Investigating the Effects of Applying Monitoring Strategy in EFL Writing Instruction

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Abstract

The present paper aimed to investigate the efficiency of applying monitoring strategy (self and peer-editing) to writing among EFL (English as a foreign language) students at a Taiwanese university. Numerous studies have shown significant improvement on students' error correction, error feedback and critical thinking through monitoring strategy. In this study, an on-line writing assessment system, MY Access, was used to evaluate students' essays. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to compare student essays in aspects of focus, content, organization, style and convention. A questionnaire and a semi-structured interview technique were employed to examine the students' learning attitudes and perception of learning outcomes. The comparison of essays showed significant improvement in various aspects. Moreover, the participants have perceived enhanced quality and accuracy presumably more through peer-editing than self-editing. The results demonstrated that the combined strategy of self and peer-editing benefits EFL learners' writing performance.

Key words: EFL writing, monitoring strategy, self-editing, peer-editing

1. Introduction

Writing is considered a complicated and multifaceted task. Good writing involves thinking that may lead the writer to express himself/herself in a more effective way. Many components are involved in writing; therefore, to complete a composition task, writers should go through different stages of writing. Jenks (2003, p.1) indicated that "the writing process is categorized in a five-stage sequential pattern (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing)." For EFL learners, writing ability is a significant skill and an essential learning element in second language instruction. Unfortunately, writing is also a difficult skill to improve in a short period of time. Various writing approaches have been suggested to help alleviate this difficulty. Charles (1990) first proposed self-monitoring strategy as a writing technique. The term "self-monitoring strategy" indicates that students are provided with opportunities to monitor their composition through self-editing and peer-editing on both their and their peer's writing. Self-editing can be defined as "procedures by which the learners themselves evaluate their language skills and knowledge" (Bailey, 1998, p.227). Peer-editing is viewed as a scheme through which peers could consider the level, value, worth, quality, successfulness of others' products or similar learning outcomes (Topping, Smith, Swanson & Elliot, 2000).

Recently, self-monitoring technique has been recommended by Chinese EFL researchers and educators because it achieves a better balance between peer evaluation and teacher response in Chinese teaching environments (Wang, 2004; You, 2004). As a result, more and more educators use monitoring strategy (self and peer-editing) as a writing technique in their EFL (English as a foreign language) writing classes to help learners overcome their writing difficulties.

2. Literature review
2.1 Applying monitor strategy to EFL writing classes

According to Krashen's theory (1981) of second language acquisition, monitor hypothesis is one of five main hypotheses.

Ricardo Schutz (2005) explained monitor hypothesis through the relationship between acquisition and learning which defines the influence of the latter on the former. This acquisition system is the utterance initiator in a second language and takes responsibility for learners' fluency, thus the language that we have consciously learned acts as conscious monitor and editor. The monitor acts in a planning, editing and correcting function so that the learner has sufficient time to edit, is focused on aspects of form or correctness, and knows the rules. The L2 students can utilize acquired knowledge to monitor themselves in language usage, so this conscious editor is called the monitor. Krashen (1981) also expressed that different individuals use their monitors in different ways. Over-users try to use their monitor all the time; under-users either have not consciously learned or prefer not to use their conscious knowledge of the language; and optimal-users can use the monitor appropriately. It is indicated that these individual variations among L2 learners will lead to different degrees of success.

Recently, self-monitoring technique has been recommended by Chinese EFL researchers and educators for achieving a better balance between peer evaluation and teacher response in Chinese teaching environments (Wang, 2004; You, 2004). Self-monitoring, being used as a writing technique, was first proposed by Charles (1990) and has led ESL/EFL writing instruction to a new promising stage (Wang, 2004). Because this technique offers students the opportunity to contribute to a dialogue concerning the text, students become active participants in discussion. Authors' self-evaluations may help them to develop more explicit awareness of their writing quality or of problems as seen from multiple readers' perspectives (Cho, Cho & Hacker, 2010).

