Demonstration of #4 is evidenced by the multiple interactions per paper by most students (100% in Cycle 1 and 93% in Cycle 2) of those who used the 1-1 asynchronous interactions for paper submission.

Most of the structured group participants "checked out the learning how to learn tools" (#1) a number of times. The website had two pages labeled as "Extra help for Lemon group learners" and "Optional extra learner support/tools." This suggested their interest in reflecting on how to learn. Yet only a small number (3 of 7 in Cycle 1, 4 of 13 in Cycle 2) followed these visits up with synchronous chats. Few of the unstructured group participants checked out the information, probably because they were not directed to these parts of the site as part of their access information.

"Attempted self-editing" (#9) was only specifically mentioned by two participants. Although it might have been happening, self-editing cannot be taken for granted for as A7 expressed:

> *"I have to improve my essay, sometimes I don't know if I write correctly or not!"*

Three participants (M1, E3 & D4), though quite proactive in autonomy, notably showed complete unawareness of their limited accuracy and proof reading techniques. This problem for L2 students' proofreading has been identified previously in the literature (Bruce & Rafoth, 2004; Wang, 2012).

Lastly, A8 and M10 were very thoughtful regarding "planning steps into the future, very long term" (#15) and how to get there in their profiles. For instance A8 wrote:

> *….6/10 in the last essay, so I lack writing skills so my aim is to improve my grade in Eng PF2 but this is not my own reason. The main reason is because every time a write something I find many mistakes (grammatically, sentence structure) and that makes me forget the idea I want to deliver. So I want to improve my English writing to a degree that I put calculus 2 aside and improve the writing. Also I believe that the better the writer you are the better the communication you have with others.*

This statement obviously contains considerably far-reaching reflection, and he wrote this in his planning stage at the beginning of his FLUACC Cycle.

4.4.3. Fostering autonomy (C). Fostering autonomy (C) was one of the two major aims of the SAC and was quite successful. The discussion below from the content analysis (p) of fostering autonomy draws a picture of autonomy being fostered in three ways: by use of electronic resources, 1-1s with the advisor, and other ways.

4.4.3.1. Fostering autonomy by resources. The electronic resources were declared useful by most participants in their evaluation questionnaire (e) with many examples given of either specific ones, or reference to all generally. 65% (n = 9) of participants in Cycle 1 and 74% (n = 17) in Cycle 2 used these resources and 1-1s with the advisor. Of the minority six participants from the sum of both Cycles who used resources and tools (f) almost exclusively as opposed to 1-1 asynchronous interactions (g), four showed an increase in the sum of their metacognitive skills scores from the pre- and post- metacognitive questionnaire. Two of these minority participants, H1 and A8, had very high increases (10 and 11 points respectively on the Likert point system). Also, H1 was able to use the resources and tools to help her get to her goal of 6.5 in IELTS for writing (prior to this research programme her score had been 5.5). These results help to show that a self-directed environment with minimum human guidance does work for fostering autonomy for some students, albeit not the majority (Benson, 2011a; La Ganza, 2008; Victori, 2007).

4.4.3.2. Fostering autonomy by 1-1s with advisor.

The range of methods I used to foster autonomy via 1-1 asynchronous interactions (g) in Cycles 1 and 2 were shown in the content analysis (p). Often in this analysis I returned to the original 1-1 asynchronous interaction data, including students' draft texts (g). Typically many of these interactions involved the various discourse methods in the advisement literature (Little, 2007; Mozzon-McPherson, 2012; Thonus, 1999) but others were context-specific evolving from the actual task. Table 4 below lists the discourse methods, with #1-11 denoting general instances (many participants, n = 16 from both Cycles with repeaters counted only once, 57%) while #12-15 show specific instances (just for several participants, n = 2 or 3). The discourse methods represent an eclectic mix, utilized as individually needed and always associated with students' writing needs.

In accordance with Hewett (2015), a method is noted as either directive or nondirective. A directive speech act is where form and function agree, as in a command, fact, or explanation; a nondirective speech act is where form and function do not agree as in a suggestion. A student must make an inference to interpret a nondirective speech act, which can lead to vagueness and ambiguity for the student. Still, a suggestion is offered in politeness, leaving a distance, allowing the student's text to remain unappropriated and encouraging learner autonomy. To uphold straightforward language for my indirect comments, I limited introductory clauses to "I suggest …"or "You could use…".

Directive or nondirective methods are indicated in the table respectively by the letters D or N, or as a mixture of both, D & N, noted in brackets after each item.

Table 4. *Methods Used to Foster Autonomy by Advisor During 1-1 Asynchronous Advisement*

1. Dialogue encouraged, not just one sided feedback (N)
2. Directions and suggestions given (D & N)
3. **Some higher order and lower order errors covered (D & N)**
4. Comments made for understanding, explanation (N)
5. First feedback given with astute attention to feelings and needs (N)
6. Specific resources referred to for info to overcome problem/needed practice (N)
7. Metacognitive and metalinguistical talk (N)
8. Steps/process scaffolded (N & D)
9. Strategies imparted (N & D)
10. More customized autonomy suggested as student returned again & again (N & D)
11. 'Expect-correct' tactic introduced to expect some student corrections but correction given to some harder errors (D & N)
i) Ditto comments to accentuate common error repetition (D & N)
ii) Simple editing code for indirect error correction (D & N)
iii) One paragraph corrected and student expected to apply to next (D & N)
iv) Suggestion to student: You do this and I'll do that for you (D & N)
12. Encouragement to achieve 1-2 goals at a time (not all needs at once) (N)
13. Student made aware of specific fossilization so need of conscious habitual correction (D)
14. Explicit explanation given for tool or new step e.g. electronic rater, proof reading (D)
15. Suggestion for student to come for early help to give time to learn/do in doable parts (N)

Advisory help often necessitated a directive mode, where students just followed directions reactively. However, it could be combined with a mitigating mode promoting proactive healthy dialogue/negotiation. Even when a student showed very reactive autonomy (over dependent, needing directions all the time), it was easy to employ some methods like "encourage dialogue" (#1) and "talk metacognitively and metalinguistically" (# 7) to expand not only their writing development but also their autonomy, encouraging reflection, choice and self-direction. Multiple dialogues showed gradual increased depth, quality and range in directive and non-directive coverage.

That my comments were sensitive from a sociocultural perspective was evident in the students' replies, return dialogue and multi-use of the 1-1s. D4 sent appreciation back for some help I had given and mentioned:

"You are such a humble woman with nice manners."

The "expect-correct" tactic (#11) was devised ad hoc to foster autonomy in a simple balanced way with students' written language proficiency, describing this double goal in terms they could understand. The students were "expected" to apply some error corrections themselves (implying reflection) while I would "correct" some harder ones for them or model a part for them. In particular, I focused on identifying patterned errors within a student's ZPD to "expect" them to correct some for themselves; yet, I "corrected" some of the harder ones, explaining a few of them in readiness for drawing into their ZPD. The "expected" errors were indirectly coded after initially being identified as an error, pushing student reflection. Ensuring I showed patience for interlanguage progress was not a problem as a student's immediate draft was what feedback was given on. Explanations were kept as short and simple as possible and made use of contrastive rhetoric and L1 interference knowledge for explicit L1-friendly explanations.

This expect-correct technique covered not only lexis, grammar and mechanics, but also many structural elements of academic writing that students needed. It could be done in various ways according to individual needs (examples #11 i – iv).

The technique of modeling corrections or coded indirect corrections for a portion of text, and then encouraging the student to apply the same to another portion or the rest of the text, was frequently practiced. Though the "expect-correct" tactic started in Cycle 1, it was implemented even more in Cycle 2 due to its success. Those who implemented the tactic well were seen especially to make progress, moving on to advanced errors rather than repeating some of the same -observable in subsequent drafts of other assignments. Students made positive comments. For example:

> *[the technique] was really useful for many reasons. When you find someone correct your essays and help you understand your weakness is really wonderful. Teachers in class do not have time to show each student his/her problems and the right way to solve it.* (M4)
>
> *Now I am editing my writing and I will send it to you when I am finished* (D2)

This method was labeled non-directive and directive because, though the correction information was explicit, some comments were still worded in suggestions and the use of an editing code or applying moelling are indirect means of expecting corrections. An element of personal social engagement to encourage dialogue was always incorporated which might be as simple as:

"All the best for your coming exam."

On the other hand, for remedying fossilization (cessation of grammar development in a particular form), I was more directive. Several students had developed creative and critical ideas and improved their academic writing, but they remained unaware of the basic grammar and mechanical error still plaguing their papers. The students were "made aware of specific fossilizations" which required "conscious habitual correction" (#13). I explained the necessity of working on these basic blockages, especially to increase their proficiency and explained that this would require follow-up feedback. Thus, they were directed to have autonomy interdependence (take help from me) in this situation with practice until they were conscious of the problem themselves.

The influence of electronic resources and 1-1 asynchronous interactions for fostering autonomy discussed in this section do not include the influence of the synchronous chats, covered under RQ3. There were also other methods for fostering autonomy, described below.

4.4.3.3. Fostering autonomy by other ways. Several other specific ways used to foster autonomy were isolated in the content analysis (p), differing in merit. There were several electronic raters on the FLUACC site that identified errors and made comments as to the type of error. Not many students chose to use these, or if they did initially, they did not continue. M1 commented that she did not usually trust electronic helps like these, but with encouragement, tried them out. She, along with most others, continued to make the human advisor 1-1s their main source of help. Upon analyzing these electronic raters, I found one gave very little help while the other drowned students in too much help. This performance would seem to account for the students' behaviour with them.

Soliciting peer help through forum posts was attempted by M1 and M8, but no one responded. I did in the end. Depending on the question, these forum-posted answers could be good for autonomy-

fostering because students regularly lurked and checked out the forums, chats, assignments, and tools others had used lately when they entered the website. This material, although used indirectly, presumably would have aided autonomy development as useful scaffolding, modelling and learning material.

F2Fs were sought by two participants. One was a struggling low level writer (S2) in Cycle 1 who needed much basic writing help while the other was a higher level writer (S4) in Cycle 2 who wanted to talk to me about general improvement issues. Because this research is about an online SAC, the data for these sessions is not included.

Surprisingly, a positive autonomy fostering tool was the supposedly mandatory pre IELTS essay test (c) on FLUACC to be taken at the beginning of each Cycle. Those who did take the pre IELTS essay test, n = 4 (29%) in Cycle 1, and n = 12 (52%) in Cycle 2, were given their tentative holistic IELTS equivalent score plus feedback in the form of comments on the content, organization and coherence, vocabulary use, and accuracy of their essay. An accuracy diagnosis of a random 100-word passage within the essay was issued too, with comments labeling main problem areas. Suggestions were included about what students could do on the FLUACC site to address their particular essay problems. Students all voluntarily replied to this feedback, finding it very helpful. H1 wrote:

"*Thanks a lot for helping. Now I believe my dream can be achieved.*"

This dream involved her getting a good score in an official IELTS exam. Most students after their IELTS test essay feedback followed up in a reactive way by visiting appropriate places on the website. An outstanding example of the website's potential for developing proactive autonomy was the case of A6 (see 4.4.8), who used this feedback to spur him on to access some appropriate resources and activities regularly throughout the semester.

4.4.4. Community and Interaction (D). Community and interaction (D) are an aspect of SAC success since being socially autonomous or interdependent is an important dimension of autonomy. The other research questions involved the frequency of students' use of the website, the popularity of 1-1s, participants' volubility with chats, the high retention rate, and the poor use of forums, all relevant findings regarding community and interaction. Two other important findings are highlighted in the content analysis (p) concerning this theme.

The first main community interaction success aspect related to keeping the site alive. At one stage, the site went through a quiet time, but when I, as the advisor and designer of the site, posted a news item (which would have been simultaneously emailed to each participant), responses and activity

were suddenly restored again. My news involved humor and empathy, shown in figure 19. Five students promptly responded to this by telling me where they were in their writing, the pressure on them at the time, and their appreciation of the message. For example, D3 responded:

> *I am so stressed ,I have many things to finish in two bad weeks I need your help in my Term paper 2 , I will try to finish studying for my exam today and I will finish writing my term paper …*

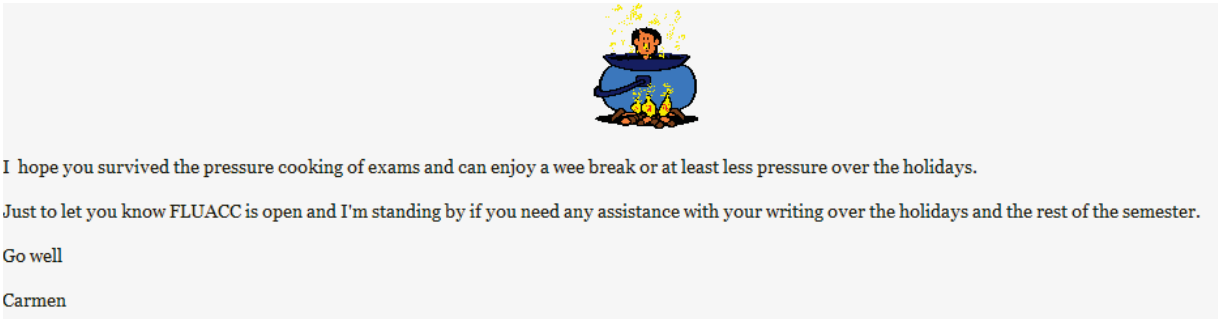


Figure 19. Advisor's proactive news item.

Their responses resulted from a proactive teaching presence. The message had given them a sense of teacher presence and fostered sociocultural autonomy. Interaction is two sided and to keep it up, sometimes it needed to be initiated from the advisor's side.

In Cycle 2, I tried this five times over the 10 weeks, always with similar results. I used it to announce new resources or information I had installed, explaining their relevancy. This may have been a factor in Cycle 2 having a higher retention rate. There was an indication that such contact could be even more frequent, especially in the early stages from the evaluation of A9 in the second Cycle. He was one who did not use FLUACC again after his initial sign on, but responded to filling out an evaluation questionnaire with his reasons for never using it. He commented:

> *"First of all, I thought it would be great to be involved in such a new way of learning. However, I lost my motivation because there was no physical communication between my instructor…".*

This showed A9 needed more initial interaction than the access introduction and instructions to FLUACC provided. He desired interaction, the sociocultural perspective of autonomy, and he was reactionary – wanting it to come from the advisor.

One surprising observation was regarding the language of communication. The Arabic language was the first language of all the participants; thus, students were given a choice in gaining extra initial information and answering questionnaires in Arabic or English. In both Cycles, none sought additional help in Arabic (though initial information sent to them regarding the research was in Arabic), and only three filled out the questionnaires in Arabic, one of these being the open-questions part. This would

seem to indicate a relative ease with or acceptance of using the English language in general. Having all their Majors in English would have been a factor in this. It could also reflect their desire to access and engage in the target language or be evidence of independence or self-regulation.

4.4.5 Affect (E). Affect, whether positive or negative, has recently been counted as a significant component of autonomy (van Lier, 2004; Yamashita, 2015). The content analysis (p) revealed that affect was a regular aspect influencing the success of the online SAC and the overall data from the participants is interlarded with occurrences of anxiety and confidence, stress, motivation, appreciation and likes, and misjudgments.

4.4.5.1. Anxiety and confidence. The majority of participants did not express any negative feelings they may have had from the beginning except one student who shared her lack of confidence and anxiety about her writing capability (S2). Others initially expressed their happiness and keenness about finding a place to improve their writing skills, but that might have ensued from a healthy anxiety of knowing that improvement was needed. 2M11 confidently wrote upon introducing herself that:

"my writing is very good but I think it needs more improvement"

Subsequently, specifically, after 10 days 2B2 shared that:

"I'm very frightened from the [coming] exam ……..feeling myself frustrated that it will be very soon and I did not prepare for it well."

She concentrated mainly on regularly accessing resources for instruction and practice rather than 1-1 interactions.

Others eventually expressed the utter helplessness they felt concerning self-editing:

"I try to fix [grammar] problems but I really don't know from where I should begin" (M4)

"Thank you for spending time reading this with the huge amount of mistakes – which I don't know what they are" (A8)

M2 was a Cycle repeater who had swopped from the unstructured to the structured autonomy group; yet, it was only at the end of Cycle 2 that she directly expressed her initial writer anxiety coupled with its replacement:

"I also became more confident in writing and write my own idea with out fraid that I will be misunderstood cos I know there will be someone excellent in English will read it and tell me my any misunderstanding."

M5 and A3 as Cycle repeaters from the structured autonomy group bought up deep seated fears to address in the second Cycle's synchronous chats (see 4.3.1.3).

4.4.5.2. Stress. Students had a lot of stress with their university studies. D2 mentioned:

"I am so stressed. I have many things to finish in 2 bad weeks"

M4 mentioned that she:

"had a lot of work" and

D2 expressed that she was:

"very bussy."

Scheduling is why many had no time to take the initial pre IELTS essay test. It was only done by n = 4 (29%) in Cycle 1 and n = 12 (52%) in Cycle 2. Then, as mentioned in the last section, when I expressed some empathy for the stressful time they were going through, the students appreciated it. They expressed their appreciation for the support FLUACC gave via resources and advice as a means of relieving stress and aiding in preparation for their assignments and exams. This feedback came in the evaluation questionnaire and 1-1 advisement dialogues. I had to carefully assess how much autonomy and writing proficiency could be expected from the individuals so that their revisions were doable, not impossible or adding to their stress.

4.4.5.3. Motivation. Success and motivation drive each other. Extrinsic motivation was strong initially because students felt the pressure to do well in their graded assignments and exams. Then, a reasonable mark for their assignments after working on one essay with FLUACC perpetuated more success.

Generally, students were strongly motivated throughout. Also, flashes of developing confidence and appreciation for understanding learning-to-learn strategies, portraying some internal motivation, were manifested at times. Multiple 1-1s developed closer relationships, which meant openness of such remarks as shown by A3:

"i corrected all my mistakes which helped me very much to understand the techniques of excellence essay."

Those who asked reflective questions striving for a full understanding of the comments and/or resubmitting a draft after working through the initial comments and feedback were probably the internally motivated ones. They had the energy and willingness to make the extra effort.

An interesting case regarding motivation came from a Cycle 2 male, A8. Towards the end of the semester before the final steps for FLUACC were done, he sent me an email titled "Asking for improvement." In it, he shared that he passed his course with a B grade, but added:

> *I want to improve my English writing dramatically with the least time. I am not asking to help me in a step by step. I want just motivation to keep me writing this summer. I want to write stories but after I write story I think who will read it and then I stop.*

His personal strategy and motivation for improving himself is commendable, but also, his self-awareness of what causes his motivational temperature to fall – the lack of a reader's input – was evident. I commended him for his strategy and encouraged him to share his stories on one of the forum sites in FLUACC, which had international links especially for this type of feedback. I gave him the option of doing the structured autonomy programme at this time because he had time and he could use his stories for the content of his development.

4.4.5.4. Appreciation and likes. Gratitude and much appreciation was the most common affect participants provided. They voluntarily offered thanks for receiving help, achieving new understandings, and success with results, mostly referring to help received in 1-1s. A3 wrote:

> *"Thank you very much, really helpful, do not know how to thank you."*

And she further shared:

> *" I am proud to tell you that I got A for English 2."*

D3 wrote:

> *"Big thanks for help with term papers."*

Some of M4's positive affect included:

> *"When you find someone…help you understand your weaknesses is really wonderful"*
>
> *"I really enjoy this chance and take a lot of information from it"*

Also, the first thing that those who participated in the structured autonomy chats mentioned was their profound gratitude and extended thanks for FLUACC's support.

The attractive, engaging environment presented by FLUACC was mentioned by some participants. They liked the website. For example S2 said:

> *"The way it presenting the subject very useful and interesting. Also I liked the website it full of colors."*

M2 wrote:

> *"I like the design and easy to use anything."*

A11 mentioned:

"I loved the site that is learning through fun and entertainment then learning for us to quickly and easily."

M2 had an interesting, emotional experience writing her post IELTS essay test that displays how writing had become not just a boring chore to her. She wrote:

"Beautiful experience. Time too short. But wrote 361w and not notice [later we found it was 425w actually] Use to writing +1000. I was shocked [good shock]. Look forward to feedback."

Almost a year after the research Cycles had finished, a group of participants sought to meet with me F2F. M1, M5, N2 and A3 had all been in both Cycles of the research and had continued to use FLUACC and advisement on and off in the next couple of semesters having specially requested this. They came to me personally to sincerely let me know how valuable the whole experience with FLUACC had been. They hoped the research would be published because it had been so useful and should be implemented on a fuller scale on campus and elsewhere as a real help to students. M1 shared how a professor had commented on a recent essay she had written, that it could not have been her work, but was written by a native speaker. She was delighted because it was 100% her own work. This was how far she had come in her writing proficiency and autonomy development. All four of these students' progress in both these elements since Cycle 1 showed pleasing maturity and independence, evidence to encourage the availability of a service like FLUACC for the long term, as a legitimate need for students.

4.4.5.5. Misjudgments. Without the wider F2F perceptions, misjudgments can occur. In Cycle 1, a mistake I made was thinking S2 was a male for quite a while. I aided her, but expected more independence than I would have if I had known she was an Arab female (females being culturally much more dependent and interdependent than Arab males). This was an interesting experience to me as advisor when I reflected on how I had chosen unconsciously to treat her so differently because of a gender misjudgment. Also, A6 was the only male on FLUACC in Cycle 1. Would I have encouraged him to initiate the structured autonomy programme more if he had been a female?

Another misunderstanding occurred in Cycle 2, this time regarding my misperception of H1's maturity (detailed in *4.3.1.3*). This experience showed me the need to be careful to verify a participant's level earlier to ensure that all help is relevant. As advisor I was inclined to wait for students to approach me individually before dialoguing, but more proactivity by me with individuals, not just groups (see 4.4.4), could have meant these misjudgments might not have occurred. With the five autonomy themes analyzed, the four other themes are now covered.

4.4.6. Writing support (F). As most students are driven to a writing SAC for writing support (McKinley, 2010), the type of writing support offered is a primary aspect for the SAC. For success in developing L2 writing proficiency, the case of an online SAC is no different. The content analysis (p) focused on types of writing support, again verifying that most of this support took place in 1-1 asynchronous interactions. To avoid repetition on the "how" of the autonomy-backed writing support e.g. the "fostering autonomy" methods from 4.4.3 including the "expect-correct" tactic, this section concentrates on the "what" of writing needs, examining the eclectic mixture required by individual students each time they required aid. Some evidence of writing proficiency success through the 1-1 support is provided, as well as for a generalized shift in needs with students' progress in their university journey. The ultimate mix of bringing writing and autonomy development together is discussed under Principle #3 in the section 5.3.

4.4.6.1 Range of writing needs. From the (g) 1-1 asynchronous interactions (with draft text attachments), it was apparent there were several broad categories of writing problems in students' draft texts. These problems related to academic writing knowledge, language development, contrastive rhetoric/L1 interference, and to a lesser extent maturity of thinking. Specifically identified problems in (1) academic writing included formation of thesis statement, formal writing style and citation of sources; (2) language development included lexicon, grammar, punctuation and spelling; (3) contrastive rhetoric/L1 interference included reverse visualization, vowel blindness and plagiarism; (4) maturity of thinking included lack of critical thinking and formulating ideas. These four broad categories were addressed in the 1-1 feedback to the draft texts submitted online to help the students be successful.

4.4.6.2. Evidence of success in writing support methods. To verify the success of the writing support that students received, I compared the needs students displayed on (a) one specific paragraph from the draft of their earliest assignment in a Cycle to (b) a similarly placed paragraph from a draft of their latest assignment in the same Cycle. Table 5 records these comparisons for 6 participants in terms of the four main writing problem categories where the earlier (a) version is the first line and (b) is directly under. An "X" in one of the four categories in the subsequent columns indicates that the student is manifesting problems within that category. The right column contains summaries about the degree of the problems in each paragraph (a) and (b), with the summary of (b) including a comparison with paragraph (a)'s problems. This was a way to interpret the success of the writing support they received.

The table shows some improvement in the writing proficiency of five of the six comparison texts. Though only M1 and M5 seemed to have overcome one of the broad problem areas, a partial improvement is indicated in the others, evidenced in summaries (b).

Table 5. *Improvement Success for Six Students by Comparing Draft Texts Early vs. Late in Cycle 1*

Students' Writing samples: a= early b= late	Academic Writing AW	Language Development LD	Contrastive Rhetoric CR	Maturity Problems	Summaries of students' writing problems and improvements
N2a	X	X	X		A higher level of LD & CR only needed mainly but some basic problems. Mature writing and thinking.
N2b	X	X	X		Definite improvement in some LD basic problems and level/knowledge of AW requirements
S2a	X	X	X	X	A low level all categories.
S2b	X	X	X	X	Advancement in any area is masked by the large quantity of problems/errors still
A3a	X	X			Needing quite a bit of help with AW expectations. LD was good but still a few basic mistakes. Ideas, organization, spelling & punctuation were very good.
A3b	X	X			Improvement in both AW and LD levels but still some help needed; less and mostly different errors than initially
M5 a	X	X	X	X	Needing help with everything but doable, not overwhelming in number. LD needs were mainly of the harder types, but a few troubling CR problems remain
M5 b	X	X	X		Maturity improving – she is very anxious to know what she should know so she is at the right level. Improvement in other areas. Some CR problems are

					still remaining though help has been given.
M4a	X	X			Basic errors in LD, some organizational problems in AW but good basic knowledge
M4b	X	X			Errors fewer and of a higher level in LD; good organization, increased content & sophistication of AW
M1a	X	X	X		Submitted assignments chunk by chunk with much dialogue, showing improvement over time. Fossilization of LD addressed.
M1b		X			Only some higher level of LD needed mainly.

Writing development is understandably gradual within these big categories as each can be comprised of multiple problems. Any enhancement cannot be credited to just FLUACC's help because all these Cycle 1 students had an English academic writing F2F course at the same time. The effect of their writing course teachers cannot be measured, especially with the intricacies of formal writing. Yet from FLUACC, students still required much help with academic writing and language development. The latter was something they were not given much help with in their writing courses.

Contrastive rhetoric/L1 interference was seen as a problem, but something I used to explain some of their academic writing and language development problems. M5 had maturity problems, but fortunately responded to help, being very anxious to be at her proper level. Maturity problems usually stemmed from coming from high schools where rote learning and memorization was the norm for essay writing. Students from such systems were not used to understanding or thinking critically for composing their own writing.

The advisor/researcher evaluations (m, n) of the 1-1 asynchronous interactions regarding writing support revealed that many individual problems were addressed, help could be repeated when needed, and doable improvements could be expected and achieved. Sessions were easily customized for personal needs, pace and idiosyncrasies, the more so after getting better acquainted with a participant from repeated visits. Much of the feedback they received was being used for revisions generally as evidenced by the students in their expressions of thanks, the submission of their revisions for further checking, and the students returning for help with another chunk of text.

Quite obviously, the students struggled to write acceptable papers. Without the extra time and help they received in the 1-1s they might not have succeeded with their academic writing and language development.

4.4.6.3. Writing support for success at different stages of the university journey. The writing needs of the students were generally different after they had completed their mandatory credit writing courses. Though some required help with assignments for their major disciplines while they were doing their writing courses, most students required much help with their major discipline assignments after the writing courses. They no longer had consistent writing input from their writing teacher. These draft texts were analyzed from content analysis (p) as well as the specific drafts from (g) 1-1 asynchronous interactions. Eight participants in Cycle 2 were at this stage of their university journey, whereas in Cycle 1 there were none.

Whatever the level, students required extra outside help, especially for success in language development. Help with academic writing also was needed, notably source citing and organization for new genres, but still more for language development generally. The repeaters from Cycle 1 required markedly less help in basic academic writing and language development than students new to FLUACC for Cycle 2. These repeaters had moved on to more sophisticated areas of need, demonstrating progress longitudinally via FLUACC.

4.4.7. Usefulness (G). The students' and advisor's perceptions and experience of the usefulness of the online SAC for developing autonomy and L2 writing proficiency are aspects of success. The participants' perceptions were specifically discussed under RQ2 (What were the participants' perceptions of the usefulness of an online SAC for becoming an autonomous learner and a more proficient L2 writer?). My perception as advisor was reported earlier in this section on RQ4. Overall, from students or advisor, there was a great deal of positivity. Content analysis (p) of the usefulness theme identified other findings over the two Cycles. These concerned asynchronous modes, scores of pre-test post-test essays, other grades and marks, changes, access time and colleague acknowledgements.

The usefulness of the two different asynchronous modes was compared and a greater understanding emerged. Asynchronous 1-1s assignment queries originally started at the beginning of the Cycle 1 ten-week period via the assignment review tool on the FLUACC Moodle site as well as via emails. I quickly reverted to emails only since the feedback mechanism using a Microsoft Word

attachment was far superior to that of the Moodle tool. Microsoft Word allowed exact error-positioned comments, feedback colours, and precise Track Changes marking tools. Also, the Moodle tool lacked the privacy of a 1-1 email as each assignment was posted on FLUACC and could be viewed by other participants.

Regarding actual quantitative measures of success, the IELTS essay pre- and post-scores (d, e) were not plentiful enough to address writing improvement. Unfortunately, only a handful of students from Cycle 1 and 2 wrote both essays, n =3 and 4 respectively. Of those who did, only three of the seven showed progress but there was a mean increase from 5.6 to 5.9 (Figure 20). The inter-rater reliability using the correlation coefficient was 71% which is an acceptable level (Kline cited in Kayapinar, 2014). The scores of two participants remained the same, while M4 seemed to worsen in Cycle 1 but improved over her extended time in Cycle 2 (2M4).

Writing improvement is slow and not necessarily linear (Hyland, 2002). IELTS 5 – 6 is known for its seemingly slow progress – so slow it is called the "intermediate plateau". Though improvement is continuing the scale at this level is not granular enough to exhibit the increase (Wood, 2015).

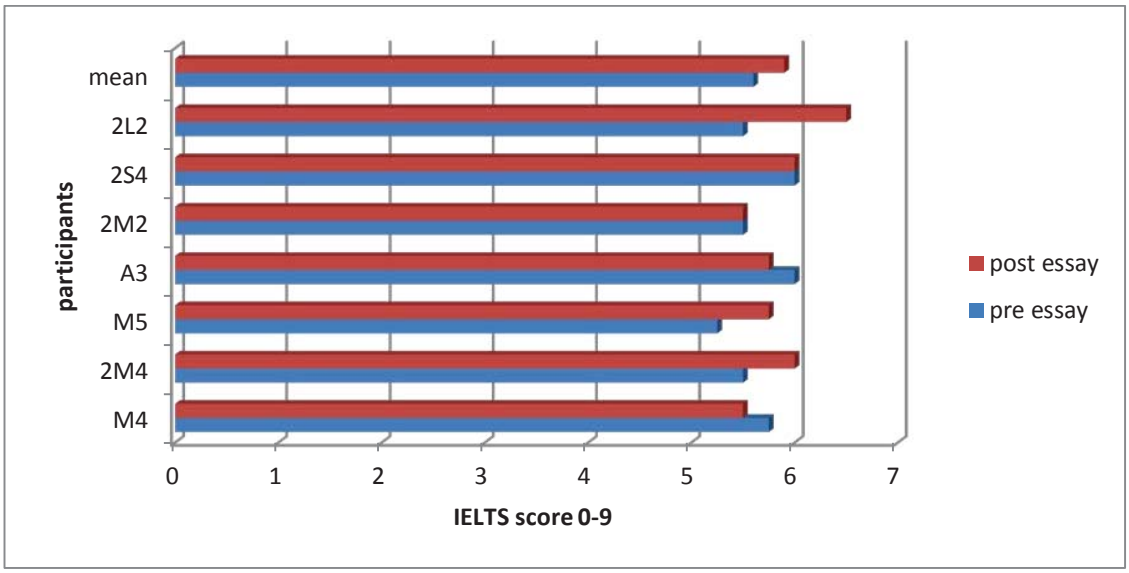


Figure 20. IELTS essay test pre- and post-test scores for Cycles 1 & 2

Something that showed more marked evidence of writing improvement was the 100-word sample accuracy diagnosis done on the IELTS essays. This, also mentioned as part of d and e, produced more noticeable results with regard to both the number of students who improved as well as score difference. The mean was an increase in accuracy from 18 errors to 11 out of a 100-word sample. Figure 21 shows some individuals underwent noticeable improvements. Most noticeably, 2M2 improved from 33 to 11. M4 improved in Cycle 1 and then again in Cycle 2 (2M4) in this measurement.

Though few students did both pre- and post-IELTS essay tests, feedback from the pre-essay provided an additional useful autonomy fostering and language development resource to students. With student needs and focus often being language development, it showed potential as a useful motivating assessment tool.

A number of students voluntarily reported on the good or improved marks they received from lecturer-marked assignments and external exams in Cycle 1 and 2 (i). These comments were shared

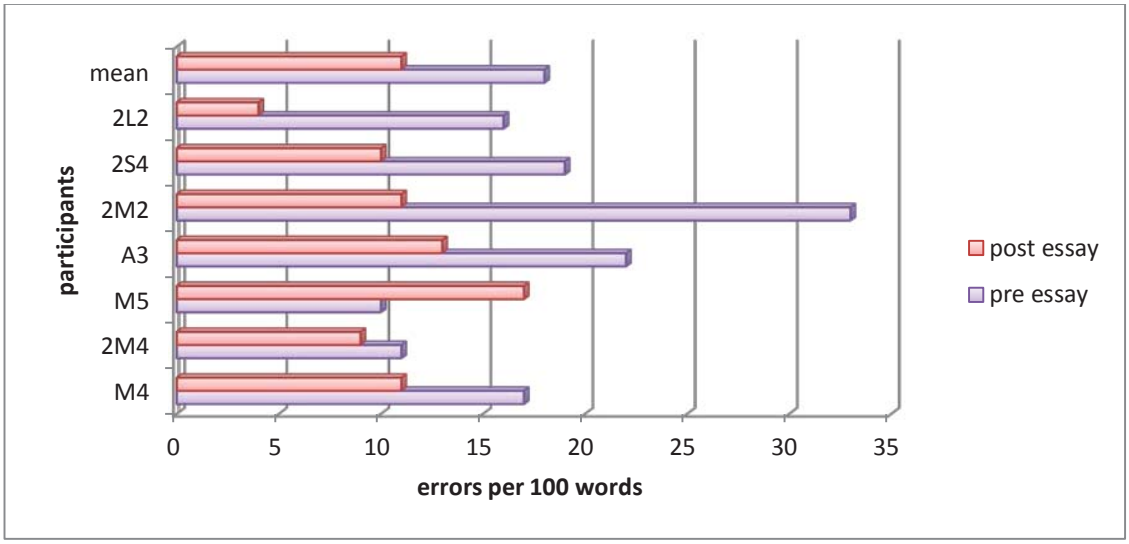


Figure 21. IELTS pre- and post-test errors per 100 words for Cycles 1 & 2

during 1-1 interactions as objective indicators of writing success. Eight students reported A or B grades for specific assignments or courses. Only two reported getting a low grade for a paper and one admitted failing. Four sat the official IELTS exam and received good pass grades. Most directly correlated their good scores/grades to the help they had received from FLUACC. For example, A3 got grade A for her course, so expressed:

"Big thanks to you, miss."

M4 wrote:

"your comment and the website helped me a lot to improve my writing, and finally I got IELTS and my writing grade was increased so I am thankful to you."

Generally, it was the 1-1s that students associated with improvement the most, demonstrating the importance of an advisor in FLUACC.

Concerning usefulness, the website was open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and it was noticeable that the students made use of this availability. Evenings, early morning hours, weekends, and holidays were the busiest times according to data source components (f, g, m, n). This after-hours

availability made the virtual SAC's usability a dimension above a physical writing centre. As advisor, I also had more choice as to when to answer requests.

The useful adaptations made during the course of each semester were noted in my formative field notes (m). Small changes and adjustments, in terms of resources, were made to FLUACC in an ongoing way according to student needs to make it more useful for them. This involved more scaffolding, an extra subtopic extension, or just updating to the latest/ best application resource for a particular objective. Those whom each specific item would help were notified.

More sizeable changes from the experience of Cycle 1 were incorporated for improved usefulness and elimination of problems in Cycle 2. Changes from my post reflections and evaluations (n) of Cycle 1 included placing extra emphasis on the first steps on the website so that students were reminded to do these helpful pre-tests, and showing more proactive advisor presence via additional news items throughout the Cycle.

Finally, the usefulness of the site had a ripple effect on my colleagues, as recorded in my field notes (m) half way through the second Cycle. Someone on the management team approached me saying how management and students seemed really keen about FLUACC. She wondered if it could do with more helpers (advisors)? This was nice to hear but I had to decline due to it being a prescribed research set up until the end of Cycle 2. Another teacher from Pakistan approached me regarding Pakistani students wanting writing help. He said they would be very keen on the kind of aid FLUACC was supplying.

4.4.8. Student Differences (H). Individuals were unique in how they used the FLUACC environment and accessed resources to cater to their learning styles and needs. The high retention rate of participants using FLUACC over a Cycle or even two Cycles showed that it was able to successfully cater for individual differences as seem clearly in the case summaries (o) of two contrasting individuals, M1 and A6, from Cycle 1. They each used FLUACC differently to develop their writing and autonomy mostly with success. Content analysis (p) of their progress verifies these differences.

M1 made high use of writing support via human interaction and community. She participated in advisory 1-1s with me and tried the forums to get peer perspectives. She sent chunks of text from two term papers, paragraph-by-paragraph, for feedback and discussion. She seemed able to self-manage her assignments to work in this consistent manner rather than a last-minute, desperate check. When she sent in draft chunks, she also frequently included questions regarding specific concerns. For example, she asked:

*"** is the highlighted sentence correct ?? It seems that there is something wrong with it ?!!!!"* She was making higher and lower order errors. It was easy to code and expect her to correct many of her lower order errors because she seemed capable. Comments could be quite metacognitive and metalinguistic. Her display of reflection stood out through her interactions via questions with metalinguistic and critical dialogue. Some examples include:

*"**I read in my book about the tips of making a coherence essay ,,, and putting similar starting phrases for the paragraphs was one of them ?? Did I use this strategy in a good way??"*

*"**I read about proof reading ,,, and I tried to fix some errors,,,"*

She did not just accept suggestions, but queried some. She expressed that FLUACC was very useful for developing her writing, especially the 1-1s with advisor, for which she expressed gratitude. She strongly agreed via the metacognitive questionnaire that she needed a teacher to help with this development. Though she tried out peer forums three times, unfortunately her peers did not respond (yet quite a few read the posts). Her suggestion for improving FLUACC was that students should participate more in forums.

She also tried out the electronic resources and tools (f), but mostly in the first half of the 10 weeks when she had more time, rather than the last 5 weeks. This included specific topic and skill resource help. She interpreted the proof-reading resource wrongly, expecting it to have tools to check her work rather than exercises to help her do her own self-editing. She mentioned proofreading as a new strategy she had learned. She tried out an electronic paper-checking tool dubiously, and appreciated when I encouraged her to take a few hints at a time rather than being overwhelmed by all the problems it might identify. Her post IELTS essay (d) 100 word error analysis rendered a good low three errors per 100 words at the end of Cycle 1 compared with 15 errors from an initial 100 word analysis done on one of her earliest assignment drafts, showing good language development improvement over the Cycle. Overall, she seemed to show a large degree of self-motivation and autonomy in a variety of ways.

In contrast to M1, the more introverted A6 preferred the use of resources and tools (f). He did not chat or participate in forums himself, but spent much time lurking/checking over what others had contributed. 1-1 asynchronous interactions (g) were used, but only near the beginning to affirm what to do. After receiving 1-1 feedback from his pre-test IELTS essay (c), for which I also complimented him and encouraged him to work on his grammar via the site, he shared:

"Thank you for your comments on my IELTS essay and I promise you I will solve my problem in grammar and vocab".

This feedback seemingly spurred him to regularly use the resources and tools throughout the 10 weeks. He seemed to mostly concentrate on grammar, and to a lesser extent, vocabulary resources. In the evaluation questionnaire (e) he acknowledged working on FLUACC was very useful and would be in the future too. He found particularly useful:

"the tools such as the sites"

He strongly affirmed in the pre- and post-metacognitive questionnaires (a, b) that he did not need a teacher, verified by his constant use of resources and tools(f). He demonstrated a good degree of autonomous behaviour, but in an entirely different way than M1.

Quantified content analysis differences from their case summaries (o) are represented in Figure 22 below for the nine themes of writing and autonomy development success and affirm variances between them. One-hundred percent represents the total content of a case summary, with the quantification of themes done by NVivo (see Methodology section 3.3.5.2). The sum for themes

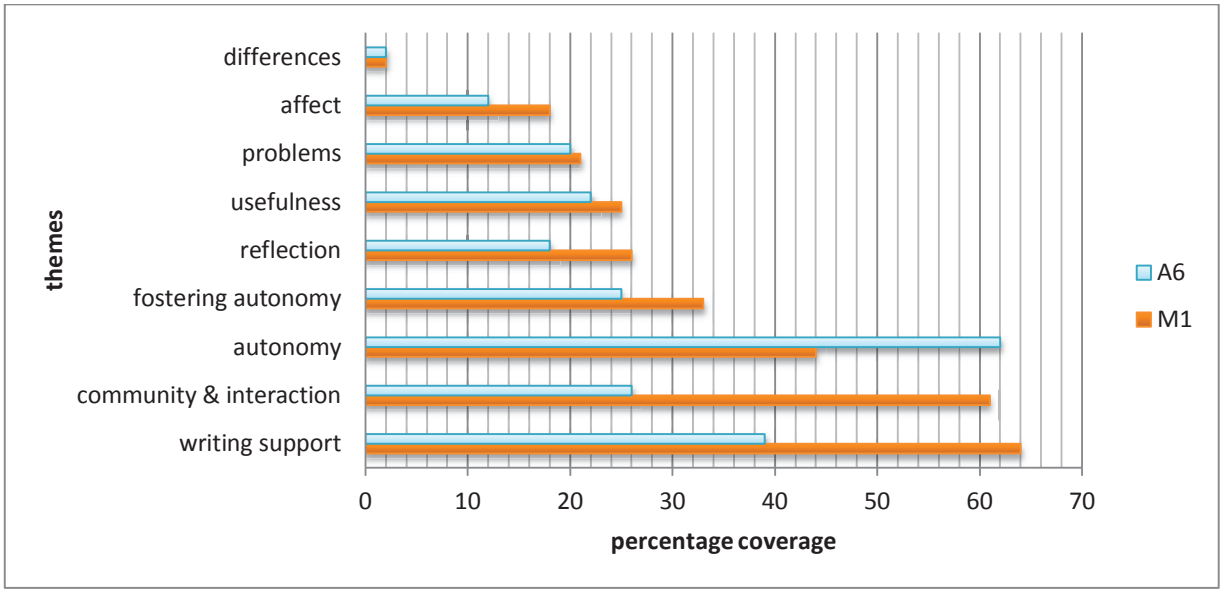


Figure 22. Comparing the different frequency of themes for participants M1 & A6.

theoretically could exceed 100% as content is often aligned to more than one theme, with much interrelatedness. Comparison between students can be made as each one was analyzed the same way offering an objective, systematic, quantitative comparison to increase confirmation of other analyses (Franzosi, 2007). Data particularly confirms M1's use of 1-1s for writing help and collaborative autonomy versus A6's silent independent autonomy.

4.4.9 Problems (I). Despite the many previously mentioned advantageous aspects of the online SAC, definite problems occurred that hindered the smooth, successful attainment of writing and autonomy development. These problems were noted regularly as critical evaluation in my field notes (n, m). Content analysis (p) brought two notable problems to the forefront, specifically, technology and gender.

Regarding technology, not all students were tech savvy enough to have smooth log-ons and the server itself caused some problems. The initial log-on, password construction, activation, and verification were too complicated for some students, and they needed additional instructions. Sometimes FLUACC access verifications were removed by the university as spam and not forwarded to students' university email or even their spam email. During one 24 to 48 hour stint, the university would not pass on any of the students' FLUACC work. Occasional Word attachments also got changed to some file type that could not be opened when duly sent by email. Finally, the evaluation questionnaire (e) was done by some in Cycle 1 with a delay since it took time to create a version that would work on everyone's computer with/without upgrades. This part was running smoothly in Cycle 2.

Differences in needs or wants because of gender were not apparent; however, cultural problems because of gender arose with a couple of females. Other universities in Qatar are co-ed, but this research university has separate, but neighboring, campuses for males and females. This is because some conservative Arabs, for cultural and religious reasons, believe education should be segregated, even in tertiary institutes. With my open website, both genders could enroll. This caused no problems in Cycle 1; but in Cycle 2, the female E3 suddenly realized it was a mixed site and asked how she could make a pseudonym for herself, something I had encouraged in the instructions anyway. She felt embarrassed because her contact email was obviously available through the site. Despite this apprehension, she continued to use the website, even asking for permission to use it after the research was finished. In addition, H1 had happily used and completed Cycle 2 and asked to continue, but suddenly said she was "so sorry", she could not. This might have been because of the above cultural problem.

4.4.10. Summary of RQ4 findings. The success of the FLUACC online SAC was evaluated for its contribution to the development of autonomy and its ameliorative effect on writing proficiency. Beyond these top-level evaluative constructs, relevant themes were extrapolated. Autonomous behaviour manifested itself in various ways individually, the most common indications being students seeking help when needed, identifying their own needs and weaknesses, accessing the SAC regularly or prolifically,

initially helping themselves speedily on to FLUACC, and viewing themselves with high metacognition. Autonomy was both proactive and reactive. Reflection, a significant part of autonomy, was evidenced in emails, chats, writing drafts, answers to questionnaires and self-professed blogging. A number of participants were interested in the process of writing, not just the product, and in investigating the learning-to-learn materials.

The findings also showed that the electronic resources, 1-1 advisory sessions, as well as various other services helped foster autonomy. Increased autonomy was especially observable and evident in 1-1s. A mixture of directive and non-directive methods and using the improvised expect-correct tactic ad hoc, fulfilled the need of enhancing progress in writing proficiency while at the same time fostering autonomy.

The importance of community and interaction, aligned with autonomy, was noticed in two ways: first, through the medium to high usage of 1-1 human interactions compared to participants interacting with the resources, and second, through renewed responses and activity after the advisor shared a message with everyone. A variety of forms of affect, associated with autonomy, added to the success picture of autonomy. These forms included the lack of confidence, writing anxiety, and stress. Negative affect was countered by many incidences of happiness, keenness, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, a healthy anxiety to improve, confidence, and much gratefulness.

Writing support that successfully aided students in their writing proficiency was particularly evident. The participants' existing knowledge was developed further by engaging in this support. Participants required academic writing knowledge, but also language development and contrastive rhetoric/L1 interference explanations. The advisor needed to be a skilled language development teacher, to cater effectively to the different levels and needs of students' writing proficiency.

Overall, the usefulness of the website was displayed in the general increase of metacognitive autonomy, the students' positive comments, the flexibility of 1-1s, students' improved writing, and use of FLUACC in hours when F2F help was unobtainable. The fact that FLUACC catered to students using a diversified portfolio of learning options made it helpful for various individuals to use for their choice of methods according to their various needs. Technical problems were inherent with the online system, but many of these were smoothed out for Cycle 2.

4.5 Summary of Main Findings to Research Questions

The four research questions of this study were addressed, and the findings confirmed that learner autonomy and L2 writing proficiency could be developed for Arab academic writing learners via an online SAC in an university situation like the one in this study. Specifically:

RQ 1: The main use by students of the online SAC occurred through asynchronous interactions with an advisor. Resources, no matter how apt, were generally secondary and used as a supplement, but not as a substitute, to these interactions. A minority of students chose to use only resources or only asynchronous interactions.

RQ 2: Students acknowledged the usefulness of advisory sessions and resources for their writing needs and problems. High ratings and positive comments were given for these indicating their importance in furthering the explicit goal of increased writing proficiency. Most students perceived themselves fairly positively initially as regards different metacognitive (autonomous) aspects, with an overall increase in their metacognition displayed over a 10-week Cycle. This assessment corresponded to their evaluation of the usefulness of the online SAC for aiding self-management – fairly positive but not as high a rating as for aiding writing proficiency. Having the benefit of a teacher's/advisor's help was still considered a necessity by most, although this need somewhat lessened over the course of a Cycle.

RQ 3: Results regarding the extra programme offered to the structured autonomy group showed that some structured autonomous aid offered as synchronous chats with the advisor enhanced autonomy and writing development as evidenced in the students' evaluation questionnaires. This was as long as the advisor had the flexibility to work with the needs and directions of the students as well. Thus, sessions were semi-structured rather than wholly structured. Even one chat session seemed to have a positive impact on retention, use of resources and 1-1 asynchronous sessions, and development of autonomy and writing proficiency. The use of synchronous assistance also strengthened rapport and understanding, being somewhat more personal than asynchronous support, and promoted control and volubility from the students despite the extra structure. A limitation with the third question's results was the small extent the participants did this structured programme and the low number of participants who engaged in it.

RQ 4: Various aspects that affected the success of an online SAC for developing autonomy and writing skills were identified as a variety of themes starting from autonomy. FLUACC's environment and facilities were seen to promote choice and operation of individual autonomy. They also fostered it. Under these circumstances, students viewed themselves with increased metacognition and accessed help regularly, identifying their own needs to various degrees. Blogs were used for reflection, but more

noticeably reflection was observed in their 1-1 advisory interactions, including interest in the writing process and not just the product, and learning how to learn. Autonomy fostering occurred through resources (pedagogically structured), a test feedback procedure and 1-1s with the advisor using an eclectic mixture of methods. Students developed in autonomous writing. Advisement took place as a mixture of non-directive and directive advisor discourse with an expect-correct tactic. The need of these 1-1s was evident as students were very proactive in choosing them as a means of support. Thus, interdependence was a main choice by students. They were also responsive when the advisor was proactive. The ideal language choice situation for L2 language learning occurred whereby the target language was used by the students almost all the time. Affect factors were treated as normal and important with encouragement for countering the negative.