Concerning the application of strategic monitoring in writing classes, students could play two roles, both reviewer and writer, to comment with their own observations and other students' inspections on the same writing. This strategy is different from the traditional one-way teaching mode, and students can also take notice of their own errors and find different problems during this procedure. On one hand, students act just as reviewers editing compositions from a diverse reader point of view. On the other hand, students as writers could also be trained to improve their own writing capabilities. Moreover, monitoring can facilitate the instructors' understanding of students' written content, thus enabling instructors to better understand the obstacles students encounter in EFL writing.

2.2   Monitoring strategy instruction: advantages and challenges

Peer and self-editing help students develop the ability to make judgments, which is a necessary skill for study and professional life (Brown, Rust & Gibbs, 1994). Self and peer-editing are usually combined together. Peer-editing can help students learn and develop self-editing techniques. To improve writing, writers should engage themselves in self and peer-editing and modify their work through self-reflection.

Polio (2001) claimed that feedback from peers helped learners produce writing with better quality and higher accuracy, but also with a critical point of view. Monitoring strategy provides students with an opportunity to activate their linguistic competence in correcting both peers' and their own errors. Moreover, Ferris and Roberts's (2001) study suggests that the type of error addressed seems to influence language accuracy since "error feedback had noticeably higher success ratios in the three 'treatable' categories (verbs, noun endings, and articles) than in the 'untreatable' word choice and sentence structure categories" (p. 172). Ellis et al. (2008) compared the effects of focused and unfocused corrective feedback on two experimental groups' use of definite and indefinite articles. While one experimental group received focused corrective feedback, the other received unfocused corrective feedback. However, the control group received no error correction. The results revealed that both experimental groups outperformed the control group in terms of reducing article errors.

The aim of critical thinking on writing is to effectively gather, question, organize, and evaluate the students' and their peers' comments, annotations, and errors. On one hand, Mittan (1989) considered that giving feedback had positive effects on the reader's self-editing skills since "by responding critically to their colleagues' writing, students exercise the critical thinking they must apply to their own work" (p. 210). Furthermore, EFL students can analyze and criticize misconceptions and preconceptions so that they raise awareness of their own inappropriate writing habits and faults. On the other hand, peer-editing enhances students' critical thinking techniques by encouraging students to express and negotiate their arguments and comments.

According to Mendonca and Johnson (1994), students were found to ask questions, offer explanations, give suggestions, restate the words written or said by their peers, and correct grammatical errors during the peer-review task. The researchers also observed that although students would accept their peers' feedback in the revisions, they did not follow all the comments completely. This study positively showed that the peer-review activities overall could inspire students to think critically while editing, and thus promote students' communicative competence by encouraging students to express and negotiate their ideas with others. Being provided with more opportunities for meaning negotiation, writers may be understood more, therefore peer feedback may lead to more successful revisions (Liou, 2010). In a nutshell, self and peer-editing are valuable strategies in L2 writing instruction that facilitate students' critical thinking.

Writing has been defined as a problem-solving activity with complex and multifaceted processes (Flower & Hayes, 1986; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1986). Strategic monitoring enables students to see multiple perspectives from peers' solutions and arouses them to consider problems that had previously gone by unnoticed. Cho, Schunn and Kwon (2007) asserted that after detecting problems in texts, reviewers are automatically engaged in diagnosing the problems. Namely, students can identify the causes of writing problems by finding analogous issues within their own writing history. The problem solving and diagnosis procedure helps students understand the sources of the problems, and consults them on how to repair the problems and to generate problem solutions. Indeed, from reviewing their own and peers' drafts, inexperienced writers also profit because it provides a chance to practicing problem detection.

As in any problem solving task, one must identify the problems and set goals to organize how to solve them (Patel & Laud, 2009). Monitoring strategy helps writers successfully become goal oriented through motivation-promoting goal setting. If writers understand how to take the next step in writing, the ability to set goals keeps them focused on the tasks, ensures that they monitor their progress as they write, and promotes self correction of their work (Patel & Laud, 2009). In this process, writers achieve a sense of satisfaction that will motivate them to complete the goals as they are self-evaluating themselves and their efforts continuously (Schunk, 2001).