As regards writing support, this was successfully supplied according to individual need over a wide range and at multiple levels, especially during the 1-1s with the advisor. During these times, increasing language development and understanding of academic writing were addressed, culturally attuned through contrastive rhetoric/L1 interference (explaining problems stemming from L1). The students' main concern of writing development was accepted by the advisor. This could be coupled with autonomy development though writing was the driver. The expect-correct tactic facilitated an efficient balance of autonomy with writing development. Accepting students' reactive autonomy (organizing self after some directions given) allowed multiple dialogues to ensue, changing behaviour into a more proactive form (taking responsibility for at least partial direction of one's learning). The overall success and usefulness of FLUACC for both writing and autonomy development was demonstrated and built on in a number of ways in Cycle 1, Cycle 2 and across both Cycles. Finally, catering to individual differences and tending to problems also featured significantly.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

The context of the study was a university in Qatar where the participants were all Arab tertiary students using an online SAC. The local situation was therefore highly specific. The general aim of the research was to explore how learner autonomy and L2 academic writing proficiency could be developed for Arab learners via an online SAC. Four specific research questions developed during the exploratory evolution of the action research. The findings for each research question were presented in order in Chapter 4.

The findings for the individual research questions demonstrated marked interrelatedness. To condense the discussion of the complex multi-faceted findings, the following four Key Principles were extracted from the findings:

1. Multi-dimensional autonomy is manifested by most Arab student users in an online SAC.
2. 1-1 advisory interactions are necessary for most Arab students on an online SAC.
3. Students' writing needs and perspectives can drive successful autonomous writing development.
4. Positive affordances of an online SAC present ameliorative opportunities for improved learner outcomes.

Each Key Principle is discussed in the same sequence below. Initially, a Principle is unpacked in relation to the findings, emphasizing its contribution to the empirical research on L2 writing, autonomy, online SACs, and advertisement. Next, further discussion evaluates the depth of these findings by viewing them in relation to existing literature in the research fields. Following this, particularly where the local needs in this study are seen to diverge from the body of existing knowledge, the Principle is aligned with the emerging critical issues. Lastly, the practical implications are identified, especially to the study's university context.

5.1 Key Principle #1 - Multi-dimensional Autonomy is Manifested by Most Arab Student Users in an Online SAC

Multi-dimensional autonomy implies a variety of types at multiple levels, as opposed to a simpler single-dimensional mode of autonomy. The emergence of multi-dimensional autonomy in this study appears to conflict with much of the previous research regarding Arab L2 learners' autonomy, which generally posits the lack of autonomy of these students. The following discussion reviews the previous literature on Arab autonomy, then summarizes the findings from the study regarding multi-dimensional autonomy, offering a specific evaluation.

5.1.1. Autonomy for Arab L2 learners. Assumptions have generally been made about certain ethnic groups' inability to develop autonomy in education (Palfreyman, 2003). Learners, especially from non-Western cultures, such as Asians and Arabs - many of whom come from collectivist societies with authoritarian relationships the norm - are particularly included in this assessment (ibid.). Yet, increasingly, caution has been exercised by researchers for accepting stereotypes because in some places, such as China (Huang, 2009) and Japan (Aoki, 2003), there is increasing evidence of autonomy, despite previous assumptions to the contrary. Also, sensitive negotiation with learners, where the teacher is mindful of culture and local ideology, has promoted the fostering of autonomy (Benson, 2008; Finch, 2002; Griffiths, 2007; Palfreyman & Smith, 2003). Countering Arab stereotyping, Zaharna (2010) pointed out that a monolithic Arab culture no longer exists; there are differences as well as similarities between the 22 countries making up the Arab world. However, researchers describing the state of learner autonomy from the Arab region have provided less than positive reports, asserting that teacher-centred practices and spoon-feeding expectations in schools and universities are standard practice (Al-Saadi, 2011; El-Sadig, 2010; Fareh, 2010; Mynard, 2004).

In contrast, my research demonstrated that various manifestations of autonomy occurred with almost all the Arab participants (n=33). This happened during both L2 writing action research cycles offered to help students from the Qatari university. Further, despite the gender dominance of males culturally in the region, where societies and families are distinctly patriarchal, this autonomy was demonstrated in the females (n=29) who comprised the majority of study participants as shown in Chapter 4. Their very participation to start with can be regarded as a display of some level of individual autonomy by volunteering to participate. By adopting Smith's (2003) strong version of autonomy, I was acknowledging that these L2 learners had some kind of autonomy already, and that co-creation of autonomy between us could occur. Their autonomy was then especially encouraged because of the openness and responsiveness of the action research method and the variety of opportunities available in the FLUACC environment.

Furthermore, the action research method allowed me to appreciate some of the diverse kinds of autonomy that these individuals manifested, upon which I could then carefully co-build autonomy via the resulting relationship. Many of these learners displayed reactive autonomy which, from a sociocultural perspective, was evident in how they organized themselves after direction and responded to mediated learning. In addition, a range of autonomy types was demonstrated by individuals, especially over time. As the use of FLUACC represented an uncontrolled situation, it is not possible to

ascertain whether any increase in autonomy took place by other means. In the discussion below, evidence regarding FLUACC's impact facilitating autonomy is given wherever possible.

5.1.2. Multi-dimensional autonomy. Results showed that various dimensions of learner autonomy were manifested, including: 1) technical autonomy with self-management; 2) psychological autonomy with its cognitive processes; 3) sociocultural autonomy with its interdependence; and 4) political-critical autonomy with its control of learning content (Benson, 2001; Oxford, 2003). Various forms of affect associated with these dimensions were demonstrated as well.

Previous research has described the complex multi-dimensional nature of autonomy as a construct of capacity manifested at diverse levels and in various ways (Benson, 2011a; Finch, 2002; Tassinari, 2012). Accordingly, my research findings revealed various dimensions of learner autonomy. Benson (2001) stated that a multidimensional capacity is comprised of "different forms for different individuals, and even for the same individual in different contexts or at different times" (p. 47). This type of difference was one of the reasons I chose the research to be exploratory, flexible, and holistic. I anticipated that certain degrees of autonomy would be manifested rather than an idealistic complete autonomy (Oxford, 1990; Sinclair, 1996). Therefore, the working definition for autonomy in this research was "the capacity and willingness to take responsibility for some aspects of one's language learning in a specific situation," with the mode of practice being both predictable and unanticipated in this out-of-class learning situation (Benson, 2011b). The technical, psychological, sociocultural and political dimensions of autonomy are described in section 5.1.2.1 while 5.1.2.2 discusses the affect factors. Though reactive and sociocultural dimensions of autonomy were both recognized as viable options of autonomy, because these are manifested primarily by students seeking guidance from the advisor, they are discussed largely in Principle 2 (5.2).

5.1.2.1. Four main dimensions of autonomy development shown. First, students showed technical autonomy by demonstrating self-management behaviour (Benson, 2001). They accessed resources from the resource-rich online environment by themselves (86% in Cycle 1; 91% in Cycle 2) and used some of the strategies known or provided. Several strategies students shared included "attending to their mistakes to avoid falling into them again" and "using new words." For a minority (n=7), accessing resources was the main way they used FLUACC (21% in Cycle 1; 17% in Cycle 2), and evidence, via grades, exams, and questionnaire results, showed those who exercised this technical autonomy regularly were able to make progress in their writing and autonomy. In particular, two students made

progress from 5.5 to 6.5 in their IELTS writing, while all five of those who answered the evaluation questionnaires indicated they had improved in self-management skills. Others who combined their access of resources with 1-1s (64% in Cycle 1 and 74% in Cycle 2) predominantly showed improvement as well, but this could be attributed to 1-1s and resources. Students' exploration and use of resources are discussed more in section 5.4.1.

Second, students demonstrated autonomy from the psychological perspective by exhibiting control over cognitive processes (Benson, 2001). This autonomy was evidenced in the students' acknowledgement and manifestation of metacognitive skills and knowledge, as well as their reflective learning. Metacognitive knowledge of self, strategies and tasks has been shown to be necessary for making good autonomous decisions (Cotterall & Murray, 2009; Oxford, 2011). In the pre and post metacognitive questionnaires, students rated their perception of their various metacognitive aspects quite high initially with their overall metacognition generally increased over each research Cycle. This self-perception cannot be taken lightly, for as Cotterall and Murray (2009) reiterated, such beliefs are very important enabling factors for language learning and autonomy. White (1999) confirmed that beliefs can guide outcomes or behavior and Zhang (2010) correlated students' metacognitive beliefs with their writing competency. The act of taking metacognitive belief questionnaires in itself is known to promote student awareness of metacognitive knowledge (Wenden, 1998).

In my study, reflection via blogging was also declared useful and rated positively in both Cycles by over 90% of those who answered the evaluation questionnaire (n= 25). The actual evidence of metacognitive knowledge and reflective behavior was observed and recorded mostly as proceeding from a sociocultural perspective of autonomy during 1-1 advisor-to-student interactions. This third perspective will be discussed in the next Key Principle section (5.2) because of its distinct association with and strong demonstration in advising sessions.

However, autonomy of the sociocultural type (Oxford, 2003) was manifested by two students in peer-to-peer forums. These were part of each main topic subdivision on FLUACC, including an initial socializing one. M1 shared and invited comment from peers three times without success and her only suggestion for improving FLUACC was *"Students should participate more in the forums."* Her comment was astute, as overall, the forums were underutilized. The lack of peer collaboration could have been because participants did not know each other well enough; there was no bonding time or shared introduction time as in a class or per a community of practice in an online course. The lack of peer collaboration could also have been a cultural preference where a teacher advisor is preferred for having more authoritative knowledge than the students' peers. In line with this, various students

acknowledged me as an “expert teacher” or “great doctor” although they were not my students on the physical campuses. Facilitating peer bonding is encouraged by teachers in online writing courses for social presence, engagement and success (Breuch, 2015; Snart, 2015) and it is something that could be considered in OWLS/online SACs (even though they are ad hoc facilities) to increase affordances, positive affect and support.

Fourth, a political autonomy perspective was manifested in addition to the technical, psychological and sociocultural perspectives. A political (or critical political per Oxford, 2003) perspective of autonomy is defined as when students decide on what content they need help with; they set the topic or agenda, and in so doing, make the overarching top decision (Benson, 2001). This is a kind of proactive autonomy where a student needs no direction from another before carrying out activities (Littlewood, 1999). One of the assumptions in my research was that proactive autonomy was manifested when students accessed resources on the website. However, proactive autonomy was more directly apparent in the 1-1s with the advisor where over half the students in Cycle 1 and slightly fewer in Cycle 2 named their needs, deciding on the content of their help. To be sure, some of these decisions were a bit general, but others were quite specific. The targeted language skill, academic writing, would have helped with this naming of needs. Cumming (2006) suggested that students use small objectives to order their thinking in the highly goal-centred process of academic writing. As a result, students should have some specific ideas about what is needed for them to do well in their assignments.

The asynchronous 1-1 interactions of the online situation could have helped with the political autonomy of naming needs as well since students were forced to write metacognitively (Jackson, 2000). Students felt compelled to express some directions about their draft attachment in the body of their email to me (the advisor). The online situation was an ideal context for learners to show primary control, compared to the usual context of a classroom or institution where the curriculum and political agenda constrains the amount of content that students can control (Benson, 2001). Also, online asynchronous modes afford some kind of distancing for shy individuals to vent their needs in comfort (Jones et al., 2006).

Goal setting normally can be one of the hardest parts of political autonomy to foster in a classroom (Karlsson et al., 2007; Victori, 2007), so to see this happening naturally with a large proportion of the participants was encouraging and confirmatory regarding the autonomy capacity inherent in each person (Smith, 2003). Using FLUACC was not neutral as regards the empowerment perspective because students were free from the agenda of others. The site empowered them to make political decisions themselves with the freedom for enacting or constructing actions either reactively or

proactively. Sinclair (2014) emphasized that a learner requires a voice and power, social and political emancipation, and freedom from Western imperialism. The student making a choice to work interdependently, seek guidance or behave in a reactive way at times can still be a part of this empowerment.

Students can choose which feedback to agree with or disagree with and argue about with the advisor, showing individuality in their way of learning English writing. An advisor is different from a teacher who has the final evaluative role whereby students might feel they have to follow the teacher's instructions to get a good grade. An advisor will provide explicit helpful instructions knowing that students might show autonomy by using them or not accepting them. Also students might learn the hard way. They have the right, as Thonus (2002) terms it, to "call the shots" (p. 111).

In this study, to a large degree students were constrained by their classroom assignments or official exams. Also the specific LMS used by FLUACC limited how help could be received; for example, there was no Skype available, and the blogs were either private or very public -shared with everyone using the server. Yet students enacted their political autonomy and emancipation in unique ways, as documented at the end of section 4.4.1.

Overall, the results of my study showed a positive effect on students' autonomy when they used FLUACC. This SAC helped create approaches that afforded and allowed the construction or fostering of multi-dimensional autonomy for the Arab participants. So, the students enacted one, some or all of the technical, psychological, sociocultural, and political critical dimensions of autonomy. The study results also captured several forms of affective factors demonstrated by students, adding to the multi-dimensional nature of autonomy, which will be discussed below.

5.1.2.2. Affect as significant autonomy component. Oxford (2003) advocating focus on "as many [autonomy] perspectives as possible in any given study" (p. 90) to aid its development, included affect as a form of motivation in each perspective. Affect, as emotions, feelings, and attitudes, has been lately accepted as an important part for a learner to control their learning and included among the factors of autonomy (Hurd, 2007; Tassinari, 2012). Advisory sessions have been shown to be times when affect is manifested (Tassinari & Ciekanski, 2013; Yamashita, 2015). Given the added isolation in a remote or virtual learning environment, affect has been accorded even more significance (Murphy, 2011; White, 2003). In my project, I found emotions and feelings to be a big part of how Arab participants were motivated. Just as in the literature, affect was very interrelated with their autonomy and how they took control, thus a valid part of multi-dimensional autonomy. Feelings are significant to the Arabs as a culture as well, where there is a preference for feelings over accuracy, making

emotionally rich communication the norm (Zaharna, 1995, 2010). An example can be made from the number of emotive adjectives in a simple comment from D4 in this study:

"I enjoyed it a lot as I can ask any direct question to lovely Ms …….. and I can get her kind answers."

As stated previously, my definition of autonomy involved motivation in the form of students' willingness to be responsible (Littlewood, 1996). The participants all displayed a willingness (even keenness) and motivation to volunteer for the project at the beginning, despite the newness of the program and, as a research participant, the formalities they had to go through at the beginning. This willingness was probably extrinsically motivated with the need for good grades on their assignments and exams (which they mentioned), but also waves of intrinsic motivation shone through in the 1-1 interactions and with the success attained in either small or big steps. Learning was enjoyable for its own worth. This confirms Ushioda (2007) who associated (sociocultural) interaction within the Vygotskyian zone of proximal development as affording circumstances for willingness, intrinsic motivation, and autonomy.

In addition to the use of emotionally rich communication, according to Zaharna (1995, 2010), Arabs belong to a high context culture, where the whole meaning of communication can be embedded in the context rather than words, with the weight on the receiver to understand. The reader has to have the feel of things or to be aware of the "personal context" (Hurd & Murphy, 2012, p. 216) to fully understand the message and this awareness involves a relationship. Thus, the deep anxiety some students were experiencing during language learning (not counting urgent attention messages) was not immediately apparent to me, as generally the students only shared it later, in the context of the 1-1 interactions, where they were nurtured with care and attention to encouragement, motivation and empathy as advocated by Hurd and Murphy. This development of our rapport took time to become well established. The increasing exposure of the students' feelings became a basis for my advisement to encourage multiple 1-1 interactions per participant.

The more that is known about an individual, the more an advisor can help him/her appropriately (see 4.3.1.3 and 4.4.5.1). Once students share what is causing them emotional stress, a teacher (advisor) can be instrumental in changing and shaping such aspects of affect (Robinson, 2002). I had this very experience with some of the participants. Explicit sharing of what was triggering fears for the student enabled me to suggest and talk over appropriate remedies. Their revealing of affect or what caused their feeling provided relevant teaching and emancipatory moments where significant learning could take place that otherwise might not have, and where, assisted by the affect involved, co-creation

occurred. One such example was establishing a special reading sub-topic in FLUACC with A3 after she had revealed her deep fear about reading, which she needed to overcome so her reading could improve to balance and inform her writing. She suggested that readings with listening capabilities would be helpful too. Thus, so-called negative affect can be harnessed and worked with, rather than ignored or resisted. Emotional pain can become cognitive gain with student awareness and ownership of emotions.

Furthermore, the research revealed that affect influenced the autonomy of some seemingly very independent students, working mostly in isolation with FLUACC resources. Dewaele and Furnham (1999) have shown that introverted private type students who pursue independent resource-based learning can be driven by high anxiety motivating them to manifest more autonomy. The latter seemed the case with B2 in the second Cycle who informed me of her high anxiety in preparing adequately for the IELTS exam so she could get a mark sufficient to pursue a master's degree in an English-medium institution. Her anxiety was facilitative in aiding her improvement (Williams et al., 2015). However, though she worked mostly on her own, she affirmed that she really appreciated the encouraging, empathetic and helpful remarks I sent. Another independent individual's (H1) anxiety was manifested more as a reluctance or shyness to have a real-time synchronous chat with me. After encouragement she asked:

"I'm wondering about what we are going to talk."

Yet, without the synchronous chat we had together, I could not have addressed some of the frustrations she was experiencing – in this case providing better matching of her level with FLUACC resources. Thus, though independent learners, who can be considered introverted, can and do make progress alone as these two definitely demonstrate they also seem to benefit from having 1-1 help.

The most common affect expressed by the students was thankfulness and appreciation. As a positive affect it can foster autonomy development (Williams et al., 2015). High positivity was recorded by the majority of the research participants in the evaluation questionnaire concerning the usefulness of the website for the support it afforded to improve their writing via resources and 1-1s. Immense thanks was expressed voluntarily and continuously in the 1-1s for the feedback students received. Thankfulness comes from a feeling of having one's needs met and experiencing learning and success. Though the writing needs for an immediate task were the students' primary driver, fulfilling their needs produced gratitude.

Such cases demonstrate an "optimal fit" had been made between a student's learning needs and the advisor's instruction and pedagogical method in the context (Robinson, 2002, p. 2). Such prime

personal contexts are open doors to encourage metacogitive growth through more active learning and broadened engagement by the student where encouragement comes from the context, not directly from the advisor (although the advisor is part of the context at times). The joy of understanding was definitely an element, not just getting the task done. The group of students seeking me out for a F2F thank you long after the research finished, supported this view (see 4.4.5.4). Their triumph in outcomes via online SAC use contrasts with the perception in Trinder's (2016) results of 175 advanced Austrian students, who felt that communication with any technology "takes on an artificial and impoverished quality that fails to motivate." F2F sessions for them were needed for "better learning outcomes" (p. 94).

Developing writing proficiency and autonomy can be symbiotic goals with growing affect and rapport between a student and an advisor. There was no strain or resistance for autonomy development occurs gradually with writing development because, as Little (1997) argued, there is an inseparableness and interrelatedness between learning-to-learn and specific language learning concerns. Also, as mentioned in the last paragraph, the personal context enables autonomy to grow naturally. However, as will be emphasized in Principle #3 (see 5.3), the students' writing problems need to be acknowledged as the priority need. Then, the autonomy goal intertwined with it can be appreciated and promoted to a higher status by the student – the positive affect, created from having one's need met, opens and broadens a student's thinking range (Fredrickson cited in Williams et al., 2015). The implications of this multidimensional autonomy discussion are summarized below.

5.1.3. Practical implications of the multi-dimensional autonomy. Overall, the practical implications of the findings in Principle #1 include having a tertiary online SAC for Arabs in this university where learners' manifestation and development of autonomy are not restricted. Students should be able to make the choice to be supported and/or plot their own direction according to their needs. The technical, psychological, sociocultural, critical political, proactive or reactive dimensions of autonomy should all be accepted and fostered by the advisor and catered for in the learning environment. Though students in this region can be coming from a spoon-fed high school program, their own capacity for autonomy should still be respected via an adherence by teachers and advisors to a strong version of autonomy pedagogy (Smith, 2003).

Knowledge from students' affect in 1-1s should be incorporated into how they are to be helped. Only by the advisor being sensitive and not down-playing extrinsic motivation, deep feelings, and thankfulness, can 1-1s be the scenes of intrinsic motivation, emancipatory barrier breakdowns and

proactive autonomy truly owned by the students. This study showed if only one kind of autonomy was manifested predominantly, it was the sociocultural perspective of autonomy (involving guidance, relationship building, acceptance of reactive autonomy, appreciation of dialogue and subjective affect), especially in the context of 1-1s with the advisor. Yet, these sessions were also pervaded with other autonomy dimensions.

Overall, the environment should be such that students can choose among multiple resources and interactions with an advisor and peers uninhibited by curriculum or directions from teachers and without constraints in time. In interactions with an advisor, "What students already know and want is seen not as a hindrance but as a major resource" (Smith, 2003, p. 256). The findings suggest that a SAC should thus allow proper self-access where students can identify their needs and wants and seek for them to be met. However, it should also encourage the students to trust the teacher/advisor for support beyond what they can identify for themselves because this is what a student wants too – a truly student-centred pedagogy (more about this in Key Principle #3 section).

5.2 Key Principle #2: One-to-One Advisory Interactions are Necessary for Most Arab Students in an Online SAC

Benson (2011a) stated that "research on advising… [has brought about] a shift of focus in research on self-access from the production and organization of materials to the social and pedagogical relationships that are now seen as key to its effectiveness" (p. 225). The necessity of advisement is evident in my study since most of the Arab students using FLUACC made predominant use of the 1-1 advisory service, exhibiting a sociocultural perspective of autonomy. They not only used the service, but did so multiple times in a 10 week cycle.

In this section, the scope of the 1-1 asynchronous advising that took place in the study are described to appreciate what made them necessary. The strength and privacy of Arab student interaction is summarized followed by the importance of the first interaction time with participants. Next, an argument is made for the continuing use of an advisor as a component of autonomy. After this, advising via synchronous means is compared with advising via asynchronous means, and the worth of structured advising via synchronous means is discussed. How language choices in the advice sessions affected students is also outlined. Finally, a critical perspective is offered for independent learning centre ideology concerning advising and the divergence required for the local situation as demonstrated herein. In conclusion, the overall practical implications for local Arab advisement sessions are summarized.

5.2.1. Scope of asynchronous advisory interactions. Participants gravitated towards 1-1 asynchronous written interactions with the advisor (me) as a more knowledgeable person although the online environment was resource rich. Asynchronous written interactions were used by 71% of the participants (n=10) in Cycle 1, and 91% (n=21) in Cycle 2. They figured prominently in many participants' evaluations as something found particularly useful, such as D3:

"Discussing our writing with advisor was so helpful."

The scope of learner autonomy in these 1-1s varied, though all learners primarily demonstrated constructivism and a sociocultural perspective of autonomy. This is where dialogue is important as it takes place in an interactive zone of proximal development for maximum learning, sensitively guided by the more knowledgeable advisor (Benson, 2011a). Interaction helps the learner engage and subsequently advance in his or her learning. Co-construction and negotiation also occurred as parts of the advising process (Karlsson, 2008; Mozzon-McPherson, 2001). An example from A3 was:

> *I made some correct which you recommend me to change but I do not know if it is my change is correct or not, so I noticed the changes as a red color to be easy for you. Also I want to know if it is my citation correct or not.*

Dialogue helped to develop language learning from explicit to implicit, with the likelihood of this happening increased by multi-sessions. 67% of participants in Cycle 1 had more than 10 interactions with me, while in Cycle 2 this figure was 71%. Each whole task usually involved more than 2 interactions.

Most of these sessions demonstrated a scope of autonomy beyond a solely sociocultural perspective. Thus, often present were the psychological aspects of autonomous reflection, metacognitive talking and knowledge, and positive affect (see 4.4.2 and 4.4.5).

I also noted the political aspects of autonomy wherein the learner could name their own learning needs, thereby dictating the content of the help they wanted. Individual emancipation showed in students' sharing of their unique far-reaching wants and efforts in 1-1s (see the end of 4.4.1). In fact, the 1-1s provided an easy way to cherish and foster different forms of autonomy. Students were having their major writing needs met in these sessions while openly practicing their autonomy and having it developed.

5.2.2. Arab dialogue strength and privacy. Compatibility ensures usability. Since most of the Arab participants (in Cycle 1, 72%, n = 10; in Cycle 2, 83%, n = 19) chose to use the 1-1 asynchronous advisement over any other method of help, the question why arises? This choice could be related to the

fact that oral interaction is a definite strength of Arabic culture (Zaharna, 1995, 2010), and was part of the sociocultural situation characteristic of the study. Although interaction online was written, some researchers like Warschauer (2006) have likened online written dialogue (via emails and chats) as more like oral language than written, or as a form between oral and written communication. The 1-1s seemed to encourage the Arab participants to translate their oral strength into written interactions because they communicated their writing needs regularly (which would imply without too much difficulty) via written interactions in informal English (mostly emails). They chose to do this despite it meaning their literacy load was compounded and increased greatly (Griffin & Minter, 2013). A few participants responding in their evaluation questionnaires wrote that the thing that was particularly useful about FLUACC was their being able to discuss problems and ask why and how.

Furthermore, sessions generally involved more than the minimum two interactions of a dialogue. Sustainability of interactions over a period of time has been advocated by some researchers for successful learning (Castner, 2000; Devoss, Hara & Thomas, 2000; Hewett, 2015). This happened naturally in my study according to students' needs, with most 1-1 asynchronous users electing to use the service for an extended number of times. Even though written 1-1 asynchronous sessions have been described as "somewhat one-sided" in terms of comments coming mainly from the teacher/advisor (Hewett, 2015, p. 21), in my study interactions with a task at hand often involved more than the standard two phases (initial comment and draft assignment from student followed by returned assignment with feedback from advisor). Also, some students sent their assignments one chunk at a time as they developed it further. Dialogue therefore developed more. Participants over a 10 week cycle averaged working on 2-3 whole tasks involving an average of 10-20 interactions.

This repeated use demonstrates student requirement for and satisfaction with the service. In fact, there was a high retention rate (over 80% throughout both Cycles) in what was really an ad hoc program where students could choose to come and go at will. Having the same advisor (me) each time could have helped with this. Relationships as the backbone of communication are important to Arabs who are known as a high context culture where value is given to associative relationships in which individuals complement each other (Zaharna, 2010) – something that can only happen through knowing each other quite well.

Another point regarding privacy should be discussed as relates to the necessary asynchronous interactions. Firstly, the additional distancing of interactions over the internet can help learners save face as has been acknowledged in literature (Ehmann Powers, 2015) but also this privacy issue is very important to Arabs culturally (DCSINT, 2006). As M4 shared:

"We are free to ask any question without thinking if it is stupid! question or not."

This is something she distinguished as not being able to do F2F in the classroom situation.

Secondly, the privacy of asynchronous interactions increased in FLUACC after a change in asynchronous feedback tools during Cycle 1. The assignment review tool which could be viewed by anyone using the website, was supplemented by the more private use of emails (see section 4.4.7). All females chose to use emails in Cycle 2. Bruce (2009b) had learnt that Arab males especially do not like to be seen to be weak by asking for help. They respond better with private help. Though males were a minority of participants in the study, the number of males was greater in Cycle 2 (one male in Cycle 1, three males in Cycle 2).

5.2.3. Initial advisory dialogue importance. The sociocultural divide between a stranger, as an advisor, and a L2 student can be significant. It has been claimed that the start-up of advising is important with the student who may have many apprehensions (Bruce, 2009a), and that for independent, online facilities, more time is needed to build relationships and create interactivity than in F2F sessions (Freirmuth & Jarrell, 2006; Salmon, 2004). Regarding SACs generally, Kelly (1996) claimed that affect is a therapeutic element and is needed where the advisor is demonstrating "unconditional positive regard, genuineness and empathetic understanding" (p. 97). This is a complex factor and difficult to establish when the initial contact is via email. For OWLs, informal friendliness with an orientation to the site, especially on how to get help is stressed – all in simple language (Hewett, 2015; Martinez & Olsen, 2015).

In my study, most participants seemed satisfied with the initial interaction since they continued using the service. Probably exigency combined with the welcoming message helped them overcome any feelings of shyness and reticence. Most came with urgent needs on hand that were of high consequence to them. The anonymity and distance afforded by the faceless asynchronous 1-1 may have been factors as well (Ehmann Powers, 2015; Jones et al., 2006). However, a few participants did not use the website much. Although busyness was the most common reason mentioned for this, A9 also shared that part of the problem was because the kind of rapport he required was not provided initially (see 4.4.4). Nevertheless, overall participants' follow through is high compared to the 8 out of 50 that followed through in Sabatino's (2014) study.

Several times over the two Cycles, I changed the initial content of the email that went with the information-cum-consent form and the email sent with FLUACC's access key. These changes were an endeavor to better fulfill students' initial need for rapport and direction so that any necessary

interactions could follow as needed. Sometimes, specific emails were further customized from hints of the needs and affect noticed in individuals' initial emails. Thus, in the following email extract I made reference to term paper help available as this was what the specific student was confronting and I emphasised my wide availability through various channels:

> *There is a big section for 'Topping Term Papers'. If anything seems confusing or lacking for your particular writing needs, feel free to let me know because this all helps to make it more what it should be. 1-1 help is available via downloads, emails, messages or chats. And I am available over the holiday, weekends, evenings etc. I realise you probably need immediate help with your TP1 because that is due so soooooooon! That's fine.*

I now feel I could have taken a more proactive role following up the few initially non-participating students by sending an email extending help and rapport - something Jackson (2000) encouraged.

5.2.4. Continuing use of advisory support. One seemingly controversial aspect to the concept of autonomy was the continuing interdependent use of an advisor by participants in general. If students were advancing in metacognitive and the self-management aspects as they indicated in the questionnaires, they might be expected to be moving more positively towards not needing a teacher. Yet, though in the metacognitive questionnaires, on a 5 point Likert scale the not "needing a teacher/advisor" rating increased in the positive direction in both Cycles, the mean score for those who answered the questionnaire for Cycle 1 was a low positive (3.1) and at the end of Cycle 2 not quite positive (2.4).

Needing guidance is no longer considered a conflict with the concept of autonomy (Reinders, 2010; Sinclair, 2006; Thanasoulas, 2000). When discussing a well-developed autonomy, Pennycook and Candy (as cited in Arnold, 2006) argued that truly responsible autonomous learners know by themselves when a need requires them to ask for help from a knowledgeable other. These learners can choose aptly when dependence is needed or might best aid their learning (thus becoming interdependent by drawing from co-construction and interaction). Allwright (1990) also posited mature autonomy as "a state of optimal equilibrium between dependence and self-sufficiency" (p. 1). This equilibrium includes finding the balance between "both inner and external resources, both human and material resources…and both the individual and social aspects" (p. 10). An advisor could, of course, help a student strike a reasonable equilibrium, but only if the advisor had enough rapport and knowledge about the student's state of mind.

If students are growing in autonomy should not they be doing more work for themselves? Unnecessary assistance would be if an advisor was repeating the same information to the same student

all the time. I never felt that students were "using me" when they knew better themselves or could have done it alone. My experience was similar to Hewett's (2015) where students are not "lazy about their own learning" but rather demonstrate that "there is a genuine desire to learn" and any follow up made on a problem revealed that the students are "eager to talk about the problem" (p. 116). My researcher's field notes echoed this "effort noticed" and "much revision taken on board." Some students indicated their effort in trying proofreading and editing themselves before sending their draft to me. I accepted the student's choice of "interdependence" and identified this as the appropriate term since this signified a student working together with an advisor, rather than "dependence" which implies extreme reliance. If I felt students could have done more for themselves this concerned those with whom I had not yet developed sufficient dialogue. For example, a couple of students sent me last minute "fix it please" papers with many problems. This placed the onus on me, as the advisor, to continue dialogue to help students mature in their equilibrium. Overall, a single interaction time with a feedback return was insufficient for co-building autonomy. Also with time dialogue can be richer metacognitively and problems addressed advanced, with basic writing proficiency accomplished as evidenced by repeaters and continuing repeaters.

5.2.5. Synchronous sessions supplementing asynchronous 1-1 advisory dialogues. One-to-one advisory dialogues were not just limited to asynchronous means, such as email. On FLUACC, synchronous chats were also available, but only to the structured group of the two in each cycle (see ethics section 3.2.2). Given the option of both modes, most students from this structured group chose to use asynchronous sessions either exclusively or to a greater extent. The synchronous mode supplemented (not supplanted) the asynchronous mode since it was used only once in a cycle by some individuals while the same individuals used the asynchronous mode multiple times. In Cycle 1, four out of seven participants showed an interest in chatting and three followed through, while in Cycle 2, six out of 13 participants showed an interest and four followed through. Shy individuals finding more anonymity and security by using the asynchronous modes, and others experiencing problems with synchronous chats, have been acknowledged in previous research (Ehmann Powers, 2015; Golden, 2005; Mick & Middlebrook, 2015). The same was generally true in my study (privacy and shyness have already been discussed in 5.2.2 and 5.2.3.).

Regarding problems with the synchronous mode, it was more difficult to arrange a time to chat or to actually conduct synchronous interaction technically without a problem, which at times included a server connection issue. Hawkinson (2010) reported that over 33% of the learners in her study

complained about technological problems causing a disconnect in their synchronous session. Though my learners did not complain, the disconnect percentage of synchronous chats was high enough (29% averaged over both cycles) to be a frustrating concern when dealing with L2 writers who have significant English language and writing issues to overcome. Smooth operation with low distractions are optimal for successful synchronous advisory sessions.

The type of problems addressed in 1-1s sessions differed by mode. It was easier to identify textual problems, insert specific comments, and deal with draft texts better using the asynchronous mode. On the other hand, more depth of advisement for issues and general problems could be covered in synchronous chats. This supports what Williams and Severino (2004) suggested regarding synchronous modes helping to elucidate points of confusion better than asynchronous. Mabrito (2006) two years later agreed, discovering the more social, less task-focused collaboration that occurred synchronously meant that it was not so helpful for properly addressing the depths and details of the many problems within a writing task. Honeycutt (2001) also claimed that students preferred asynchronous help for the more specific, written help on texts the advisor provided. In addition, as mentioned earlier, in my study the asynchronous mode fostered reflection in learners when they were expressing their problems and asking questions as well as allowing responses to any of the comments I made. Researchers have affirmed this reflective enhancement (Castner, 2000; Dehoff, 2000; Jackson, 2000; Mick & Middlebook, 2015; Mynard & Thornton, 2012).

Some further advantages with the synchronous chats emerged. First, in terms of volubility and control (in amount of words and who led the interaction), they were more egalitarian than the asynchronous sessions, to the point where the students made a greater contribution than the advisor. The greater extent of student contributions to the chats than the advisor's can be noticed in Cycle 1 (37-25, 51-42, 30-17) and Cycle 2 (111-74, 36-33, 70-32, 23-19). This result matches the findings of Jones et al. (2006) concerning L2 students in Hong Kong and reflects a higher degree of proactive learner autonomy when compared to the dialogue exchanged regarding a draft via asynchronous means, where an advisor's comments tend to be much more extensive than students' comments. D'Augustino (2012) connected both high collaboration and high interactivity with successful online teaching.

Also, synchronous chats provided access to more knowledge about the student and yielded a more personal contact. Mick and Middlebrook (2015) claimed synchronous dialogue can be more "interpersonal rather than cognitive" with "feelings of intimacy and real-time engagement" (p. 131). In my study there seemed to be a good balance that was very refreshing and satisfying to advisor and student alike where the intimacy part was definitely a big aid to helping the cognitive talk. Affect being

part of intimacy influences the cognitive domain (Damasio, 2000). Switching modality allowed a refreshing and new reconnection, and as Mick and Middlebrook described it, a definite "forward movement" (p. 136).

Text-based asynchronous sessions tend to be the main modality used by independent facilities offering online advising though some have both. My results support the benefits of having both available.

5.2.6. Structured autonomy advisory support. The synchronous mode was implemented by me as advisor to one group as part of a carefully structured intervention for autonomy. Results of this involvement have been answered explicitly with details under research question 3 in section 4.3. In essence it did not become a main intervention for the whole structured group as planned, but rather changes as to how it was implemented had to be made to help it work well with the few participants from the structured group who used it. Was it a necessity then?

There is a gap in the empirical literature regarding structured autonomy programmes with advisory chats in an online environment like my research. Yet, in physical SACs, there is evidence that initial F2F structured chats have had positive effects on university students' efficiency and progression in autonomy development (Karlsson et al., 2007; Reinders, 2007a). In Mexico, Japan and Hong Kong, some SAC directors have found this initiation so necessary they have made it compulsory (Barrs, 2010; Davies, 2004; Morrison, 2008). This has been found to lessen the problems of students with seemingly initial low autonomy and agency accessing such facilities with frequency and intensity (Barrs, 2010; Dofs & Hobbs, 2011).

With my online site and sessions, initial chats occurred later – midway through the Cycle, after rapport and some knowledge of a specific student's problems and strengths had grown via the asynchronous 1-1s. Chats were semi-structured rather than structured, allowing spontaneous help as dictated by the needs and direction of the students to occur as well. In each chat, the number of student interactions exceeded the advisor's, demonstrating student volubility and autonomous control. See the student-to-advisor interaction chat ratio, in 5.2.5 above, always greater on the student side. These results were different than the structured initiation F2F advisory chats and programmes in physical SACs, reported by other researchers in the previous paragraph, where most direction would come from the advisor. Though no participant had more than one chat per Cycle compared to the extended and monitored use planned, the positive effect of this single chat appears to have been substantial for the individual both immediately and in the longer term regarding their perception of

their autonomy development and their follow through in making use of resources and asynchronous 1-1 advisory sessions. This was confirmed in Cycle 2. For statistical purposes, a drawback was that too few students participated in chats (three in Cycle 1, four in Cycle 2). However, descriptive statistics showed that the structured group compared to the unstructured group had achieved more in various ways (section 4.3.2.) with the differences between groups' improvement in autonomous writing even more in Cycle 2, a result most probably influenced by the repeaters.

The difference afforded by the single occasion for input from the synchronous semi-structured session seemingly afforded more than the effects noted by researchers for a normal unstructured synchronous session (see 5.2.5), suggesting that the content of the structured autonomy had served a helpful purpose as regards fostering learner autonomy. It had its place in the arsenal of advisement types in fostering autonomy, being faster than other means. However, without the spontaneous unstructured dialogue, an atmosphere conducive to this development might not have happened.

5.2.7. Arabic versus English as the language of advisory dialogues. As part of the sociocultural perspective of autonomy, the language used between students and advisor is important. Advisement can only be useful and prove necessary if it can be understood. For all the participants, English was L2, and Arabic L1. Little (2007) stressed the importance of actively using L2 to acquire it implicitly and would thus have agreed that English had to be the language of communication during advising sessions. Indeed, the participants primarily communicated in English. Though offered an L1 Arabic advisor to help them, and having questionnaires to fill out in both English and Arabic, none of the students requested an L1 Arabic advisor and only one student in each Cycle answered the Arabic side of the questionnaires. Even though some students' English proficiency was low, they still chose to use English when seeking help or replying to the questionnaires.

A notable factor that might also have helped favouring the use of the target language was my knowledge of and empathy with the contrastive rhetorical/inter-language problems the students struggled with as they wrote in English. This factor was particularly emphasized as I was a keen student of the Arabic language myself.

The exclusive use of the target language during advisory sessions has been questioned by more researchers in the last decade. Though use of L1 had been seen as especially helpful for students with low L2 ability, some researchers contend nowadays that, for most L2 learners, using L1 when needed is recommended as an efficiency policy since it can allow quicker and deeper understanding for students (Canagarajah, 2000; Cummins, 2007; Wang, 2012). Thornton (2012) asserted that when interactions are

pointed toward autonomy fostering rather than language development, the use of L1 is advisable for understanding and to prevent cognitive overload. Tan (2011) reported that many Asian WCs provide bilingual support. In Japan, the use of L1 (Japanese) by advisors was claimed by Nakatake (2013) to be a main reason for success of a specific WC. Denton (2014) wrote of multilingual online asynchronous 1-1s being available in a heavily populated Hispanic university in the US. However, Jones et al. (2006) described Chinese L2 writers using "English only" as the standard and expected medium and using it successfully in a WC in Hong Kong. In my research, there was no indication that using the target language was a problem for the students. This result in all likelihood emerged because the tilt was toward language development help more than toward autonomy fostering. English was used even when I had an extremely weak learner whose writing could not be understood well because of her low proficiency in English grammar and structure. Still, this student took it upon herself to find my whereabouts and met me face-to-face three times for extra help rather than requesting an Arabic speaking advisor. In sum, having an Arabic speaker's availability should be an option, but other recourse should be offered.

My research, in fact, supports one of the very few studies on the language of advisement (Thornton, 2012) where it is argued that the learner's choice should prevail. More studies are needed involving the learners' perspectives as opposed to the advisors' on this matter. The next section takes a critical perspective of my local findings regarding the 1-1 advisory interactions compared to general ideologies and trends.

5.2.8. A critical perspective of one-to-one advisory support. Action research allowed critical theory to be continually applied to the research findings, giving priority consideration of the students' freedom for their gain, well-being and flourishing (Pine, 2009; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). This way various constraints were circumvented and methods adapted for the unique local situation. These are acknowledged now for greater critical understanding (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

As the findings throughout section 5.2 above show, participants prioritized use of 1-1 advisory asynchronous sessions on FLUACC over computerized resources, but the availability of full interactivity is not generally the norm for independent learning facilities. FLUACC would not have been such a utilized and useful facility without the 1-1 sessions. Amongst the four independent type learning facilities of self-access centres (SACs), online SACs, writing centres (WCs) and online writing labs (OWLs), usually only WCs devote such an amount of time to 1-1 interactions.

Physical SACs might have a few advisors with learners tending to come for resources rather than advisory help. Only recently has research advocated for the presence of more advisors for added effectiveness (Blake, 2007; Dofs & Hobbs, 2011; Mozzon-McPherson, 2007; Rubin, 2007). Online SACs are similarly primarily accessed for resources. Though a small number have virtual advisors (Gui & Northern, 2013; Lázaro & Reinders, 2007; Reinders, 2007b), the majority do not supply human advisors (Reinders & Lázaro, 2007a).

In contrast to SACs, WCs are mostly used by students for intensive 1-1 meetings with their advisors, although some resources are also available (Bruce & Rafoth, 2004; Lefort, 2010). Online versions of WCs, known as OWLs, often offer many resources, but only a minority provides advisors (Golden, 2005; Martinez & Olsen, 2015; Tan, 2011). Mackiewicz (2005) reported only 6% of an over 340 U.S. OWLs surveyed were fully interactive, providing human interaction. Yet, in another survey, North American OWLs that did have advisors, advocated 1-1 interactions as being key to success in online facilities (Norcross, 2011), precisely the same as in FLUACC. However, Tan (2011), when investigating the smaller number of OWLs outside America, could only find a handful that were fully interactive.

FLUACC was an online SAC but also fulfilled an OWL's role with its specialization in writing skills. However, my study upheld the predominance of advisory interactivity as usually offered by physical WCs, in contrast to the research on SACs, online SACs and OWLs where an advisor generally takes a subordinate role. My findings, in sections 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 which answer research questions 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively, support having a fully interactive online SAC or OWL and as well identified the kinds of interactions required. From a critical perspective, this involved taking a stand against (1) the resistance of OWLs to full interactivity; and (2) the dominant North American WC ideology and limitations of the conceptual theories behind independent learning centres. Yet being freed from these constraints, a balance was sought for (3) language development versus autonomy development; (4) direct versus indirect advice; and (5) a teacherly versus peer advisor.

5.2.8.1. Taking a stand against the resistance of OWLs to full interactivity. General resistance to having full interactivity (i.e. including advisory sessions) in OWLs, like FLUACC, seems to be related to the advisors' perceptions of the passiveness of the writer and the lack of quality of 1-1 writing advisory sessions performed online (Golden, 2005; Norcross, 2011) – especially for asynchronous sessions, monopolized by my students. The scope of online interactivity has not been appreciated, particularly by those researchers and tutors adhering to the WC philosophy of an advisory session. They note the complete lack of transmitting any personal clues versus contact in F2F and failure to exchange ideas

through writing alone as a problem for them (ibid.). Jackson (2000) sums this issue up in the question, "where is the writer?" (p. 1). In other words, without the writer's direct involvement, how can the advisor ensure that the writer remains in control?

Two problems, still not widely appreciated (Ehmann Powers, 2015; Hewett, 2015), are apparent with the WC philosophy. First, because OWLs are in an online environment, this involves a "new animal – with a look and feel of its own" (Munroe, 1998, p. 24). This potential "new animal" will be discussed at greater length in a following section on Key Principle #4. The second problem is the WC expectation of full control by L2 writers, an ideological position not supported in my findings. This is discussed below.

5.2.8.2. Taking a stand against dominant Western ideology. Dominant Western ideology of full student control plagues WC and OWL advisory dialogues (Hewett, 2015; Sloan, 2013; Wang, 2012). The point of departure in this issue is clear: my Arab L2 writers did not have enough knowledge to be in full control of their learning, so advising by dint of an ideology requiring full control was irrelevant to their needs, or even unreasonable. Unfortunately, the ideology for WCs, which has been passed on to OWLs, derives largely from affording assistance to L1 students in the USA, not L2 writers. Yet adherence to this orthodoxy is rampant among ESL advisors in North America (Denton, 2014) and among EFL advisors abroad (Thompson, 2014). Advisors or tutors in many WCs expect learners to be in full control of their writing problems from the beginning and will respond only to what the learner suggests (Wang, 2012). They tend to be very minimalistic in their help, with expressionism and fear of appropriation in mind -so the writing remains totally the student's work (Hewett, 2015). Ultimately they are demanding high proactive autonomy from the learner, with the student solving his/her own problems with basic facilitative guidance.

My research very reasonably departs from this fundamentally American approach as my target learners do not fall within the group for whom the same approach has proven helpful, specifically L1 writers; furthermore, there is no proof of this approach helping L2 writers (Lefort, 2010; Wang, 2012, Williams & Severino, 2004). Tan (2011) reported that L2 WCs and OWLs outside America were different individually, modified according to L2 learner needs and the local culture, yet still affected by this basic Western ideology. The current status of the physical WCs in my research university are similarly affected (to be better described under Principle #3). Moreover, Hewett (2015) has stressed that this kind of minimalistic help was not adequate for online writing help, even for L1 writers.

To date, effective L2 advisory dialogues in some WCs and OWLs with a modified L2 ideology have been noted (Rilling, 2005; Thonus, 2002; Wang, 2012). Advisors take a variety of stances to adapt

to their L2 learners (ibid.). Similar to FLUACC, the adaptation to the needs of L2 students, their culture and individual differences was paramount. Furthermore, as Wang (2012) claimed, "Postmodern theory advocates understanding things in more local terms rather than in grand theories or utopian dreams of equality" (p. 18), granting freedom from adhering to North American WC ideology. Thus, my work leaned to what my specific L2 writers found useful for improving in their writing, not L1 writer onsite WC theories. This resulted in three specific balancing acts displayed in the local advisory sessions with others explained under Principle #3.

5.2.8.3. Seeking to balance language skills and autonomy. First, neither standard SACs or WCs, despite their differences, seem to have the complete answer of the amount of language versus autonomy development needed in advisory interactions in my online L2 learner situation. In contrast to WC sessions, SAC sessions can focus on developing autonomy to a much greater degree than in developing a language skill. For example, a recent definition regarding language learning advisement from Carson and Mynard (2012) was that "[language learning advising is] helping students to direct their own paths so as to become more effective and more autonomous language learners" (p. 4). Though SAC advisement does include language skills, Reinders (2008) claimed this did not amount to tutoring or conferencing about a skill –something I disagree with. Tan (2006) noticing the different roles between advisors in SACs and WCs, felt that both types were needed for maximum language learning and autonomy.

The innate flexibility of my action research study approach being driven by students' needs and wants allowed a good proportional balance to be obtained between learning-to-learn (autonomy) and language skill achievement. To me as advisor, as with Tan (2006), balance was not using one or the other, but a mixture. The findings of my study summarized in section 4.4.10 (related to research question 4) show that students needed more writing tutoring help (detailed under Principle #3) than a SAC advisor is usually prepared to give, and needed more help taking gradual control of their work than a WC tutor is normally prepared to provide. Helping students with their writing needs provided me the opportunity to encourage them to progress in autonomous learning. Then in turn, autonomy development helped them in their writing development. This reciprocity agrees with Little's (1997) inseparableness and interrelatedness of specific language learning concerns and learning-to-learn. A writing skill weighted balance is supported by Hewett (2015) with regard to online writing instruction. She criticized how the act of teachers/advisors identifying specific writing problems for students has

been labelled “appropriation” and “taking away autonomy”, describing this as being “ethnically suspect” and restrictive to students’ potential learning and teachers’/advisors’ helpfulness (p. 84).

Furthermore, there are two main conceptual theories behind independent learning centres. SACs derive from autonomy theory whereas WCs stem from sociocultural theory (SCT). Denton (2014), Myatt (2010), O’Tootle (2006) and Sloan (2013) attest to the rigidity, insularity and lack of rigorous research on WCs. Hewett (2015) certified that WC theory even separates WCs from writing classes rather than blending them as it should. Both autonomy and sociocultural theories subscribe to interdependence, dialogue, and Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (Little, 2013). The high level of control expected from students over their own writing has been identified as making WC advisory sessions unsuitable for L2 writers (Lefort, 2010; Wang, 2012). WCs appear to apply Littlewood’s (1999) proactive learner autonomy theory in a mature form, i.e., the students should be true agents, in SCT terms (Lantolf, 2013), and not need fostering autonomy development due to WCs adherence to SCT (Little, 2013).