When exploring the reasons why students can't apply monitoring strategy to improve their writing ability, there are two challenges. The major obstacles of self-monitoring's efficiency are, for instance, cultural blocks and low-achieving writers.

Regarding peer-editing, Carson and Nelson (1996) found that their Chinese students showed reluctance to initiate comments and criticize their peers' work, as they were afraid of losing face under the influence of cultural collectivism. In Chinese culture, Confucianism has deeply permeated and influenced the whole society in many aspects and fields (Lee, 2000), and it can be generally understood as a philosophy that prescribes the social group to follow its moral, political, and philosophical doctrine and orthodoxy (Levenson, 1968). In Chinese learning environments, students have been trained to be obedient and get used to hiding their opinions, in effect, to just keep silent during class. Moreover, most of them tend to absolutely trust the authority of instructors and without doubt. In Lee's (2000) explanation, Chinese students learn for one's own sake and not for the sake of showing off. They show respect to authority because "the belief in obedience and respect for teachers is deeply rooted in their minds" (Zhu, 2003, p.38). As a result, cultural blocks cause Chinese students to initiate comments reluctantly and avoid disagreement with comments about peers' works. In other words, even though some conspicuous errors have been noted in texts, Chinese students are still not willing to give classmates negative comments, and they try to please peers with kind comments because of the concept of modesty, saving face, and avoiding complications.

Another barrier to monitoring strategy is caused by low-achieving writers. Because of low proficiency, the learners are not able to review their peers' performance appropriately, which causes them to suspect their peers' reviews (Carson & Nelson, 1996). The efficiency of peer response depends basically on the editors' writing ability; however, low-achieving writers usually cannot correct composition skillfully or leniently. Liou (2010) declared that there are two major problems that make detection of organization more challenging. Students at a lower proficiency level may not have as abundant an experience and awareness with peer review as those at higher levels, and can't be motivated further along the learning curve as a result. Low-achieving writers are less confident that they can give appropriate or concrete suggestions to their peers since they may think the original papers are acceptable or may not have any idea of how to make major changes. In such situations, the peer feedback activity is regarded as ineffective for students.

Regarding the findings of previous researches by Diab (2008), Liou (2010), and Min (2006), it is suggested that both instructors and participants alike indeed benefit from applying monitoring strategy in writing classrooms. Consequently, it can be assumed that students will enhance their EFL writing performance by appropriately using monitoring strategy (self and peer-editing). This strategy also helps instructors better understand the students' obstacles.

This paper focuses on the effects of monitoring strategy. The results of this study may assist EFL instructors and learners in achieving their writing goals. Hence, three research questions are addressed as follows:

RQ 1: What are the effects of monitor strategy on EFL students' writing performance, specifically on focus, content, organization, style and convention?
RQ 2: What are EFL learners' opinions about the advantages of monitoring strategy?
RQ 3: What are EFL learners' attitudes towards self-editing and peer-editing?

3. Method

3.1 Subjects

The subjects of the present study were drawn from a group of students at a university in southern Taiwan who were majoring in English. The group consisted of 35 Chinese-speaking EFL learners (8 males and 27 females). The average age of the subjects ranged from 19 to 22 years old. Among them, about 94% of the participants were sophomores; and 75% claimed that they had been learning English for 9 years. Most of them considered English writing ability a crucial role in English learning, and 73% participants agreed that English writing is quite important in English education.

3.2 Instruments

Several research tools were applied in the present study: (1) MY Access, on-line English writing grading system, (2) Sample self-editing and peer-editing sheets, (3) A questionnaire on attitudes toward monitoring strategy in writing, and (4) An interview. In this project, the researchers adopted the on-line editing system, MY Access (http://www.myaccesshome.com), to grade the learners' essays because MY Access is a program designed to increase student literacy. After students submitted their essays to MY Access, the program assessed their writing ability and provided suggestions for improvement. In order to help the participants gain some retrospect on their writing process, the self-editing sheet and peer-editing sheet were adapted from a textbook (Oshima, & Hogue, 2006).