In FLUACC, autonomy theory applied for fostering autonomous writing was proving to be more helpful than SCT (or at least the WCs’ interpretation of SCT) to provide methods of writing assistance suitable for L2 writers, as it allows for gradual, individual and multidimensional development as recognizable autonomy. It allows the grounding of autonomy in everyday practice and diverse cultural perspectives, which is surely where SCT should be strong as well. However, as mentioned in the first part of this section, my findings did not support the dominance of autonomy over language skill development – in this case, writing skills.

5.2.8.4. Seeking to balance directive and non-directive help. Secondly, the balance of directive and non-directive help is important for 1-1 advisory interactions. A combination of both was provided by me as the advisor to the participants in the study. The proportion varied according to the individual and the task, with no apologies for including directive help.

However, the non-directive approach to advising was introduced to the WC by North (1984), and has been advocated for writing as a process approach of self-expression, disallowing explicit directives from the advisor (Wang, 2012). The focus was on changing the writer rather than the single script (Golden, 2005; Lefort, 2010). In contrast, the newer L2 writer philosophy allows the advisor to give directions to students (Lefort, 2010), who respond reactively (Littlewood, 1999), instead of being expected to solve all their problems with suggestive help and socratic questioning. As Wang (2012) explained, L2 students often need a more directive participation from an advisor to ensure that they are

not overwhelmed or confused, which can be their response to questions or other forms of indirect suggestions (Lefort, 2010; Williams & Severino, 2004).

Direct instruction can also save the student and advisor time and can also conform to a cultural authoritative expectation from the students (Wang, 2012), as indeed it does in the Arab world in general. Powers (1993) described the need of an advisor to fill the gaps and differences in the knowledge of L2 learners, labeling such an advisor as a "cultural informant." Paoli (2006) explained that the time needed for language acquisition is compromised by the stress of assignment deadlines, which further accentuates the need for direct advice. However, the conundrum lies in the fact that direct corrections can provide a quick fix, but possibly not a lasting one.

My role as advisor in this research was a mix of directive and non-directive support, alternating approaches as appropriate and as possible. Clarity and brevity for the student was pertinent in either form – no vagueness. In the online context, suggestions are more likely to be misinterpreted so that Hewett (2015) in dealing with L1 writers online emphasizes clarity and directness of expression by the teacher/advisor. So, for L2 writers this would seem to be even more of a needed concession.

The mix I used was individual and tailored to the need and time. Moreover, repeated 1-1s with many of the participants tended to yield still directive help for conciseness but also increased suggestive help because any ambiguities misconstrued in suggestions were less likely to be a problem and students became more proactive. Also developing student-advisor relationship meant students respected feedback, directive or non-directive.

5.2.8.5. Seeking to balance teacherly and facilitative advice. The third balancing adaption made contrary to advisory ideology was empowering students with teacherly versus peer advice during an interaction. Advisors in WCs are usually peer tutors, but what I provided as an advisor was often more characteristic of teacherly advice (standard of advice expected from a teacher) than a peer tutor's advice which might be more collaborative. This was simply because, as an L1 advisor, my use of varied approaches and my professional background in the subject were more than a peer usually offers, and indeed, could be expected to offer, and this is what was needed by the learners.

This teacherly approach has been characterized by some researchers as necessary. Wang (2012) queried the limitations of the peer-tutor approach offered to L2 students in WCs. Myers (2003) asserted that WC advisors should play the role of a language teacher and writing instructor because they are, in fact, "perfectly positioned" (p. 64) to help students with the language learning needed for their writing. Accordingly, my techniques ranged from teacher-centred to student-centred respective to need.

Hewett (2015) used the terms “eclectic pedagogy” and “semantic integrity” to describe this more cross over approach between teaching and collaboration (p. 19), encouraging its adoption by those helping L1 writers in OWLs and advising peer tutors to be given a more teacherly knowledge base to enable them to be more useful as OWL advisors. If a teacherly approach is required for OWL advisors for L1 writers, it should all the more so be required for OWL advisors of L2 writers.

Cultural sensitivity can also weigh into this need for a teacherly approach, as students from an authoritative collectivist background, like Arabs, often believe that English teachers are the authorities they need to help them. They can also lack confidence in peer help (Lefort, 2010; Tan, 2011). This phenomenon was supported in my research where only two students sought help from peers as one way of the several they used to get help. Thus, several strong points call into question the frequently Western-normative ideologies of the WC for advising, advocating better balancing. Some of the practical implications of the study’s advising are provided in the following section.

5.2.9. Practical implications for the necessity of 1-1 advisory dialogues for Arabs on an online SAC. Overall, the practical implications concerning this key advising principle are to ensure 1-1 advising is available on an online writing SAC and that it is relevant to the Arab L2 participants. My study showed advising from a sociocultural perspective of autonomy emerges as the suggested approach where Vygotskyian dialogue can take place between the advisor and student in the zone of proximal development, predominantly using the asynchronous email mode. Initially, care must be taken with the first interaction to build a good rapport so that future sessions will benefit from the maximum possible communication. Reactive autonomy might be mainly manifested at first, but metacognition and reflection can be encouraged with repeated use. In fact, for writing proficiency and confidence enhancement, 1-1s can be a bridge for some students to move from the mainly reactive to showing more proactive autonomy. Synchronous semi-structured chats can be used to enhance autonomous learning after some rapport has been established. One chat of this kind is a doable service that might be offered to each student once a semester at a time of their choice. This chat can also provide an opportunity for closer relationships, refreshing collaboration and expression plus addressing any deep problems. Interdependence must not be construed to mean a person is showing a lack of autonomy, but instead be viewed as a healthy choice made according to needs.

Independent learning centres for L2 writers should provide high interactivity if needed, and advisors should resist the ideologies in opposition to this. Also, they should resist L1 minimalistic advising ideologies since L2 writers cannot identify and solve all their own problems with indirect

guidance; they cannot be in control of all the content of their own learning. Advisors with a mix of SAC and WC type approaches are indicated for the Arab sociocultural situation since according to the results of my study the gradual fostering of autonomy afforded by a SAC advisor in tandem with a focus on writing needs are what are required. The writing help should fall along a continuum of directive to non-directive assistance according to individual need at a specific time. Further, because of the expertise level and the directives required, advisors might need to interact more in the role as teachers than peers in relation to the level of their knowledge and the kind of help needed. Hewett's (2015) new research on assisting L1 writers in online circumstances has verified the need for non-minimalistic help, directiveness and teacherly instructions, and my research validates these points for L2 writers. With the L2 language skill being specifically academic writing, the next key principle overlaps with some of the points already made, but in the following section they will be discussed in more detail as relates specifically to writing.

5.3. Key Principle #3: Student Writing Needs and Perspectives Can Drive Successful Autonomous Writing Development

This section identifies the main writing needs students manifested and wanted help with because these needs drove the methods of aid specifically offered in this online SAC. Although students' needs have been the focus of second language teaching for a long time, they have not been part of online advising principles; instead top-down teacher preferences and perspectives and WC ideologies have been the main drivers (Denton, 2014). Below are the specific adaptations and results that occurred when the participants' writing needs and perspectives were put first. The discussion will show how the flexibility of action research allowed a special "expect- correct" technique to evolve to cater to the specific online Arab L2 writing context. This discussion is followed by a comparison with some other tertiary situations, particularly EFL, and a critical perspective of the requirement of being led by student needs. Finally, the practical implications are given.

5.3.1. Ascertaining writing needs. Students obviously wanted help with their writing. This was their primary motivation to voluntarily participate in the research project. As has been affirmed by researchers, a WC or SAC has the privilege of getting to the heart of L2 students' writing problems with its 1-1s (Leki, 2009; Myers, 2003; Bruce & Rafoth, 2009). Yet, ascertaining and using the same students' needs and perspectives to drive the assistance they receive is rejected by a great number of studies (Denton, 2014; Ehmann & Hewett, 2015; Hewett, 2015; Holtz, 2014). In my project, though the findings

and preceding principles showed the Arab L2 writing students came with their own form of autonomy which developed through their FLUACC experience, getting help via feedback for their writing needs was the participants' motivation.

The study showed that students in Cycle 1, who were mainly taking mandatory undergraduate academic writing courses (n = 10), needed help in four broad areas: academic writing, language development, and contrastive rhetoric/L1 interference with some help in maturity development -like critical thinking (see section 4.4.6). Various participants asked for help regarding forming or checking "thesis statement," "topic sentences," "organization," "introduction," "conclusion" and "citations/referencing". Academic writing can be a new and complex form of writing to students, requiring time and individual assistance above the limits of scheduled class time. Cummins (1999) warned that cognitive academic language proficiency can take 5-7 years to master and longer if students have not had much exposure to academic type tasks in their L1 (a problem akin to some participants lacking preparation at high school).

Furthermore, individual students were rightly worried regarding their language structure. They asked me to "check," "comment on," give "my opinion" on, "recheck" a portion of text, or to "know/identify my mistakes", and "especially grammar." Many seemed generally unaware of how to self-edit or proofread for themselves, highlighting the need for the kind of research on student-led autonomy as in this study. With the process approach and genre modeling brought to the forefront in their undergraduate mandatory writing courses, students generally received very little focus as regards their ongoing language development or language errors. Time and workload significantly encroached on the process approach working its full due, resulting in a lack of coaching in editing and proof reading.

Sufficient feedback needs to be provided freely by the teachers who have time and liberty to do so (Hewett, 2015). Then, L2 writing can be used to aid second language acquisition/ development (Roca de Larios, 2013; Zhang, 2013), rather than confuse students. However, given the constraints on the teachers' time, extra individual feedback was definitely needed by students, such as afforded by an advisor in an independent learning centre. As advisor, I enjoyed the liberty of an eclectic teacher "to do the work that students wanted and needed" rather than being stifled by orthodoxy (Hewett, 2015, p. 90).

Students differed in their feedback needs when they had no English Writing course as part of their semester's studies compared to students who had, with the prominence now being on language development. The participants in Cycle 2 provided this knowledge because Cycle 2 drew from a wider range of students than Cycle 1, including also students who had finished their mandatory

undergraduate writing courses and were now writing without any classroom English instruction (n = 8). The English-medium instruction in their major content courses did not provide them with any help in their language development. Results from viewing their draft texts revealed many students still needed some help with academic writing, especially source acknowledgement or writing in a specific genre they had not learnt in the academic writing courses (e.g., analytical and reflective reports). However, the main need was language development – their papers were full of lexical, grammatical and mechanical problems. Various participants might still ask for help regarding forming or checking "thesis statement," "organization," and "introduction" but mostly there was a repetitive call for "checking" where they did not know how to proof read or edit. Again, the type of feedback an independent learning centre could provide was required but this time the main emphasis had to be on language development.

Directive and proof-reading advising are needed for L2 writers. In the sea of needs that students expressed, sometimes specific need identifications emerged but also plenty of generalities, like "checking" and "your comment and opinions." I took the stance that students had identified and changed what they could and they needed help with what was wrong in general. This relates to the newer realistic stance towards L2 writers mentioned in the last section (Bruce & Rafoth, 2009; Williams & Severino, 2004), where direct help is given to writers on errors not identified by students, recognizing that there is so much L2 writers still do not know by themselves. However, proofreading and editing were considered part of my realistic stance as well, not the practices affirmed by many WC and OWL administrations despite the need for editing help being the voice of the students and what they perceive as useful to improve their writing (Wang, 2012). The CCCC's (2009) position statement for L2 writers also reaffirms their legitimate long term needs in language development. A balance of comprehensive and focused feedback was provided in accordance with the individuals involved (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012) to fulfil the students' wants and needs without overloading them.

5.3.2. Effective feedback technique for student needs. The CCCC's (2013) position statement on online writing instruction encourages the development of teaching strategies and the adaptation of theories and pedagogies to the unique online environment. Thus, during the two cycles I worked on developing a special feedback learning technique for the 1-1 asynchronous mode with the advisor, as this was proving the most popular mode (but not the only one) among the students. The action research methodology being pragmatic and flexible enabled the teaching and learning to change to help meet student needs. My reflections and interventions continued according to "what works best" for this aim to make the interventions practical, in line with an action research exploratory study (Dick,

2000, p. 4). Five factors were considered: (1) the student's expectations of correction; (2) my knowledge of working within Vygotsky's ZPD as a reasonable expectation of what L2 students could do with guidance from a Knowledgeable Other; (3) my experience as a L2 writing class teacher in meeting student needs; (4) my understanding of contrastive rhetoric problems/L1 interference that needed emphasis for Arab L2 writers' language development; and (5) the brevity and simplicity needed in online directions and for L2 language learners. The participants' positive response to the study's pre-test IELTS essay error feedback reinforced the use of this technique as well, for it was in this way students' interest and success in eliminating frequent errors that were identified for them in FLUACC's writing test were clearly seen. The students appreciated that their errors were identified, some basic error patterns were commented on and a score for errors-per-100-word was posted. Participants' comments indicated they considered these matters important to address and, more importantly, within their grasp. They seemed to want to learn from their mistakes and become more autonomous. Arab students within the university are very results-orientated, so the error score was like a target to aim to reduce. Thus, elements of this type of feedback influenced the "expect-correct" technique described in section 4.4.3.2.

The terms "expect" and "correct," were used to concisely describe the mix in the technique required to develop student written language proficiency primarily while advancing learner autonomy. Rilling (2005) had found indirect corrections through identifying patterned errors worked best in her OWL asynchronous advising situation while Chandler (2003) was successful modeling error correction on a portion of text and then leaving the student the task of applying this to the rest. This opened the door to the method I designed, which is a combination of both and more. Hewett (2015) advocated explicit, eclectic ways which were not limited to content, process or product. They should be guided by semantic integrity, providing what students need. She gave examples such as modeling, a four step problem-centred interaction culminating in student action, and listing steps for the student to take. To me this made instruction for L2 students more complicated and verbose than needed (since this research related to L1 students), whereas the concept for the "expect-correct" technique kept teaching and understanding simple. Evidence to prove that it was a helpful online tactic came from a variety of data sources covering a number of facets as illustrated below. Empirical evidence such as this has been called for regarding new and even old feedback techniques because there is a lack (CCCC, 2009; CCCC, 2013; Hewett, 2015; Miller-Cochran, 2015).

The expect-correct technique was flexible enough for the individual participant needs, providing student improvement. The proportion of "expect" to "correct" and which ones to select for "expect" depended on the student's level and needs as shown in their specific draft. I carefully matched the

corrections for writing proficiency with some expectations for autonomy development so that revisions remained doable instead of too hard, which would have added to their stress or demotivated them - affect and motivation temperature being important (Ushioda, 2007; Yamashita, 2015). Because the "expect-correct" mixture was non-threatening, it proved an effective way of improvement, encouraging student dialogue in that a student would want to do it again, checking corrections or trying it out in the next part or full assignment -refer to M2's confidence increase and help gain from feedback in section 4.4.5.1.

Besides being effective for improvement, this expect-correct technique, guided by the students wanting help with their errors, was an efficient use of time for pressurized students which they appreciated and needed. For the most part, the technique helped the Arab L2 writers' attain a decent grade – something that ranked high in their aspirations. This was evidenced by eight of the participants volunteering that they had got grades of A or B from their lecturer-marked assignments compared to the two reporting a low grade and one reporting failure. Four also reported getting 5.5+ for external IELTS exams. Grade improvement evidence like these is very important to students but also to administrative stakeholders (Ehmann & Hewett, 2015).

Furthermore, with this feedback technique, learners could make efficient progress towards the institute's expectations of their written work, which was more like an L1 writer's English standard, according to top down command and faculty survey. Lower order concerns (LOCs) were dealt with by me on a par with or more than higher order concerns (HOCs), according to individuals' needs (differing from Hewett's (2015) HOC preeminence for L1 students). Linville (2009) acknowledged the helpfulness of dealing with L2 students' LOCs in a WC with some concessions (see section 5.3.3). My findings showed over a cycle the holistic mean score of some students' pre- and post-essays (n=7) increased from an IELTS 5.6 to 5.9 score while their accuracy rate improved from 18 errors per 100 words to 11. Though causality cannot be demonstrated in this research design, students seemed very encouraged by their improved results. They seemed to associate these improvements, and good grades for IELTS and assignments with the help they had received from FLUACC, according to their multiple comments of thanks and appreciation. This enfranchisement of the students' perceptions as a leading cause of writing development further supports Key Principle #3 and supports the expect-correct tactic as being a means of effective feedback.

The expect-correct tactic had a multiplying effect on autonomy fostering as well as writing proficiency. As students became used to responding reactively to the tactic, they appeared unconsciously, without any strain, to become stronger in their metacognitive and metalinguistic abilities

and more adept in their revisions. The result was greater proactivity, not just in language development, but in other areas of their writing like content and process. Such effects became noticeable over the length of the initial 10-week action research cycle and were confirmed with new participants and returnees doing the next cycle via qualitative and quantitative data from multi-sources and analyses in the findings especially in answers to research questions 2 and 4. Gradual change over time in students in manifesting reactive autonomy to more proactive forms have been reported in specific university classroom studies in some Asian countries (Huang ,2009; Le, 2013; Nakata, 2007). Chan (2012) documented this change occurring in Hong Kong students' investment in out-of-class English interest activities as students progressed from secondary to tertiary studies, but I could not find evidence of such occurring in literature concerning online SAC situations.

The expect-correct technique was helpful with cases of fossilization (see 4.4.3.2). These were evident in Cycle 1 where attention to language development was limited in mandatory writing courses and in Cycle 2 where no language help was supplied in their content courses. Johns (2001) and Kietlinska (2006) informed of such occurrence when L1 input was lacking. Fossilization was holding students back from attaining good grades and making improvements in their writing. The expect-correct technique provided the focused awareness these students needed to correct mistakes (Gardner, 2010; Lightbown & Spada, 2006), since I provided reinforcing guidance until students' awareness habits were established. Evidence of successful elimination of fossilization problems can be noticed by M1's writing progress in cycle 1 (Table 4, section 4.4.5.2). Her post IELTS essay error analysis rendered a good low three errors per 100 words at the end of Cycle 1 compared to her initial level of 15 errors per 100 words (analyzed from one of her first texts submitted - as she did not take the pre IELTS essay test). Students receiving help with fossilization did not know their fossilized needs initially, but were grateful as they became aware of them and received better marks by overcoming them, and became autonomous in this regard. Overall, the "expect- correct" technique afforded a simple, flexible and broad application to students' writing problems.

5.3.3. Comparison and critical perspective of the study's emphasis for allowing student needs to be the driving force. There is a lack of empirical studies focusing on asynchronous dialogue between student and teacher online, but even fewer that focus on the students' writing needs being the drivers of this service (as recognized by them and not) – the subject of Key Principle #3. Denton (2014) works in a bilingual part of the US, where advisor services were offered in both Spanish and English for the mostly Hispanic student population. In a detailed study she reported that "students choose asynchronous online tutoring not because they consider it as a drop off service, but it is a format that works for them,

and they are seeking feedback that will guide their revision process" (p. 108). She emphasized that the advisors' efforts to shape the interactions for individuals was not a one size fits all and were appreciated by the students. Eclecticism, pragmatism and meeting students' needs, as per my research, were favored over sticking to orthodoxy - in this case the North American F2F WC ways. Eclecticism refers to using various ways and heterogeneity, while pragmatism refers to using practical ways and seeking practical outcomes.

In countries with an EFL context in general, Benson (2011a) has claimed SACs usually function "with their own philosophy and routines for engaging learners in language study" (p. 128). However, little about writing aid concerning SACs has been published. The International Writing Centers Association encourages individual WCs to be responsive to their individual context, yet evidence shows a persistence in adhering to the ideology, lore and orthodoxy of North American centres (Denton, 2014), even those in EFL situations as shown below.

With not much writing advising to compare against in EFL circumstances and even less in the online mode, it appears that Japan's tertiary institutes are leading the field in terms of research on centres to meet individual needs; this research can be compared to FLUACC as it shares the same scope. Japanese research has reported an ideological adherence to the concepts stemming from North American WCs, including a focus on creating better writers (rather than helping with students' drafts), refusing proof reading and using peer tutors (Johnston, Yoshida & Cornwall, 2010). These techniques would therefore conflict with my findings where meeting local Arab students' needs were paramount. However, there are acknowledgements of unique differences according to specific tertiary contexts too (Thompson, 2014). Thus, a recent four-semester study in a WC in Japan's Sojo University revealed the majority of advisory sessions (over 80%) were focused on linguistic accuracy or editing needs with half the students being graduates (LaClare & Franz, 2013). In this context, what are normally considered lower order concerns (LOCs) became higher order concerns (HOCs) in terms of the attention paid to them. My research showed however that both HOCs and LOCs needed to be addressed, with HOCs tapering off after concerted help. When Sophia University's WC showed diminishing use by individuals, McKinley (2011) recounted, the same was revived when it started offering group tutorials on academic writing skills. Thompson (2014), in still another Japanese university, reported poor use of a WC until action research led to replacing the WC with an OWL that students chose to use to access resources rather than for 1-1 advisory sessions.

These examples show how research driven by individuals' needs is important, though they differ in their results. Each is limited to a local context, but, as empirical evidence, adds to the understanding

and theory of advisory sessions, second language writing and second language SACs, WCs and OWLs. Even in Qatar, the research university's physical WCs and two other university WCs model themselves on the North American version. My pilot online SAC was able to break free of this mould because it concentrated on student needs and was data-driven via action research. It was as Thompson (2014) claimed: when "we focus on students' demands, decisions become less about orthodoxy and more about the needs of students" (p. 141).

Hewett and DePew (2015) and Hewett (2015) are the most up-to-date books on online conferencing but are predominantly dedicated to online writing courses rather than OWLs, and L1 writers rather than L2. Some L1 strategies can be applied to L2 writers and some cannot (see 5.3.2).

Hewett (2015) advocates eclecticism for tutoring where different views are embraced as regards exploring tutoring strategies online. A dynamic view of advising is encouraged where advisors can change pedagogy when disengagement occurs, respond to the moment, and personalize according to the individual – all aspects fully in agreement with the FLUACC study. It seems only in this way that not just effectiveness, but also efficiency can be addressed. Yet still some WC values are supported, including resisting line editing, which is reiterated in a small section on helping L2 students (Hewett, 2015).

Unlike Hewett (2015), I feel my research serves to strongly affirm that proofreading assistance and editing are necessary to meet many L2 writers' main needs. At the same time, my study demonstrated that autonomy can still be fostered when ministering to these needs. Indeed the very way of meeting editing needs via the expect-correct tactic supplied a challenge to students to exercise their autonomy ("expect") and they received metalinguistic or metacognitive knowledge ("correct") in doable amounts. This process seemed to stimulate students over time to exercise more proactive autonomy. Confidence gained by learning to identify and correct some of their frequent lower order errors (grammar, vocabulary and mechanical problems), inspired students to identify, discuss and attend to more and higher order problems.

Other research in this vein of advisor support is sparse. However, Wang (2012) took a definite stand for it as a vital need in L2 situations. Blau and Hall (2002) argued that L2 advisors or teachers can feel guilt by helping L2 students with language development. Yet in reality Myers (2003) shifts the guilt to where it needs to be placed by stating that refusing requests from L2 writers for proofreading help is actually obstructing their language progress. Teachers and advisors are withholding needed knowledge by not helping them with what they seek. Murphy and Sherwood (2011) also expose this disparity as "social injustice perpetrated by dominant culture's racist and classist agenda" (p. 4). In a practical vein,

Linville (2009) claimed realistic help in WCs was needed for main rule based errors to help L2 students attain the level of self-editing that was expected by graders, while observing that this process could be slow. However, on FLUACC, the ease of using Microsoft Word revision tools to identify problems and demonstrate revisions on attachments to emails plus the very specific practice resources on the website, seemed to make lower order improvement a faster process. This could be an aspect where online writing sites could outclass F2F sites.

The stress and effort required for L2 writers to reach the high expectations made on them also needs consideration, as the problem negatively affects students' needs. If students are drowning in their writing experience, they cannot enjoy it – meaning it would be hard to stay motivated, feel engaged or exercise agency. As a field of research, English as the medium of instruction for tertiary subjects in EFL contexts is still much in its infancy along with big queries about its worth and what is really happening to students' content learning as well as their English development (Dearden, 2014). Meanwhile we need L2 writing to be satisfying, rather than an impossible unrealistic chore, to keep students developing in their writing and autonomy. Steps and goals required by students need to achievable so that they can have or retain a sense of agency by believing that what they do can improve their L2 writing (Williams et al., 2015). Having the "expect-correct" technique available including its proofreading help seemed to mean students developed in their writing in a less stressful way than without it - opening a door into the joy of writing (see 4.4.5.4). Understanding and success create joy and generate the next growth cycle of understanding and success. Students can feel it is possible to improve with effort and their agency can increase.

For all the effort required by students, teachers and support staff, whether EMI and L1 native English standards should be upheld in EFL universities is a difficult decision that individual countries and institutions need to make, yet they are limited by the dearth of research (Dearden, 2014; Thaiss, 2012). If in fact such standards are demanded then for the sake of equitability, interactive online writing SACs that meet the needs of the students on their own level as in my study should be considered. Dropping standards or forsaking EMI altogether has its problems from a critical perspective as well. Lowered demands of English standards over three years for L2 undergraduates in Australia, an ESL country, yielded no English growth or improvement (Knoch, Rouhshad, Oon & Storch, 2015). As regards dropping EMI, after my study the specific Qatari university involved switched the curriculum in Arts, Law and Business Courses to Arabic medium to be fairer to students. However, there are ongoing problems ensuing as to the employability of the resultant graduates with sub-standard English skills. The following section is a summary of the practical implications as regards helping L2 writers according to their needs.

5.3.4 Practical implications for successful autonomous writing development driven by Arab student L2 writing needs. This study involved a specific cohort of Arab L2 tertiary institute writers displaying multiple needs. Extra time and explicit help supplied by physical or online SAC or WC advisors are required for students to master the literacy needs of academic writing with its higher order concerns (HOCs) while attending mandatory academic writing courses (emphasized in Cycle 1). This help should extend beyond this academic writing course time too as students apply such literacy to their major EMI content courses in different genres and varied sources (shown in Cycle 2).

Equally important is meeting students' needs by providing help in developing their language proficiency, often described as lower order concerns (LOCs), until they can produce the vocabulary and accuracy needed for their assignments (applicable in both Cycles). Ongoing help in language development remains important to prevent fossilization and must become a long term protocol for L2 writers to achieve anywhere near the L1 writing standard required of them, long after they have mastered academic writing skills. Contrastive rhetoric/L1 interference for problems, including vowel blindness in spelling, can act as L1-friendly resource explanations of needs at the word, sentence and conceptual levels.

Therefore minimizing language development aid, as is done by orthodox advisors (in many North American WCs) and those influenced by such methods, was criticised as unfair (5.2.8 and 5.3.3). Instead, my study showed language development aid should be maximized, firstly, because it meets student needs and, secondly, because it enhances the fostering of greater autonomy. Thus, line-by-line editing and proofreading help should be supplied because of student language development needs.

Advisors using asynchronous modes can concentrate on solutions like using an expect-correct technique, which provides explicit teaching for all the students' writing needs, without discrimination between upper and lower order concerns. Such an environment and technique seemingly allows a focus on students' concern about all their writing needs while operating in a bite-size feedback cycle in the individual's zone of proximal development to promote writing proficiency and autonomy. Multiple dialogues involving feedback induce confidence; and when success is experienced, reactive autonomy can become proactive. Key Principle #4, as discussed in the following section, highlights the uniqueness of the online environment. It is appreciated for what it offers learners.

5.4 Key Principle #4: Positive Affordances of Online SACs/OWLs Present Ameliorative Opportunities for Improved Learning Outcomes.

The worth of an online SAC or OWL is only as good as the opportunities for learning and parts of the pedagogical environment perceived and used by its learners. Not enough attention has been given to the interaction of technology, like my online SAC, and the learner (Stockwell, 2012). Analyses performed demonstrated learners' propensity for some basic characteristics, affordances, and clarified some ways they enhanced learning opportunities and outcomes. Cotterall and Murray (2009) noted that "affordances are opportunities for learning, which the students perceive within the learning structure" (p. 42). Affordances can depend on an individual's personal identity since how a learner perceives himself/herself can determine his/her needs and motivation. Then, students demonstrate agency by acting on affordances where they not only perceive an affordance but respond to it or use it for their learning (van Lier, 2007). Thus, identity, agency and affordances are tied to autonomy and success on a learning website. A technological tool on its own is only an affordance if one of its features is accorded a useable status by a learner. Some of the affordance features that made students active agents on FLUACC are: support, personalization, immediacy, availability, proactivity of the students and the advisor, and flexibility. These are described in more detail below with a critical perspective of why affordances should be sought for online learning centres and a summary of the practical implications.

5.4.1. Support. In my research (RQ2), the primary affordance of the online environment from a student's perspective was support. Students acknowledged by word and behaviour that the two most significant items of support were the 1-1s with the advisor and the resources found on FLUACC. Support through advisory interactions has already been discussed under the second and third Principles above, with resources just touched on under the first Principle. Concerning the resources, the number that can be arrayed on an online website is enormous. Perhaps the most celebrated, the Purdue OWL, has over 200 resources (Purdue OWL, 2015). The vast array of resources can overwhelm L2 students causing confusion and engendering dissatisfaction. Thus, in this study FLUACC supplied direct links to Purdue OWL for some specific resources, yet remained itself a special resource website to cater to filtered local and unique custom needs. In a similar vein, Wilson (2012) argued for a bodega (local market) type writing centre suiting the needs and backgrounds of the local population rather than a supermarket-type which may have plenty of standard information but has not been altered to meet its unique situation.

Care was taken in the study to ensure that the resources were especially relevant to the writing curricula and needs of the students to increase usefulness, as advocated by Barrs (2010) and Gardner (2006). Topics were arranged hierarchically according to difficulty, yet as intuitively as possible, for example with the headings "perfect paragraph" to "easy essay" to "elegant essay" to "topping term

papers." Information, interactive exercises, and self-assessments were included. Also, resources were added as student needs so required, with regular updates. Emails were distributed to inform participants of new resources that became available. Not just "what" resources, but the learning-to-learn "how" resources were included, as advocated by Warschauer and Morrison (2011) and Gardner and Miller (2010), some of which proved favourite places for students to access.

However, the FLUACC resources overall were not explored well by all students with only half the participants showing appreciable frequency, breadth or depth in their use of resources. When balanced with the other ways students obtained help via FLUACC, especially 1-1s (see 5.4.2 and 5.4.4), and the high retention rate, this is a good result for an ad-hoc use facility compared to the inefficiencies that have been reported as a standing problem by independent facilities (Castellano et al., 2011; Figura & Jarvis, 2007; Reinders, 2007a; Reinders & Darasawang, 2012). The care observed regarding the relevance of resources possibly helped this, in particular with ongoing changes essential for maintenance and improvement (CCCC, 2013).

Some special technological support tools were considered of limited support by learners. Several online algorithmic writing raters that students could access on FLUACC, as an alternative to a human advisor, were not habitually used. The problem with these was, though they identified errors in a student's text and commented on the type of error, one provided only minimal help and the other inundated the student with too much. They lacked the human advisor judgment of nuances and the right amount of information to be provided per individual. These algorithmic writing raters are still of limited use or should be used in a cautionary way (Weigle, 2015). M1 shared that she did not trust the help such electronic tools provide. I encouraged students to use these raters to help them pick out several points that need addressing in their drafts. Hewett and Warnock (2015) suggested using the opportunities such raters can afford. In my study overall, 1-1s with an advisor were chosen over these raters or for the majority of help taken. A more personalized affordance is discussed in the following section.

5.4.2. Personalization. Students made choices about how they would engage in learning (RQs1 & 3), thus, personalization was an affordance. RQ 1 showed some were more introverted or private learners, choosing just to use the resources alone or mostly (n=3 for Cycle 1, n=4 for Cycle 2). A few only sought support from the advisor via the 1-1 asynchronous (n=1 for Cycle 1, n=2 for Cycle 2). The majority chose to devote their time to 1-1 asynchronous interactions with delayed transactional distance, plus the additional use of some resources (n=9 for Cycle1, n=17 for Cycle 2). A few took a turn

at synchronous chats with reduced transactional distance (n= 3 for Cycle 1, n=4 for Cycle 2), and two tried the forums. The role adopted most when they entered the SAC each time was that of lurker. Unseen and undetected by others except the advisor, they explored new chats, forums, profiles and interactivity that had occurred since their last entry. As Cotterall and Murray (2009) explained, different elements enable students "to adapt their learning to suit their identities" (p. 42). This is an appropriation with more likelihood for them to assert their agency.

The findings identified that choices made by any two specific learners varied, for example M1 and A6 in section 4.4.8; yet, these differences made them individually successful. Multiplicity of modalities, media, the kinds of resources, teaching and learning approaches in an online writing environment, as encouraged by CCCC (2013) regarding online writing instruction and Hewett (2015b), ensures more inclusivity via personalization as an affordance. This was needed because Arabs are no longer a monolithic culture regarding cultural normalities (Zaharna, 2010) or L2 language needs. What Bowie said applied when he encouraged teachers and writing course designers to consider when making up an online course a "universe of users" rather than a universal L2 language user (cited in Miller-Cochran, 2015, p. 294). This would apply to OWLs as well. Thus, inclusivity is needed (CCCC, 2013) and in the 1-1s unique dialogues occurred according to individuals' needs and wants. The combination of affordances of immediacy and availability are discussed next.

5.4.3. Immediacy and availability. Prompt answering of emails has been encouraged by Lowenthal and Parscal (2008) for teacher presence, but also for meeting student needs. Golden (2005) advocated no more than 48 hours delay between contact and response. As a test of immediacy, Golden submitted a draft to five different university OWLs. The wait was 7 days to 2 months for a response, with one never responding at all. Immediacy and availability as affordances on FLUACC were much appreciated by my students. *"The most important thing was the fast answering of our questions"* M5 reported.

Maintaining immediacy might mean adjustments need to be made when multiple interactions occur with a student in any one day or length of advisor's response is taken into account. Dialogue of not "one round," but "multi-rounds" has been said to promote autonomy and better learning (Hewett, 2015; Jackson, 2000; Rilling, 2005). Yet, Jackson (2000) encouraged multiple interactions per day, per person. Jackson also stated that students appreciated the comprehensive feedback received via asynchronous email but Breuch and Racine (2000) reported the extensiveness of an advisor's response taking an average of 94 minutes to compose. I find Jackson's comment regarding multiple interactions

per day per person and Breuch and Racine's time spent over a response to a single student rather excessive. I certainly did not answer more than one response per day, per person, with my responses taking about 15 -20 minutes to compose. In this way, I could provide sufficient feedback in a mixture of direct and indirect succinct "expect-correct" consultation without overloading the student or myself, but with encouragement for further dialogue. I could also attend to the diverse student requests within 24 hours to keep all the dialogues going. This efficiency allowed a manageable immediacy.

It was evident from my research website that students were focusing on their writing late in the evening and early hours after midnight. Weekends and holidays were especially busy as well. Such times were ideal for me as a full time lecturer working daytime on weekdays while my time for research as an advisor fell mostly on evenings, nights, weekends, and holidays. I could not keep up an ideal instant answering service, but students seemed happy with the speed whereby they generally received help well within 24 hours. It encouraged dialogue and repeated use.

One advantage of the Internet is 24-hour connectivity and OWLs and online SACs use this advantage in terms of supplying resources, but not generally for advisor availability. Advisor flexibility for online SACs/OWLs is needed to suit students' modern lifestyles and expectations, providing an extra dimension beyond a physical SAC/WC. These new expectations were reflected in my participants where a couple of them were balancing their studies with married life involving children. And, in general, the university was moving to accommodating working students and continuing education students. Denton (2014) reported that her online centre was only opened during normal working days, Monday to Friday, and required 2-3 working days to respond. Haberman (2004) complained that evidence of advisory sessions offered at all hours was sparse. Some universities, realizing the 24/7 nature of the problem and their inability to accommodate it, have outsourced such services to places like Smarthinking, an advisory service company. This is, indeed, a factor that must be taken into consideration. Such a service answers student requests both in synchronous and asynchronous modes with its peak hours being 1:00 a.m. to 3:00 a.m. (Haberman, 2004). Outsourcing always contains problems of compatibility, where specific institutional practices can differ from those provided by an outsourced company. An institution's investment in a 24-hour advisory service would involve added cost as well. Yet my institution and many others are supportive of WCs catering for individuals individually, appreciating this is the input and quality of help that numerous students require. If all the students who actually needed such a facility used it, then a significant availability problem could result.

5.4.4. Proactivity of students and advisor. Student proactivity influenced the form FLUACC became. Online SACs and OWLs are found in various forms, from information sites, advising sites, to a combination with the latter acclaimed as the best according to the Evaluative Framework for technological SACs outlined by Lázaro and Reinders (2006). FLUACC had been advertised as an "online writing lab for you to help yourself to many resources" and advisor help was "available if wanted"; nonetheless, student use and proactivity pushed it into a highly interactive website.

Research might encourage high interactivity but student proactivity might advocate otherwise. Distance learning researchers have advocated the importance of human interaction (Arnold, 2006; Shea & Bidjerano, 2010). McDonald and Reushle (2002) posited that an appropriate ratio of dialogue time to content time could be as high as 80:20. However, most of this dialogue occurs via discussion boards, not individual help. In FLUACC, student engagement via communication was mainly through the 1-1s. They were very popular as, averaged over both cycles, 69% of participants had over 10 interactions, while only 49% made an appreciable amount of use of content resources. FLUACC's record differs from that of other researchers in SACs and OWLs who experienced a lack of 1-1 use (Darasawang & Reinders, 2010; Terryberry, 2002; Thompson, 2014). The proactivity of their students tended to be for resources.

Proactivity worked both ways. When I, as advisor, was more proactive sending out general messages that displayed my presence in Cycle 2, rather than just remaining reactive to students, their use of FLUACC increased (See section 4.4.4). This positive impact on students' engagement and motivation was often in the form of emails to me sharing how they were and what their problems were. It was not only the usual 1-1 users that responded after a proactive message, but even some of the more introverted material users.

These messages provided a sense of instructor presence as advocated by Shea and Bidjerano (2010) and social presence – something already discussed as significant but missing in a peer sense (section 5.1.2.1). The content of my messages were important; they were not just factual, but also contained empathy, humor, animations, and alignment with the student's environment. Valdivia, McLoughlin and Mynard (2011) reported on a confirmatory study in Japan, where the online advisor's comments motivated students because they displayed care for the students, related specifically to their work, were ongoing (not just one off), and included visuals. To maintain a presence, Martinez and Olsen (2015) advocated the use of a wiki about writing issues that is continually added to or messages via various social media students would use. The significance of instructors/advisors injecting their presence is community, student engagement and site aliveness where students do not feel isolated and writing is not a solitary experience.

5.4.5. Flexibility. Action research uses a protocol of change, where flexibility can occur because the research is embedded in the dynamics of the place of practice with action and research working hand-in-hand. Remaining flexible to work towards "what works best" is paramount (Dick, 2000, p.4). The students as participants were important stakeholders in how the research developed. Such exploratory, open-ended, interpretative research which accurately reports participants' practices in OWLs has been endorsed by Ehmann and Hewett (2015).

This research of change was an affordance as learners appreciated being accommodated with pliability and the adaptations that worked for them. Examples include how the structured synchronous chats changed to address students' specific needs, morphing into semi-structured sessions. Thus, use was made of the structured needs analysis and goal setting template combined with discussion of problem details regarding a specific text/issue a student was working on at that time. Also, the pre-IELTS essay test taken at the beginning of each Cycle, planned as part of the test of writing proficiency, morphed into an autonomy-fostering affordance, with students using their results specifically to guide their targeted practice of grammar and mechanics. So, when A6 found from the analysis of this essay that his error rate was high and that some error types were of particularly high frequency, he became a regular user of FLUACC's grammar resources to practice and evaluate these particular errors. This ability to change and work with what is presently needed with inventiveness is another reason Wilson (2012) argued for a bodega (local market) type writing centre. The standards of a local market are not in status quo but "able to adjust quickly and deftly to local needs" (para. 4). Recognition of differences is acknowledged and welcomed as a local market is sensitive to and driven by "bottom up neighborhood cosmopolitanism" (para. 6).

Flexibility as an affordance encompasses students interpreting support and learning structures to use in new ways that suit them as well as students sharing their perception or knowledge to help with a solution. This type of co-creation, with social constructivism rather than technological determinism, makes students valuable spokesmen for the research and online SAC, with a sense of ownership – verging on co-researchers. Thus, news about FLUACC was shared on social media by the students (3.2.3.1) and the party of four repeater students who paid me a surprise visit after the research urged that the research findings should be published (4.4.4). Gui and Northern (2013) advocated that "students should understand their role as equal stakeholders in shaping the identity of [a] learner-centred space" so that it is used by them (p. 3).

5.4.6. Online support from a critical perspective. An OWL or online SAC is not problematic but rather a positive source of affordances. An OWL can be treated like a WC rather than the "new animal-with a look and feel of its own" it really is, due to it operating in an online environment (Munroe, 1998, p. 24). Being online means an OWL does not need to comply with its physical equivalent, WC, but can have other ways of coping/ gaining success. Much has been said already regarding advisory differences, something still not widely appreciated (Ehmann Powers, 2015; Hewett, 2015). Research is ongoing to make online SACs' and OWLs' 1-1s more effective (Golden, 2005; O'Tootle, 2006; Wang, 2012). Comparing these online 1-1s to F2F 1-1s taking place in physical SACs and WCs can place the former at a disadvantage in terms of the human communicative interface. The biggest obstacle has been the inability of the online centres to emulate the attributes of a F2F 1-1 (Ehmann Powers, 2015; Holtz, 2014). To many, interactive online SACs and OWLs are the equivalent of just dropping off a paper to be fixed without the writer being involved (Moser, 2002). However, researchers who have been able to look optimistically at online centres for what advantages they can offer, combining technology and writing disciplines, have been able to celebrate the affordances of online centres (Holtz, 2014; Hewett, 2015; McGraw, 2007).

FLUACC was dedicated to invest in the potential of online advisement and online sites rather than their drawbacks. As advisors have noticed, online learning centres provide distinct advantages including the opportunity to model needs contextually, providing links to assistance, less social distraction (Sandvik, 2007) and promotion of metacognition when students need to write thoughtfully to get help with their writing (Jackson, 2000; Thornton & Mynard, 2012). This study was able to empirically confirm the worth of online SACs and OWLs and add to the perceptions of their online affordances. As Wolf and Griffin (2012) claim, online advisement is a viable alternative to physical advisement while still providing unique affordances that may even make them the better alternative. Added to the advisement option are all the options of resources and tools and their combination with advisement that can be auxiliaries in an online environment. Orthodoxy can limit students to a reductive model of help, whereas exploitation of multiple affordances can produce many options and richness. It can be argued that this "new animal" for supplying writing aid and autonomy development is not a negative but rather a positive source of affordances, demonstrated in my study by the results on the usage of FLUACC and the resulting gains in student autonomy and writing development.

5.4.7. Practical implications of increased affordances in online SACs/OWLs. Affordances and agency provide a learning environment conducive to L2 students developing in English writing

proficiency and autonomy. This study highlighted how the support, personalization, immediacy and availability, proactivity of student and advisor, and flexibility are affordances in the online SAC environment for Arabs. Students were not only aware of the affordances, but had the agency to use some of them, if not all. The duration of the research allowed these affordances to be understood. My findings should help offset criticism and promote research about the usefulness of online SACs/OWLs in terms of autonomy in academic writing. It is these specific affordances that cater to the individual that might make this online centre the flourishing niche for particular students who are seeking to develop in academic writing and autonomy. Online learning environments aiming to provide advice and support (such as FLUACC) can afford students ameliorative opportunities for developing L2 writing proficiency and agency, ultimately, fostering their autonomy. OWLs and online SACs are not aiming to be the best place for all, just as WCS are not the best place for all, but rather the best places for some writers and a good alternative to others. They can provide a way of inclusion for L2 writers particularly and those who cannot/would rather not seek a F2F advisory session.

5.5 Bringing aspects together

The central mission of an online SAC or OWL is to assist student learning outside the classroom. Student-centredness is at the heart of the role whereby learners' needs will be addressed as paramount, mutually proclaimed as a seemingly proud embodiment by their parent physical facilities, SACs and WCs (Boquet & Lerner, 2008; Dofs & Hoffs, 2011; Sloan, 2013). Affordances, agency and autonomy are linked to student-centredness. As seen in the discussion of the four Key Principles, which crystalize the findings of the four Research Questions, a more complex picture has emerged of student-centredness concerning advisement, either as an "Idealistic (or orthodox)" focus or a more "Realistic" focus –which is subjectively idealized.

These two conflicting foci are not new, although they may be termed differently, such as advisor priorities/expectations versus student priorities/expectations (Reinders, 2007a), what should happen versus what does/might happen (Simpson, 2010), WC grand narrative versus eclecticism (McKinney, 2013) and idealism versus pragmatism (Sloan, 2013). Problematically, the Realistic form has been generally assessed as the poorer compromise, yet the dominating strength of the Idealistic form can stem from its orthodoxy where it has become a tradition causing an inflexible status quo (Boquet & Lerner, 2008; McKinney, 2013). Discussions of the conflict of the two are continuous amongst scholars of SACs, WCs, online SACs and OWLs (Denton, 2014; Sloan, 2013; Thonus, 2004; Wang, 2012), yet accentuated and bought to the forefront with L2 learners and online advisement – the twin headedness of my research. This double context gives evidence of the richness, value and superiority of the so-

called poorer Realistic form with its positive outcomes and identifies more the problems of the Idealistic focus.

The former Idealistic student-centredness relates largely to the standard principles of North American WC practice, discussed comprehensively in Principle #2 and #3, which have highly influenced many WCs and OWLs abroad as well. These originated from North (1984), Brooks (1991), Bruffee (1984) and Lunsford (1991) as seminal articles for WCs for L1 writers, covering tenets of minimalistic, non-directional, process-based, mainly HOCs help from an advisor in order to encourage the growth and future of the student as a better writer. The advisor is only facilitative and requires independence from the student. North's (1994) subsequent article when he counters his former article for its Idealistic rather than Realistic stance has been overlooked by many, allowing the hegemony and even cultural imperialism of orthodoxy to rule and have the priority narrative for what is right for writing centres (Grimm, 2011).

The latter Realistic focus considers elements of what has in various forms and weightings evolved from some alternative researchers and advisors in helping L2 writers (Myers, 2003; Myles, 2002; Powers, 1993; Wang; 2012) and moving SACs and WCs online (Denton, 2014; Hewett, 2015; Rilling, 2005), expanded by me through the results of my study and critical reflection. Some of these scholars argued against the Idealistic student centredness ideology over 10 years ago, yet still many advisors are constrained by it while others feel guilty when they stray or cannot make it work in their situation (Blau & Hall, 2002; Myers, 2003).

The right side of Table 6 below attempts to lay out the Realistic student-centredness elements I adopted for advising my L2 writers in online SACs or OWLs including some main positive results while the left side encapsulates the Idealistic student-centredness emphasizing its problems in the L2 online context. Though addressed in part before, even very explicitly (Sloan, 2013; Wang, 2012), yet the comprehensive overview in table-form, isolating 17 differences, more clearly shows that the so-called Idealistic (orthodox) student-centredness elements do not include what is realistically needed for an L2 writer (their ideal, Realistic student-centredness). The outcomes* on the right side are important empirical outcomes distinctly shown by my research in answer to research questions 1-4, giving evidence for the Realistic student-centred focus.

In fact, the Idealistic orthodoxy student-centredness can have detrimental effects. However, the Realistic student-centredness approach focuses on the students with reference to their needs and wants with positive effects. As Sloan (2013) confesses the Idealistic student-centredness concentrates on students' needs, not as wanted by students but priorities wanted by advisors and their management.

Sloan queried, “We conceptualize our work in terms of student “need,” but can we be student-centred if we do not do what the student wants?” (p. 2). However, as his end point, Sloan stops short of changing to the Realistic student-centredness interactions by suggesting the solution is transmitting truthfulness to the student by explaining why the Idealistic student-centredness is adopted. However, to me these results show action, not just words, are needed. The Realistic student-centredness focus needs to be adopted for L2 or online writers, especially the combination.

Table 6. *Idealistic (Orthodox) Student-Centredness vs. Realistic Student-Centredness*

Idealistic Student-Centredness	**Realistic Student-Centredness**
Offer minimalistic help on student-identified needs (prioritized by advisor)	Offer whatever is needed/wanted -student not expected to specifically identify all
Non-directional (can seem vague, ambiguous help to L2 or online writers)	Directional & non-directional -but very clear and simple *
Make better writer (understanding more important than student’s text)	Make better writing
Future-based	Immediate, present-based
Student’s personal growth important	External issues pressurizing student & personal growth important
Partially revised/imposition of some to work on	Meet deadlines & grades, more fully revised to make it acceptable
Satisfy advisor	Satisfy teacher, who set & marks the assignment
Process-based	Process & product-based
Some HOCs mainly attended to	Balance of HOCs & LOCs attended to (or as needed*)
Withheld expert knowledge	All knowledge student can take*
Advisor constrained	Advisor emancipated*
Orthodox – standardized pedagogy	Eclectic & pragmatic pedagogy
Student frustrated and constrained	Student joyful and free*
Limited agency	Increased agency*
Confidence stifled	Confidence growing*
Proactive autonomy but constrained	Multi-dimensional autonomy and increasing*
Unclear genuineness (reduced sincerity) of advisor	Transparent genuineness (true sincerity) of advisor*

It can be noted in Table 6 that with the Idealistic student-centredness in advising sessions the L2 students show limited agency because they do not find the advisor a supportive enough affordance. Expectations of students' knowledge and proactive autonomy are too high and the outcomes emphasized not what students count as most important – the immediate assignment and preparing it for evaluation. Instead the advisor is more interested in changing the writer and the writing he/she will do in the future. With the advisor doing this by adhering to process-driven, HOC attentive, facilitative ideals the desires of the students are pushed aside. Sessions do not seem genuinely student-centred enough for students and leave them low in confidence and frustrated. In fact these feelings can feature from the start and grow with the progress of a session. With both cognitive understanding and positive affect impaired little is achieved. Though the advisor wants the student to interact, in this state the student cannot. Advisor and student can feel equally thwarted.