A questionnaire focusing on the students' attitudes towards aspects of meta-cognitive and self-efficacy, as well as their writing improvements, was constructed in order to investigate learners' writing proficiency and efficiency of monitoring strategy after the instruction. This instrument was developed from the questionnaires employed by Wang (2004), Diab (2008), Yang (2010), Nelson & Murphy (1993), Gilberts, Agran, Hughes & Wehmeyer (2001), and Cho, Cho, & Hacker (2010), with some modification by the researchers. In the questionnaire, participants were given 50 statements which were classified into the following parts: Attitude towards monitoring strategy (item 1 to 6), meta-cognition and self-efficacy aspects (items 7 to 11), focus improvement (item 12 to 15), content improvement (item16 to 18), organization improvement (item 19 to 22), language style improvement (item 23 to 26), convention improvement (item 27 to 29), error correction and feedback (item 30 to 32), critical thinking (item 33 to 36), goal setting and problem-solving skill (item 37 to 40), cultural block (item 41 to 45) and low-achieving writers (item 46 to 50). The students rated the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement using a five-point Likert scale (1 for strongest disagreement and 5 for strongest agreement). To gather further information related to the effects of monitoring strategy, the interview method was conducted. A total of ten interview questions were designed.

3.3 Procedure

This project was implemented in a sophomore writing class and lasted for 12 weeks. The writing class was offered 3 hours a week. Every 3 weeks, each participant had to accomplish one draft within 50-60 minutes. After writing a draft, they fulfilled a self-editing sheet, then exchanged with classmates and fulfilled a peer-editing sheet. Following the comments on their self and peer-editing sheets, the participants had to revise their drafts and upload them to MY Access system. The system scored each essay in terms of focus, content development, organization, language style and conventions.

During the course period, the researchers collected the students' four essays and compared every essay score to observe whether self and peer-editing improved students' writing proficiency. Figure 1 presents a sample bar graph of an essay provided by MY Access. The holistic score was 75. By the end of the instruction, the questionnaire was distributed to the students participating in the writing class. Before participants filled in the questionnaire, the researcher first explained that the aim of this survey was to understand the effects of monitoring strategy on EFL writing proficiency. A brief description of the advantages and disadvantages of monitoring strategy was explained to the participants. After collecting the students' essays, 13 subjects among the participants of the experimental course agreed to answer the interview questions. The interviews were tape-recorded. In order to lower participants' anxiety and get more information from their viewpoints, they were allowed to use Chinese to respond to all of the questions. Moreover, to avoid long pauses and irrelevant opinions, it was appropriate for them to organize their ideas for a short time before recording.
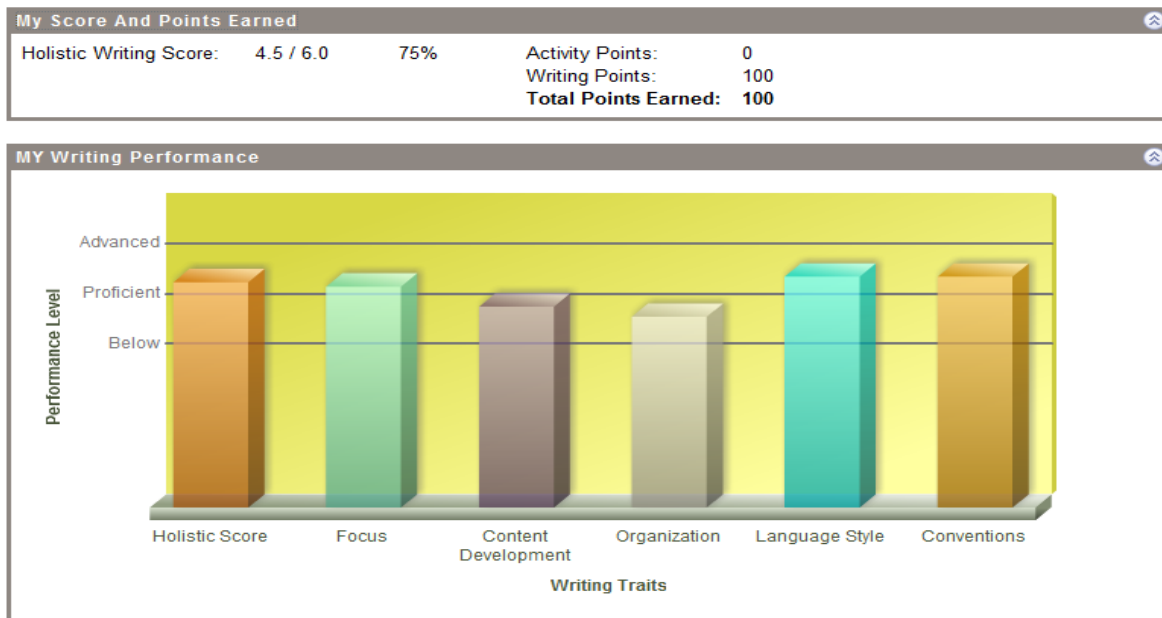