On the other hand, with the Realistic student-centred advising the L2 students exercise their agency more because they find the advisor very supportive and therefore the advising becomes an affordance with both personalization and immediacy. Students feel that they are being listened to, appreciated and understood. Expectations of their knowledge are challenging but not impossible. The advisor feels free to adapt and assist practically according to each individual learner. The outcomes that students count as important, like learning how to improve their immediate paper as much as possible, are appreciated by the advisor. Sessions seem genuinely student-centred with HOCs and LOCs attended to. Students feel freer, more confident and various dimensions of autonomy are displayed. Positive affect is high with any apprehensions lowered. Interactions become more two-sided. Students show agency in wanting to come back to improve and grow in writing proficiency and autonomy. Also, in concentrating on immediate writing needs and issues that are stressing students, ultimately students' future writing, mind frame as a writer, personal growth and autonomy is affected positively as well. These results were shown in my research and the genuine relationship between the Arab students and me as advisor were very important

Some would argue the orthodox student-centredness shows truer agency, but agency in this sense could only be seen as individualistic, without extending into the social approach to language learning as well (Benson & Cooker, 2013) and ecological – described more with Figure 23. My study has endorsed the importance of both the individual and social aspects as agency, autonomy and identity combined (ibid.).

It is apparent from my findings and other researchers defying orthodoxy that 1-1 advisory sessions can act as a constraint or affordance to student agency and autonomy. The Realistic student-

centred form in this online SAC study enabled growth in a very natural way compatible to the students and the advisor. The inadequate preparation of many L2 students to produce the level of English writing demanded is not the students' fault and it would be wrong to make them feel that way. Emancipation from such injustice is needed for L2 students, not just online. Accommodating their needs with Realistic student-centred help increases their agency and autonomy as well as their L2 writing proficiency.

This Realistic student-centredness included and extended past the 1-1 sessions, with care and empathy shown in making, maintaining and adapting the virtual environment with its resources, tools and appearance. Having the same person as designer, technician and student advisor was an asset. Care was harbored by appreciating where students were positioned with their individual autonomy, part of principle 1, and improving the pedagogical mix of the online environment from the students' perspective to increase its student perceived affordances, part of principle 4. Realistic student-centredness meant allowing student affordances dictate the shape and direction of the online environment rather than the advisor's, literature, or technology per se. Support, personalization, proactivity of students and advisor, immediacy with availability, and flexibility were observed as student perceived affordances. These affordances are qualities, not just features, and are intertwined, strengthening each other, and affecting growth in writing proficiency and autonomy and contributions of students. Such recognized affordances can grow and more affordances eventuate as conditions of advisor therapeutic care continue, sensitive to the bottom up local conditions and students.

Figure 23 attempts to present the dynamic affordances from the overall FLUACC system diagrammatically, where the arrows denote a living system and flourishing growth – students found these meaningful and were active regarding. Van Lier (2008) explained that "these meanings [affordances] become available gradually as the learner acts and interacts within and with this environment" (p. 246) - the livingness and complexity of considerations involved being termed as viewing from an ecological perspective. As inherent in critical theory, we cannot dwell in historic myths or let technology rule but rather allow the local and very social needs of users of the system, in this case FLUACC, shape its development and use (Friesen, 2008). The question marks denote that more affordances can ensue as local, sensitive care and student use continue.

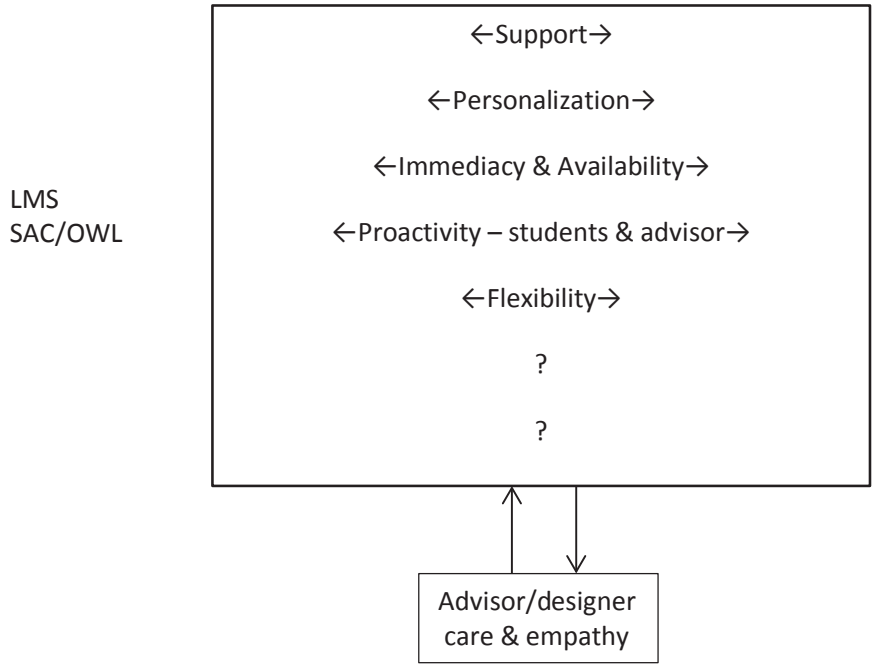


Figure 23. Dynamic perceived affordances in FLUACC undergirded by advisor/designer care

5.6. Summary of Discussion

The four specific interrelated research questions presented in the Findings chapter were discussed in more detail in this Discussion chapter under the four Key Principles (P1-4) deriving from these same questions. The general aim was to show how learner autonomy and L2 writing proficiency could be developed for Arab academic writing learners via an online SAC.

Principle #1: Multi-dimensional autonomy is manifested by most Arab student users in an online SAC. In contrast to much of the previous research in the region, most students of both genders in my study showed initial and ongoing autonomy. Various perspectives of technical, psychological, sociocultural and political-critical autonomy were intertwined with forms of affect. The range and quality of learner autonomy grew over time with indications of reactive autonomy becoming more proactive and extrinsic motivation becoming intrinsic. This manifestation of autonomy and further fostering of it appeared to be encouraged by the resources, 1-1s with advisor and the combining with writing development within the online SAC.

Principle #2: One-to-one advisory dialogue is necessary for most Arab students in an online SAC. Most of the students in my study made predominant use of the 1-1 advisory service for help, exhibiting a sociocultural perspective of autonomy – interdependence. Students interacted multiple times over a

10 week cycle via the asynchronous mode, mainly by email. Writing development occurred as did an increase in a variety of autonomy perspectives. Arab dialogue strength, relationship growth and privacy needs may have been the reasons for the students' choice of 1-1 asynchronous interactions. High retention was created for an ad-hoc, not-required facility largely because of these sessions. With the advisor conveying genuine care and direction in the initial interaction, students felt free to return to ask for help when needed. They appeared to show a genuine desire and need to know and understand in these sessions. Overall, they were very happy and satisfied with the type, clarity and level of help afforded by the asynchronous mode.

Synchronous written sessions had a secondary place, not allowing the detailed and multiple needs help of the asynchronous but inducing refreshing intimacy and allowing elucidation of several problem areas within a session. The volubility of students and their control in the synchronous mode were high, while the semi-structured input from the advisor seemed to yield substantial improvement in autonomous writing.

The dominance and ease of students using 1-1 advisement sessions online and the success of their learning counters the general resistance there has been of fully interactive OWLs. However, the eclectic methods of advisement also countered the dominant Western WC ideology. Thus, students required more extensive writing help, a very gradual take-over of self-control, a mixture of clear and brief directive and non-directive advice with frequently specific teacherly knowledge. Students chose to use the target language, English, for almost all communication, probably because the writing-autonomy development advice was weighted towards writing. The importance of the latter balance leads to Principle 3.

Principle #3: Students writing needs and perspectives can drive successful autonomous writing development. Students needed and wanted writing help primarily, yet this helped with their autonomy development. Sufficient writing feedback including contrastive rhetoric/L1 interference had to be provided without constraint, with the realization that students are trying their best but need help beyond their own abilities -something endorsed by L2 sensitive advisors and researchers. However, aside from higher order concerns, I also included proofreading and editing help, lower order concerns, – something not generally endorsed. Students needed this assistance whether they were undergraduate students enrolled in a mandatory F2F writing course, or beyond that, producing assignments for their majors with no writing instruction input. The former involved more a mixture of higher order concerns in the practice of academic writing and lower order concerns. The latter demanded mostly lower order concerns.

An expect-correct technique was developed to direct feedback needs and autonomous writing growth simply for the online asynchronous environment. Empirical evidence showed this method to be flexible for individual student's needs, doable, non-threatening, effective for student improvement, efficient in use of time, efficient toward L1 expectation standards, strengthening of autonomy growth and its partnership with writing development, and helpful in overcoming fossilization. Though focusing on writing and driven by students' writing needs, this technique seemed to effortlessly incline students to become stronger in their autonomy development. Critically, breaking free of constraining WC orthodoxy like this is necessary to meet L2 students' writing needs and wants. Using dynamic realistic techniques like the one adopted allows L2 writers to be able to manage their writing and the expectations thrust on them, to experience success, to exchange toxic overstress with understanding and the joy of writing and to develop naturally in autonomy.

Principle #4: Positive affordances of online SACs/OWLs present ameliorative opportunities for improved learning outcomes. The primary affordance for students was support from the advisor and resources for their writing proficiency. The advisor's significance has been summarized in Principle #2. Regarding the resources, links, locally relevant materials, how-to-learn resources and layout made FLUACC useful for students. Combined with advisor support this added up to a return and retention rate quite high for an ad-hoc facility. Personalization was another affordance that provided many choices and combinations of learning engagement techniques to be available for students so that agency differences between specific learners were apparent. Prompt answering/ feedback and 24-hour connectivity made immediacy and availability a third affordance. Students appreciated the efficiency in having their needs met. Proactivity in the form of recognizing students' proactivity and their appreciation of the advisor's was an additional affordance. Students' push for interactivity was recognized and catered for. The advisor's appropriate proactive messages were valued for instructor presence, social presence, facts, fun and care. Finally, the flexibility driven by action research acted as an affordance, as students saw the environment and tactics morphing to meet their needs. Their thoughts about learning were valued. Overall, a realistic and genuine student-centredness was endorsed, very compatible to students and their problems. A strength of the SAC was having many of these affordances happening at the one time.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter takes a final look at the study. A reminder of the original purpose of the research is made and the main findings are summarized with reference to the data gathering methods. This is followed by the limitations of this study, as well as the contribution the thesis makes to knowledge and theoretical implications, filling a gap presented by other studies in the field. Recommendations are made for future research and for institutional practice. The thesis concludes with some final thoughts on the process and results of the action research.

6.1. Purpose of the Research

A review of the literature revealed a gap in the empirical knowledge concerning the form of learner autonomy manifested by L2 students when accessing independent online facilities for academic writing help. The research suggested the need to investigate the individual autonomy which L2 students bring to their learning and how this might be fostered through outside support. With special regard to advising, it was necessary to determine the types and extent of assistance required to ensure L2 learners got the help needed in their local context to develop their academic writing and autonomy. The literature review revealed that in light of current research, this information remained unknown. In particular, there was a dearth of research on best practice for online SACs/OWLs for Arab EFL university students, or even many EFL/ESL students. Technology is advancing and has become ubiquitous to anyone, anywhere and anytime. Yet, the increase in technological affordances must be pursued accordingly to promote agency and autonomy for students in their academic writing endeavors. It cannot be taken for granted that students are automatically finding enough support via online learning systems because research shows many students miss out.

The double cycle action research design was chosen both from the paradigm of constructivism, to adapt to what happens and what works best, and by borrowing from the paradigm of critical theory inquiry, to be able to question ideology, both intrinsic and extrinsic. This choice provided a means for the research to remain open and produce the results most comprehensible for a local context.

In the wider context, the huge needs that L2 writers may have when required to produce academic writing, and also the limited autonomy they sometimes have or are given in classroom settings warranted such an investigation as well. The status of English academic writing has increased worldwide in tertiary institutions even to where foreign universities have adopted English as the medium of instruction and assessment (Rose, 2013). Innumerable L2 students require support outside the

classroom to achieve the high standards of expression often required. Technology has yet to be more effectively used for this purpose.

6.2. Summary of Main Findings

The main findings have been summarized in chapter 4 section 4.5 under each research question and in chapter 5 section 5.6. under each Principle. Data driven action research coupled with the multiple data gathering methods, all performed online (except for researcher's field notes), allowed insight into what was happening to constantly make adjustments accordingly for improved outcomes. Methods that proved to have a positive influence could be enhanced and explored for more value, while those that had a negative influence could be diagnosed and either dropped or changed as indicated. During the process of the data collection, when innovative and proactive activities of the students became apparent, some aspects unplanned at my study's conception could be integrated.

The research questions and Principles answered the overarching research question: How can learner autonomy and L2 writing proficiency be developed for Arab academic writing learners via an online SAC? Findings supported that, altogether, the study provided an efficacious online writing SAC/OWL for Arab L2 writing students. Participants appreciated it for its usefulness, and their increase in writing proficiency and autonomy development. The gradual nature of developing these constructs was consistent with the duration of the study, two Cycles of ten weeks each. Though only an ad hoc help-when-needed facility, its attrition rate was lower than for an online course. Evaluation, an aspect often lacking amongst these constructs, had been incorporated in many forms, providing empirical evidence.

Generally, the 1-1 asynchronous advisory sessions were appreciated by most participants coupled with the use of resources, though to a lesser degree. In the advisory sessions, optimum writing feedback was given and taken in an expect-correct form that was challenging yet doable, gently developing writing proficiency and autonomy. Respect for students' affect and needs allowed for positive development. While these main findings seem general, evidence showed specifically that the online platform catered to a variety of individually different Arabs. Even in the relatively small cohort of the study, students were unique in terms of their English ability, writing proficiency, learning style, personality, autonomy development and how they used the SAC in detail. Thus, the adaptability of the SAC was another general success, providing unique pathways for individuals.

6.3. Limitations of Study

Limitations identify potential weaknesses (Creswell, 2012) or, more specifically, limitations of a study indicate inherent exceptions, reservations, and qualifications (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Data from this study may not be identical or generalized to those regarding other online writing development facilities, but this fact is consistent with teacher researcher action research. The methodology was chosen because adapting to context is important and every online SAC and OWL should cater to the individuals it serves.

With the small number of participants (14 for the first Cycle, and a new 14 for the second Cycle, plus 9 repeaters) generalizations, naturally, cannot be applied to the whole populace of the research university. Nevertheless despite this limitation, the study involved a diverse, ethnically-mixed sample. Also, the approach yielded complex, rich data, from multiple sources. Furthermore, the participation rates were high except for the pre- and post-IELTS test essay, though this was countered by gaining information regarding any improvement in writing from other data sources (comparison ratings of students' early and latest assignment drafts and external assessments from reported class grades or official exam results). Another small limited group participated in Research Question 3, with its online structured autonomy protocol. Yet, overall the results from Cycle 1 were very encouraging and confirmed and supplemented in Cycle 2. Though the complete structured plan had to yield to students' other priorities, the overall results proved that developing interventions as needed is one of the strengths of action research.

The presence of a single advisor for the entire project was unique but a limitation as different advisors might have produced dissimilar results depending on how they built rapport with students, their flexibility and their experience. No two advisors are alike. Yet, the consistent advice offered by the one advisor probably helped students' progress to be smoother than with various advisors. I alone was manning FLUACC, devoting every spare moment while treating it as a research project. Not only did this involve the interactions with the students, but also making a transparent record of continuous field notes, incorporating on the job interpretations, reflections and changes. However, I was also teaching full time during the day with often extra work to take home at night and weekends. I was aware that I could have always done more for, and gained more from, the students if I was not limited by the demands of my job. Still, my emic insight was valuable.

As an insider-researcher in a participant-advisor role I became more familiar with the students as each Cycle progressed, as part of a normal advisor's experience and hence part of the research. Any prior knowledge of the institute, courses and the type of student there enhanced my understanding of

the participants and their practices. I coupled my closeness with reflective distancing, endeavouring to counter ambiguities and conflicts by swopping hats or wearing both hats throughout the research process. One example is how I enabled the researcher's role by not pushing myself in the advisor's role to obtain a pre- or post-test or questionnaire from students who had not completed one. Quality research, with an adherence to research ethics, was paramount. My field notes were an honest and useful venting of my feelings at times like this. Writing these feelings down amplified my awareness of blind spots, biases and looking from an outsider's perspective. Reflection was continuous. Inevitably though, my research was coloured by subjectivity as a limitation of my insider role. This is why multiple data sources, triangulation and declaration of discrepancies were important.

Other limitations need consideration as well. Some misinterpretations and technical problems occurred with everything taking place online but this is related to the real deficiencies of the context. Also, as volunteers, the participants potentially had a motivational and autonomous advantage over other students who did not volunteer, yet, the students participating represented a mixed range in terms of autonomy. Another issue that arises from the so-called "mask of autonomy" might have occurred, where the students might have sought to simulate autonomous behaviour or answer questions autonomously more to please me as the advisor than from their own volition and authentic capacity (Benson, 2011a; Breen & Mann, 1997). The double cycle and multi-methods employed as part of overall action research are intended to place a check on any such tendency.

It was assumed that the participants were all responding to the best of their individual abilities particularly as regards truth and accuracy, but some of their behaviors did not match their declared perspectives of themselves. It was assumed that the study would benefit the participants in their writing and autonomy development and that the participants would to some measure perceive the nature and significance of the study. On a larger scale, it was assumed that the lived experiences and interactions of the participants in the study could positively contribute to the body of knowledge in the field (Thornton, Peltier, & Medina, 2007).

6.4. Contribution to Knowledge

This research reaffirmed previous research but also provided specific conclusions, related to the findings in Chapter 4 and the discussion in Chapter 5, that are unique to my study and represent a new addition to the existing body of knowledge. These emphasize the need for specific context analysis to substantiate and expand the complex constructs of autonomy, L2 writing, online learning centres and

advisement, so that orthodoxy and dominant ideologies do not limit and hence wrongly define such constructs. The associated principles and research questions are referenced as Ps and RQs.

1. Student autonomy should be appreciated and built upon for Arab students. In these conditions, students display learner autonomy, in contrast to the findings of most other research regarding Arab language learners. In fact, multidimensional autonomy was shown that varied individually and autonomy fostering took place fairly easily. Reactive autonomy was shown over time to be fostering proactive autonomy, with extrinsic motivation becoming more intrinsic as well. This study provided a new way of conceptualizing autonomy for Arabs, where even the so-called deficient reactive autonomy is seen as sufficient and built upon. (P1, RQs2 & 4)

2. In an online SAC, 1-1 asynchronous advisory sessions should be provided as this is the situation Arab learners chose over just static resources to support them in their autonomous writing development. While other online L2 learner studies have not shown this tendency, the results in this case were clear. (P2 & 4, RQs1,2,4)

3. To enhance writing proficiency and foster autonomy, in its broader definition, autonomy has to be situated in practice. Then an advisor, through understanding individual and context needs and strengths, can encourage the double growth by being culturally sensitive, effective and efficient. (Ps1-4, RQs1-4)

4. Focusing mainly on writing assistance in advisement whether both academic writing development and language development, or even mostly language development if needed, is not detrimental to autonomy, but rather helpful. Writing assistance is what students want and need, especially in an EFL English as a medium of instruction situation. When the student's current writing needs are the driver of advisory dialogues, autonomy follows or grows from it naturally. This is contrary to North American orthodox WC and SAC advisory practices. Moreover, a noticeable improvement can occur in students' language development faster than their academic writing when both are focused on. Therefore, students' emphasis on language development should be catered for, rather than ignored, to ensure early writing success, additional motivation, other positive affect factors and henceforth ability to focus on academic writing and fostering of autonomy. (Ps 2 & 3, RQs2 & 4)

5. An "expect-correct" tactic can afford concise, doable writing help for student needs online while scaffolding the zone of proximal development for individual students to foster autonomy. Interlanguage nuances and delays are taken into account where contrastive rhetoric/L1 interference is used to supply L1-friendly explanations explicitly for students. The expect-correct tactic can alleviate

stress thereby promoting confidence and motivation, even to allowing the joy and creativity of writing to surface. Such new tactics need developing for online writing advisement. (P3, RQ4)

6. L2 can be used as the language of choice for advisory sessions. L2 use by students in advisory time was the norm for these students, even with the weakest language learner, contrary to other research where students were also given a choice of L1 or L2. (P2, RQ4)

7. Structured autonomy advice supplied synchronously online in a semi structured way, mixed with students' needs, seems to provide a heightened enhancement of writing and autonomy development greater than the normal unstructured advisory sessions. (P2, RQ 3)

8. Online learning environments aimed to provide advice and support (such as FLUACC) that permit ongoing modification can increase student affordances for developing agency and individual autonomy. They can provide tailored niches for students to foster their L2 writing proficiency dynamically and interdependently, allowing heteroglossic perspectives to dictate changes rather than being static and using inappropriate pedagogies and ideologies (P4, RQ4)

9. Online writing SACs (including advisors) that are available after lecture hours, weekends and holidays are needed. These normal off-hour times were when the online writing SAC including advisor were most used. (P4, RQ4)

6.5. Recommendations for Future Research

From the results, several main recommendations for the future emerge. The essential findings drawn from chat data, SAC use, metacognitive gain and student evaluations indicate that the structured autonomy programme, modified to semi-structured, showed distinct potential for enhanced autonomous writing development. The programme worked well when introduced half way through a 10 week cycle, yet with more exploration it might be accessed earlier, or more utilized and thereby also provide increased impact. Offering this programme alternatively as a small group option or via Skype with the addition of audio, with/without visual, would allow individual choice and further multiplicity of approaches for success – something coincident with the general trend towards technologization of SACs and increase of student inclusivity.

Secondly, with the intermittent proactivity of the advisor showing as an affordance during the programme, ensuring that this occurs early in a Cycle as well might encourage any false starters to continue. This could involve an empathetic message of being available for students in their problems and needs, a brief but motivational example of what could be done or accessed, and a query as to any

way in which the advisor could be of help. Assurance should be given that no problem was too big or small and that students and their writing needs were the centre point and central reason for the project.

Also, with affect research lacking in the literature but manifesting its pervasiveness in this study, it would be useful to pursue affect factors in depth and extent via interviews with students. As affect is a strong, inherent cultural perspective of the Arab culture, a study of how Arab students respond to advisement with respect to utilizing and controlling affects' various forms to aid their cognition during the writing process is another pertinent research avenue.

With sparse literature regarding de-fossilization aid online, more explicit research using my expect-correct technique for this could prove helpful. Fossilization has been identified as a nagging language learning problem, especially with adult learners. Remedies have not been straight-forward or speedy. Yet, this research with its online expect-correct feedback seemed to provide help easily. Time and exposure for de-fossilization have been shown to be inadequate in the classroom (Wang, 2011), whereas individual online 1-1 asynchronous advisement could prove ideal.

In fact, with the expect–correct technique showing success in an online SAC, it probably could be naturally translated to online writing courses. However, it could also be tried in WCs and extended even further into the L2 writing classroom, where feedback is still an exploratory subject. If such tactics can be shared by classroom teachers and advisors, this seamless unity of method can benefit everyone and particularly our students. This is only one technique, there are other new ones that perhaps should start as a discovery online where the environment is open to adjusted and new pedagogies and tactics, with valuable empirical evidence automatically recorded.

Data of student exploration of the space of the online environment was gathered to a certain extent in my research study, where what students chose to use to support their learning was recorded. The retention rate was good for an ad-hoc facility but still the wider and deeper use of resources needs enhancement. Additionally, the time students spent in private modes, whether it was emails or lurkers onsite following others' interactions, was extensive. This is something to be followed up as an affordance. Privacy was also marked by the need of a teacher's presence, social presence and interaction on the site. Research is needed to determine whether there might be a better balance.

Peer collaboration had little appreciation in the research study. Yet, this is a tool that could assist the social presence on the website as motivating audience and peer reviewer. A way to stimulate this development more is needed.

Finally, as using L2 was virtually unanimous as the language of choice for both the advisory sessions and questionnaires, more research is needed to determine why and when this choice is made

by students because this is the ideal autonomy sought in a language learning situation. Circumstances in which students would prefer an L1 advisor could be explored as well.

6.6. Recommendations for Institutional Practice

These recommendations were covered at length in chapter 5 under a practical implication section following each Principle 1-4. In summary, having a fully interactive online writing SAC/OWL with multiple resources and interactions with advisor(s) is recommended.

Students' manifestation and development of various dimensions of autonomy should not be restricted, so that they can make their choice to be supported or plot their own direction according to their own needs. Reactive autonomy and student affect, often manifesting in 1-1s, should be accepted and used as springboards for student development.