Figure 1. A bar graph of essay example by My Access

4. Results

4.1 The Effects of Monitoring Strategy on Writing Proficiency

In order to examine the differences and improvements from essay 1 to essay 4, Table 1 displays the means and standard deviations for each essay of the students. The essay's means were substantially increased from essay 1 to essay 4. Descriptive statistics showed that the students had a significant improvement in their essays by using monitoring strategy. *Furthermore,* a paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the score of essay 1 and essay 4. There was a significant difference between the scores of essay 1 (M = 49.31, SD = 25.99) and essay 4 (M = 69.78, SD = 7.39; t = 4.57, p = 0.000). Overall, the results suggested that after applying self and peer-editing strategy in EFL writing classes, the participants' essays had been improved.

Table 1. Mean and SD of four essays

	Focus	**Content**	**Organization**	**Style**	**Convention**	**Mean**	**SD**
Essay 1 (n = 32)	49.20	47.60	47.00	50.00	50.00	49.3125	25.9919
Essay 2 (n =32)	58.60	56.75	55.90	61.00	60.00	59.2187	12.8005
Essay 3 (n = 32)	59.40	57.80	56.90	62.00	60.40	60.0000	8.9695
Essay 4 (n = 32)	69.30	66.70	66.00	72.00	70.00	69.7812	7.3911

Table 2 shows the comparison between each category of essay 1 and essay 4. As shown in Table 2, students displayed some progress in their essays, specifically on style ($t = 4.610$, $p = 0.000$) and convention ($t = 4.574$, $p = 0.000$). Thus, it revealed that students might not only receive feedback from themselves or classmates, but also edit the articles by adopting the advice of MY Access. Based on recommendations for writers provided by MY Access, style and convention are two categories which lower proficient writers should focus on. Also, the quantitative data successfully revealed a significant reliable difference between the mean of essay 1 (M = 49.31, SD = 25.99) and essay 4 (M = 69.78, SD = 7.39). Therefore, it can be confirmed that the students showed advancement in the second, third and fourth drafts of their essays after monitoring strategy intervention in the writing class.

Table 2. The comparison between essay 1 and 4 in different categories

	Mean	**SD**	**Std. Error Mean**	**95% Confidence Interval of the Difference**		**t**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**
				Lower	**Upper**		
Essay 1 vs. essay 4	20.4688	25.3377	4.4791	11.3335	29.6040	4.570	0.000***
Focus 1 vs. focus 4	20.1875	25.3930	4.4889	11.0324	29.3426	4.497	0.000***
Content 1 vs. content 4	19.0313	24.0087	4.2442	10.3752	27.6873	4.484	0.000***
Organization 1 vs. organization 4	19.0313	23.7521	4.1988	10.4677	27.5948	4.533	0.000***
Style 1 vs. Style 4	21.4688	26.3426	4.6568	11.9712	30.9663	4.610	0.000***
Convention1 vs. convention 4	20.5000	25.3555	4.4823	11.3584	29.6417	4.574	0.000***

Note: SD: Standard Deviation; ***$p < 0.001$.

4.2 Variables related to the effects of monitoring strategy

A questionnaire was constructed to investigate the variables related to students which were concerned with the effects of monitoring strategy in writing, such as students' attitude towards monitoring strategy, meta-cognition and self-efficacy aspects, five writing improvements, advantages, and challenges of monitoring writing. The results of the questions related to students' attitude toward monitoring strategy are presented in Table3.

Table 3. Variables related to monitoring strategy.

Survey Items	Frequencies (in %)					Mean	Std. Deviation
	SD	D	N	A	SA		
1. I think that monitoring strategy can improve my English writing ability.	2.9	2.9	28.6	57.1	8.6	3.65	0.802
2. I am interested in reviewing essays.	0	20	28.6	45.7	5.7	3.37	0.877
3. I feel self-editing can help me realize correct ways of expression in English.	0	8.6	14.3	74.3	2.9	3.71	0.667
4. With self-editing, I spontaneously activate my linguistic competence in correcting my errors.	2.9	11.4	31.4	54.3	0	3.37	0.807
5. Peer-editing helps me recognize the weaknesses in peers' essays, and then indirectly remind me to avoid making the same mistakes.	0	2.9	5.7	62.9	28.6	4.17	0.663
6. Peer-editing is beneficial because two people working on the same essay is better than one.	2.9	0	2.9	65.7	28.6	4.17	0.746
7. I will identify my writing purpose before writing.	0	8.6	14.3	60	17.1	3.85	0.809
8. I try to get back on checking when I lose concentration.	0	2.9	8.6	68.6	20	4.05	0.639
9. I stop from time to time and think about what I'm writing.	0	5.7	20	48.6	25.7	3.94	0.838
10. I am motivated and confident when I am writing.	5.7	25.7	45.7	22.9	0	2.85	0.845
11. I would not give up writing when I encounter difficulties.	0	11.4	34.3	48.6	5.7	3.48	0.781
Focus and meaning							
12. I can understand the main point of classmates' essays.	0	2.9	25.7	68.6	2.9	3.71	0.572
13. I can establish and maintain an insightful controlling idea.	0	14.3	22.9	60	2.9	3.51	0.781
14. I can demonstrate a thorough understanding of the purpose, audience, and task.	2.9	22.9	37.1	37.1	0	3.08	0.853
15. I can use description and details that are relevant to the story.	0	5.7	28.6	57.1	8.6	3.68	0.718
Content and development							
16. I can develop my ideas fully and creatively.	0	20	34.3	45.7	0	3.25	0.78
17. I can use information or statistics to support my ideas.	0	11.4	17.1	68.6	2.9	3.62	0.731
18. I can add the variety of ideas to increase the quality of the content.	0	5.7	22.9	62.9	8.6	3.74	0.700
Organization improvement							
19. I can capture the readers' attention through the introduction with an appropriate thesis statement	0	20	20	57.1	2.9	3.42	0.850
20. I can focus on one idea per paragraph.	0	11.4	20	57.1	11.4	3.68	0.832
21. I can apply the transition signals to connect the ideas.	0	11.4	14.3	57.1	17.1	3.8	0.867
22. I know how to write an efficient conclusion.	0	17.1	20	57.1	5.7	3.51	0.853
Language use and style							
23. I can use well-structured and sentences with variety.	0	20	22.9	54.3	2.9	3.4	0.847
24. I can underline wordy expressions in each sentence, and revise the sentence using concise wording.	0	37.1	31.4	28.6	2.9	2.97	0.890
25. I can apply precise language and word choice.	0	20	42.9	34.3	2.9	3.2	0.797
26. I can change verb tense appropriately within sentences or paragraphs.	0	11.4	20	57.1	11.4	3.68	0.832
Mechanics and conventions							
27. I can avoid spelling errors in writing.	2.9	5.7	11.4	65.7	14.3	3.82	0.857
28. I can avoid fragments in writing.	2.9	11.4	17.1	54.3	14.3	3.65	0.968
29. I can avoid subject-verb agreement errors in writing.	0	17.1	14.3	57.1	11.4	3.62	0.910
Error correction and feedback							
30. I think error feedback from peers help me to produce essays with better quality and higher accuracy.	0	5.7	25.7	42.9	25.7	3.88	0.866