1-1s ideally should be provided by both written asynchronous and synchronous means as a minimum. Asynchronous email mode is not a deficit model but can be used to build rapport, writing proficiency and autonomy development. Non-minimalistic help, directiveness and teacherly instructions are the reality of what is often wholesomely required by students for clarity and they have the right to request the knowledge they do not have themselves. Nevertheless, assistance falls along a continuum moving towards understanding as proficiency and rapport develops.

Students' writing needs should be made a priority, realizing the dedicated time and patience needed for L2 writers to acquire the literacy needs of academic writing and language proficiency. Language development aid in the form of editing and proof reading should not be denied but can be supplied with an expect-correct tactic to encourage assimilation. When writing needs are put first, autonomy development follows suit or works in tandem.

Support, personalization, immediacy and availability, the proactivity of advisor, sensitivity to the proactivity of students and implementation of changes that keep up with student needs and efficient ways are affordances and ameliorative opportunities that students value in an online SAC. They should be provided and extended.

6.7. Summary

The most important results acquired via this research involve the identification of the Arab students' autonomy, the L2 students' push for 1-1 dialogues with the on-line advisor, the realistic student-centred type of writing advisement supplied in these, and the development of a specific, highly successful technique for practical implementation. Learner multidimensional autonomy growth and

student satisfaction stemmed from these positive outcomes towards writing development. Also an online SAC/OWL has much to offer as the gamut of affordances shows. It is far from being a lamentable deficit model, but rather the place of choice of some L2 writers for out-of-class help to enable them to flourish using its special affordances. This study also demonstrates that systematic dynamic research can be done in an online SAC/ OWL to try-out and improve new and old methods to assist L2 writers in their continual effort towards writing proficiency, some methods that can even be invested back into physical independent learning centres and the classroom.

6.8. Final Thoughts

It was heartening to observe the new verification and its encouragement Hewett (2010) gave for helping L1 learners in online writing courses in a non-minimalistic, direct and teacherly way. This emerged after my research started with further verification when it was over via CCCC (2013). L2 learners and online SACs and OWLs are obligatory extensions of this pedagogical feedback type with my expect-correct tactic embodying its enactment. This reprise acts as a wake-up call to listen to the teachers, the advisors and the researchers of L2 writers who had been demanding this kind of arrangement in their classrooms and WCs for their students, decrying the inequality and unfairness otherwise.

This research, with its rich interplay of the factors at work in the phenomenon of language learning has confirmed existing knowledge and added new data and aspects addressing the conceptualization of L2 academic writing, online SACs/OWLs, autonomy and advisement in the context of the Arab world context. Though constrained in size and exploratory in nature, the political and emancipatory aspects of language learning were demonstrated via critical pedagogy and theory, reinforced with a wealth of local research and an understanding of the rhetorical and affective nuances of L1 culture, to counter the inappropriateness of mainstream, Western-normative dominant ideologies. As such, the voice of the individual learner is not stifled, but cherished and allowed to expand and flourish and lead the way. As aptly expressed in one student's request:

> *I want to improve my English writing dramatically with the least time. I am not asking to help me in a step by step. I want just motivation to keep me writing this summer.*

The importance of the social perspective which this study has upheld is reiterated as he continues, noting that:

> *I want to write stories but after I write the story I think who will read it and then I stop.*

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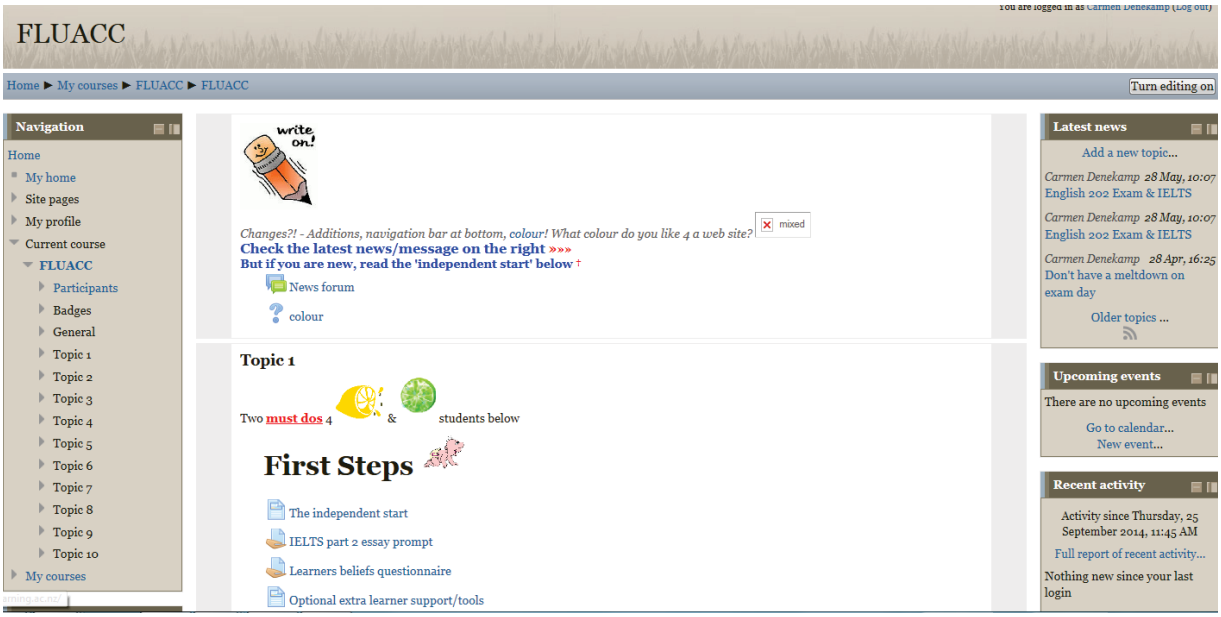
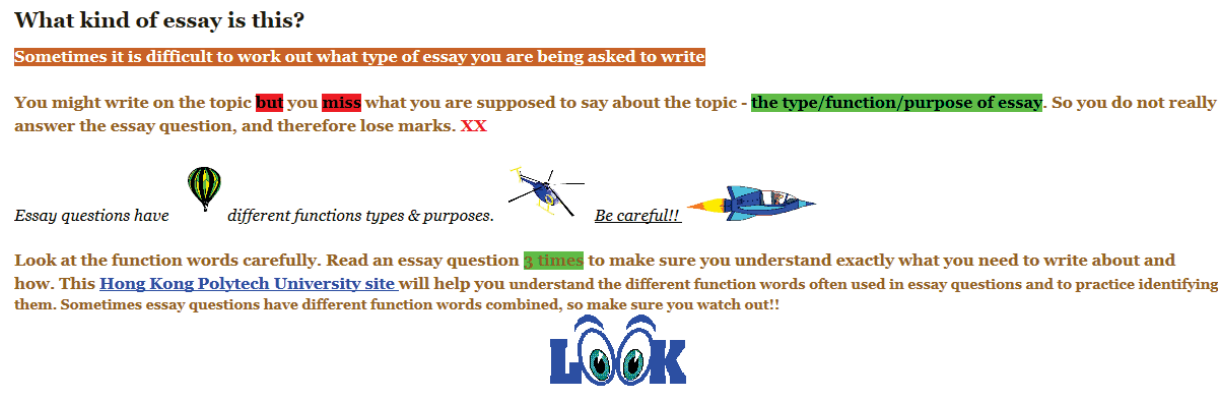
Appendix A

Screen Shots of FLUACC

Example screen shot 1



Example screen shot 2



Example screen shot 3

Topic 7

Improving IELTS 

- 250w Essay overview
- Excellent essay step by step site & egs
- 150w Report
- Excellent graph report site
- More resources for 250w essay
- More resources for 150w report
- IELTS forum
- IELTS try - student 2 teacher

Topic 8

Topping Term Papers 

- Searching for Sources
- Plagiarism
- Paraphrasing, Summarizing & Quoting
- Thesis statement
- The extended Writing Process
- Outline
- APA documentation

Appendix B

Questionnaires

Metacognitive Questionnaire

English Learning Beliefs Questionnaire (pre-test & post-test)

استبيان الرأي حول تعلم اللغة الانكليزية

Instructions
X the box that best tells how you feel about each of the 7 sentences below.
There is no right or wrong answer – saying how you really feel about Writing in English is the best answer.

تعليمات

ضع علامة X في المكان المناسب : لا يوجد صح أو خطأ و إنما شعورك نحو الكتابة بالغة الانكليزية هو الذي يحدد الجواب الصحيح.

1. I have my own ways of measuring how much I have learned in English Writing.

-1 لدي طرقي لقياس كم تعلمت في كتابة اللغة الانكليزية

❑ Strongly agree ❑ Don't know ❑ Strongly disagree
❑ Agree ❑ Disagree

❑ أوافق بشدة ❑ لا اعرف ❑ لا أوافق بشدة
❑ أوافق ❑ لا أوافق

2. I usually know when I am making progress in English Writing.

-2 عادة اعرف عندما اشعر بتحسن في كتابة اللغة الانكليزية

❑ Strongly agree ❑ Don't know ❑ Strongly disagree
❑ Agree ❑ Disagree

❑ أوافق بشدة ❑ لا اعرف ❑ لا أوافق بشدة
❑ أوافق ❑ لا أوافق

3. To learn English Writing I need a teacher.

-3 لتعلم اللغة الانكليزية احتاج إلى مدرس

❑ Strongly agree ❑ Don't know ❑ Strongly disagree
❑ Agree ❑ Disagree

❑ أوافق بشدة ❑ لا اعرف ❑ لا أوافق بشدة
❑ أوافق ❑ لا أوافق

4. I know what I need to do to improve my English Writing.

-4 اعرف ما احتاجه لتحسين كتابتي باللغة الانكليزية

❑ Strongly agree ❑ Don't know ❑ Strongly disagree
❑ Agree ❑ Disagree

❑ أوافق بشدة ❑ لا اعرف ❑ لا أوافق بشدة

❑ أوافق ❑ لا أوافق

5. I can identify my strengths and weaknesses in my English Writing.

5- استطيع تحديد نقاط القوة والضعف في كتابة اللغة الانكليزية

❑ Strongly agree ❑ Don't know ❑ Strongly disagree
❑ Agree ❑ Disagree

❑ أوافق بشدة ❑ لا اعرف ❑ لا أوافق بشدة
❑ أوافق ❑ لا أوافق

6. I know how to plan my English Writing learning.

6- اعرف كيف اخطط لتعلم الكتابة باللغة الانكليزية

❑ Strongly agree ❑ Don't know ❑ Strongly disagree
❑ Agree ❑ Disagree

❑ أوافق بشدة ❑ لا اعرف ❑ لا أوافق بشدة
❑ أوافق ❑ لا أوافق

7. I know which things in my English Writing I want to improve.

7- اعرف الأشياء التي يجب تطويرها في كتابتي للغة الانكليزية

❑ Strongly agree ❑ Don't know ❑ Strongly disagree
❑ Agree ❑ Disagree

❑ أوافق بشدة ❑ لا اعرف ❑ لا أوافق بشدة
❑ أوافق ❑ لا أوافق

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

شكرا على وقتكم

Evaluation Questionnaire

Learner Evaluation Questionnaire of 10 week self help online Writing Progamme –FLUACC

استبيان تقييم التعلم لعشر أسابيع من التعلم الذاتي بواسطة البرنامج الالكتروني للكتابة –FLUACC

Thank you for taking the time to fill this out.
Your views on the usefulness of FLUACC are important to help us improve Online Writing Services.
If you didn't use something mentioned in some of the questions, click 'I don't know' *as an answer.*

شكرا لأخذكم الوقت لملىء هذا الاستبيان

أرائكم عن فائدة هذا البرنامج مهمة لتساعدنا على تحسين الخدمات الكتابية على الشبكة الالكترونية. ربما لم تستخدم شيئا ذكر في بعض الأسئلة- لا اعلم صحة الجواب لذلك الموقف.

Course: PF/FP Level: Nationality First Language

المقرر: تأسيسي/ بعد التأسيسي المستوى: الجنسية . اللغة الأولى:

1. How often did you use FLUACC during the program?

1- كم مرة استخدمت برنامج FLUACC خلال البرنامج الدراسى؟

☐ Usually more than twice a week ☐ عادة أكثر من مرتين في الأسبوع
☐ Usually once or twice a week ☐ عادة مرة أو مرتين في الأسبوع
☐ A few times ☐ مرات قليلة
☐ Never ☐ مطلقا

2. If you never (or rarely) used FLUACC, could you tell us why?

2- إن لم تستخدم برنامج FLUACC مطلقاً(أو استخدمته قليلاً) ,يرجى إخبارنا لماذا؟

3. How useful do you think that working on FLUAAC is, to learn English Writing?

3- ما فائدة استخدام برنامج FLUACC لتعلم الانكليزية؟

Not at all useful very useful

1 2 3 4 5
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

ليس مفيداً 1 2 3 4 5 مفيداً جداً
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

4. What (if anything) did you find particularly useful about FLUAAC?

4- ماذا وجدت مفيداً في برنامج FLUACC؟

5. Do you think FLUACC will help you to learn how to learn English by yourself, in the future?

5- هل تعتقد أن برنامج FLUACC يساعد على تعلم اللغة الانكليزية بمفردك, في المستقبل؟

☐ Yes, absolutely ☐ yes, to a certain extent ☐ a little
☐ no ☐ I don't know

❑ نعم بالتأكيد ❑ نعم إلى حد معين ❑ قليلاً
❑لا ❑ لا اعرف

6. By using FLUACC, were you able to focus on what you wanted to improve in your English Writing?

6- هل تمكنت من تطوير ما أردت في كتابة اللغة الانكليزية؟

❑ Yes, absolutely ❑ yes, to a certain extent ❑ a little
❑ no ❑ I don't know

❑ نعم بالتأكيد ❑ نعم إلى حد معين ❑ قليلاً
❑لا ❑ لا اعرف

7. Were you able to set manageable goals for yourself?

7- هل تمكنت من وضع أهداف لنفسك؟

❑ Yes, absolutely ❑ yes, to a certain extent ❑ a little
❑ no ❑ I don't know

❑ نعم بالتأكيد ❑ نعم إلى حد معين ❑ قليلاً
❑لا ❑ لا اعرف

8. Were you able to assess your progress and achievement?

8- هل تمكنت من تقييم تقدمك وانجازاتك؟

❑ Yes, absolutely ❑ yes, to a certain extent ❑ a little
❑ no ❑ I don't know

❑ نعم بالتأكيد ❑ نعم إلى حد معين ❑ قليلاً
❑لا ❑ لا اعرف

9. Did you try any new learning strategies?

9- هل استخدمت أي استراتيجيات جديدة؟

❑ Yes, absolutely ❑ yes, to a certain extent ❑ a little

❑ no ❑ I don't know

❑ نعم بالتأكيد ❑ نعم إلى حد معين ❑ قليلاً

❑لا ❑ لا اعرف

10. If so, what strategies were they?

10- إن كانت الإجابة نعم فما هي هذه الاستراتيجيات؟

11. Do you feel FLUACC gave enough support to learn Written English easily?

11- هل تشعر أن برنامج FLUACC ساعدك على تعلم كتابة الانكليزية بسهولة؟

❑ Yes, absolutely ❑ yes, to a certain extent ❑ a little

❑ no ❑ I don't know

❑ نعم بالتأكيد ❑ نعم إلى حد معين ❑ قليلاً

❑لا ❑ لا اعرف

12. Did you find reflecting on your learning on your blog helped your language learning?

12- هل تجد وضع انطباعك عن تعلمك على موقعك ساعدك على تعلم اللغة؟

❑ Yes, absolutely ❑ yes, to a certain extent ❑ a little

❑ no ❑ I don't know

❑ نعم بالتأكيد ❑ نعم إلى حد معين ❑ قليلاً

❑لا ❑ لا اعرف

13. Do you have any suggestions that could help us improve FLUACC?

13- هل لديك أي اقتراحات ربما تساعدنا على تحسين برنامج FLUACC؟

Maybe the researcher would like to know a little more about your views. Would you be willing to chat with the advisor –researcher online if needed? YES☐ /NO☐

ربما يرغب الباحث بالتعرف حول أرائكم أكثر. هل ترغبون في الحديث مع الباحث على الشبكة عند الحاجة؟

Appendix C

Structured Autonomy Aids

Needs Analysis Form

NEEDS ANALYSIS

User's name: …… Date: ……..

PF/FP Level: ……..

Put X beside areas you need help with in your grammar and writing.

Put XX beside one or two areas that you want help with FIRST.

Grammar, Vocabulary & Mechanics (Low level problems)

___ Punctuation (P)	___ Spelling (sp)
___ Plurals (-s)	___ Subject/verb agreement (SV)
___ Verb tense (T)	___ Run-on sentences (R-O)
___ Articles (A)	___ More basic vocab
___ Remembering the verb 'to be'	___ Academic vocab (AWL)
___ Word confusion (WW)	___ Vocab for my Major
___ Preposition matching	___ Other words for 'and'
___ Noun/adjective disagreement	___ Sentence making (old info to new)
___ Modals (can, may, should etc)	___ Other? _____

Writing Skills (High level problems)

___ Topic sentences	___ Paragraph with details
___ Perfect Paragraphs	___ Basic essay structure
___ Thesis statement	___ Introduction
___ Conclusion	___ Brainstorming/ideas
___ Planning/Organization	___ Analyzing essay question

___ Revising	___ Meaning/logic/sense
___ Proofreading	___ Linking words/transitions
___ Classification Essay	___ Cause & Effect Essay
___ Compare & Contrast Essay	___ Problem Solution essay
___ Report on graph/table (IELTS pt1)	___ Argument/persuasive/IELTS pt2 essay
___ Sophisticated/interesting sentences	___ Searching for sources
___ Summarizing & paraphrasing	___ Using quotations
___ Avoiding plagiarism	___ Thesis statement for long paper
___ Outline	___ Academic style
___ APA documentation	___ Complex transitions
___ Time management	___ Synthesizing (sources & me)

Strategies Explanation

ENGLISH WRITING LEARNING STRATEGIES

What are strategies?

Strategies : how we can learn

What strategies are best?

Different people learn best in different ways

The most successful learners know & use a range of strategies

How can I learn some good strategies?

Each time you learn new vocabulary or write, try out a new strategy to see if it is helpful for your learning. Often you have to use it a few times (while you're learning how to use the strategy)to know if it will be the best for you.

Where can I find English Writing Learning strategies?

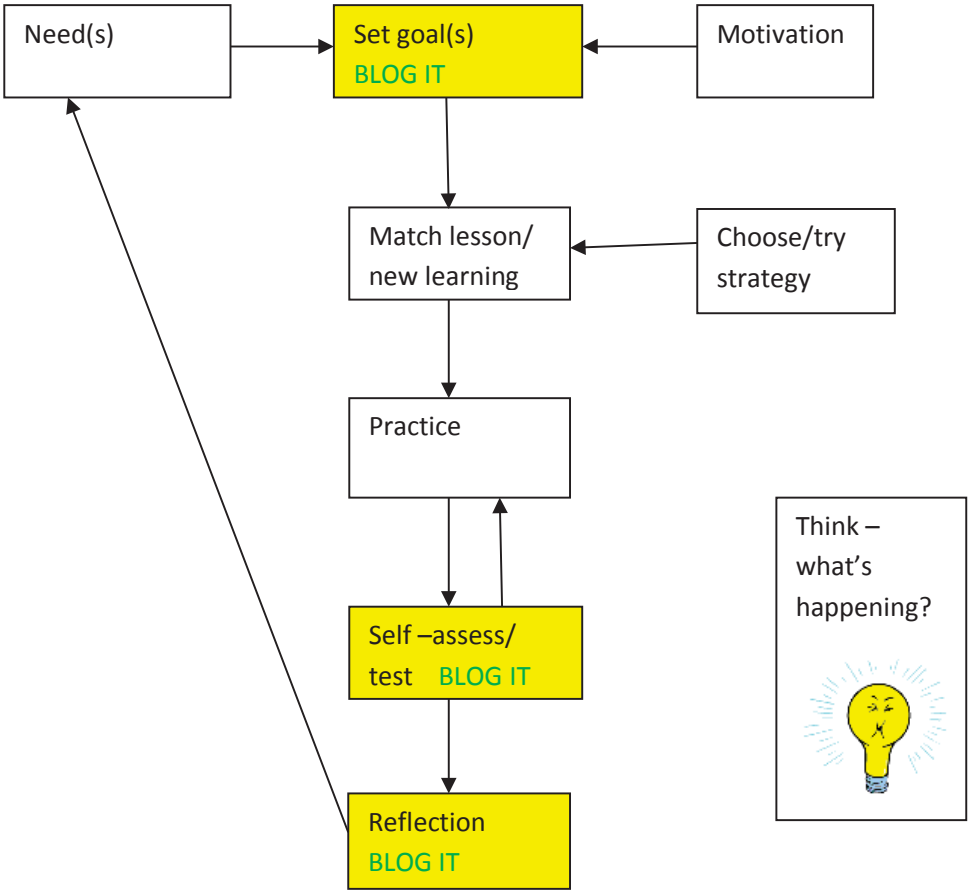
In FLUACC they are near the beginning of each topic/subtopic resource webpage, so you can easily pick one to use while using the resource. To make them easy to see, **they all have a black background like this**.

Learn English fast by using STRATEGIES!!!

Language Learning Process Diagram

THE INDEPENDENT LEARNING PROCESS

reflection/critical thinking needed throughout



Modified from Karlsson et al. (2007, p. 56)

Goal Setting Template

GOAL SETTING & GETTING

1)  2)  3) 

1)……/……/
20……

My next target(s)

……
……

2) ……/……/
20……

How well did I achieve it/them ? eg: successful/ more practice needed

……
……

3) ……/……/
20……

What have I learnt about myself or about how I learn?

……
……

Modified from Little and Simpson (2003)

Appendix D

Tables of Quantitative Site Action and Task Completion

Table 7. Cycle 1 data quantity and task completion per case within groups (yellow = structured autonomy group)

Case*	Log no	Forums & Profiles	Chats (st-adv turns)	Needs analysis	Goal setting	1-1asyn interactions (no. of whole drafts)	Pre-/post metacognitive questionnaire	Pre-/post IELTS essay test	Evaluation questionnaire	External assessments
M1	78	6	-	-	-	29(2)	√/√	-/√	√	√
M2	19	-	-	-	-	20(4)	-/√	-/√	√	√
M4	107	-	-	-	-	12(2)	√/√	√/√	√	√
S2	219	1p	3 F2F	-	-	20(2)	√/√	-	√	√
A7	33	-	-	-	-	-	√/-	-	-	
A4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
B1	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	
M5	204	-	1(37-25)	1	1	25 (4)	√/√	√/√	√	√
A3	332	-	1(51-42)	1	-	45(7)	√/√	√/√	√	√
N2	84	-	1(30-17)	-	-	30(4)	√/√	-/√	√	√
D2	62	-	-	-	-	7(2)	-	-	-	
A6	215	-	-	-	-	6	√/√	√/-	√	
D3	14	-	-	-	-	13(1)	√/√	-	√	√
S3	76	-	-	-	-	2	√/√	-	√	

Case* student name represented as a letter number code

Table 8. Cycle 2 data quantity and task completion per case within groups (yellow = structured autonomy group)

Case*	Log no	Forums & Profiles	Chats (st-adv turns)	Needs analysis	Goal setting	1-1asyn interactions (no. of whole drafts)	Pre-/post metacognitive questionnaire	Pre-/post IELTS essay test	Evaluation questionnaire	External assessments
M1	-	-	-	-	-	12 (2)	√/-	√/-	-	-
B1	12	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-
S2	29	1p	1F2F	-	-	15 (1)	√/-	-	-	-
2D4	10	-	-	-	-	29 (3)	-/√	-	√	-
2B2	187	-	-	-	-	9	√/√	√/√	√	-
2K1	122	-	-	-	-	16 (2)	√/-	√/	-	√
2A9	5	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	√	-
2M10	89	1p	-	-	-	2	√/√	√/-	√	√
2A10	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2F3	8	-	-	-	-	3 (1)	-	-	-	-
M5	150	-	1(111-74)	1	1	23 (2)	√/√	√/-	√	√
A3	135	-	1(36-33)	1	-	12(1)	√/√	√/-	√	√
N2	127	-	1(70-32)	-	-	40 (5)	√/√	√/-	√	√
A6	49	-	-	-	-	-	√/-	-	-	-
M4ch	60	-	-	-	-	16 (3)	√/√	√/√	√	√
M2ch	38	-	-	-	-	25 (4)	√/√	√/√	√	√
2S4	40	-	3 F2F	-	-	12	√/√	√/√	√	√
2H1	197	1p	1(23-19)	-	-	11	√/√	√/-	√	√
2A8	121	1p	-	-	-	12	√/√	√/-	√	√
2M8	97	1f	-	-	-	33 (2)	-/√	-	√	
2M9	-	-	-	-	-	12 (2)	-/√	-	√	√
2E3	37	-	-	-	-	8 (1)	-/√	-/√	√	√
2A11	62	-	-	-	-	10 (1)	-/√	-	√	√

Case* student name represented as a letter number code
New volunteers are prefixed with “2”, while returnees have no prefix
Returnees who changed groups (limes to lemons) are suffixed with “ch”