Item						M	SD
31. I consider that monitoring strategy support me to activate linguistic competence in correcting errors.	0	2.9	22.9	57.1	17.1	3.88	0.718
32. I think error correction and feedback inspire me to give and receive feedback for myself and peers.	0	0	17.1	65.7	17.1	4	0.594
Critical thinking							
33. I criticize misconceptions so that I am aware of my inappropriate writing habits.	2.9	17.1	8.6	62.9	8.6	3.57	0.978
34. By responding critically to peers' writing, I exercise critical thinking and apply it to my own essays.	0	5.7	25.7	54.3	14.3	3.77	0.770
35. I benefit from learning how to give and receive constructive criticism.	0	0	20	60	20	4	0.641
36. I am critical about the comments received from peers rather than accepting all comments blindly.	0	2.9	8.6	71.4	17.1	4.02	0.617
Goal setting and problem-solving skill							
37. I think peer-editing enables me to see perspectives from peers and it also inspires me to consider better solution to the problems.	0	5.7	14.3	62.9	17.1	3.91	0.742
38. By editing peers' essays, I not only pay more attention to plot, structure and grammar, but also notice peers' ideas, plans, and solutions for my self-editing.	0	8.6	14.3	62.9	14.3	3.82	0.785
39. I can identify the problems of writing and set goals to solve them.	0	20	34.3	42.9	2.9	3.28	0.825
40. I feel monitoring strategy helps me become goal oriented in writing through goal setting.	0	11.4	22.9	62.9	2.9	3.57	0.739
Cultural Blocks							
41. I don't like criticizing peers' essay because I want to save face for them.	0	37.1	28.6	31.4	2.9	3	0.907
42. I am obedient and get used to hold my opinions, so I just keep silent in class.	5.7	25.7	45.7	17.1	5.7	2.91	0.950
43. I trust my teachers' comment because they are authorities.	5.7	31.4	31.4	22.9	8.6	2.97	1.070
44. I am afraid of criticizing my classmates and try to keep a peaceful relationship.	8.6	48.6	28.6	14.3	0	2.48	0.853
45. I avoid negative comments on peers' essays and try to please them with nice comments.	11.4	45.7	20	22.9	0	2.54	0.980
Low-achieving writers							
46. I don't know how to express my opinions in English clearly.	8.6	60	14.3	14.3	2.9	2.42	0.948
47. I can't identify the weaknesses in the essays because my own writing proficiency is weak.	8.6	34.3	28.6	22.9	5.7	2.82	1.070
48. Most of my classmates cannot correct essay properly and identify where the problems are.	0	51.4	22.9	22.9	2.9	2.77	0.910
49. I am reluctant to believe my partner's comments if his writing proficiency is low.	8.6	48.6	28.6	14.3	0	2.48	0.853
50. I cannot give appropriate suggestions to peers since I have no idea of how to revise the essay.	0	60	28.6	8.6	2.9	2.54	0.78

*Code: Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), Strongly disagree (SD)

It shows that 65.7% of the subjects on item 1 thought monitoring strategy could improve their English writing ability. Additionally, from item 2, the majority of students displayed interest in reviewing essays (M =3.37, SD =0.877). Surprisingly, 74.3% responded to item 3, showing that self-editing could help the majority of the participants discover correct ways of expressing themselves in English. On item 5 and 6, the students pointed out that applying peer-editing helped them recognize the weaknesses in peers' essays and indirectly reminded themselves to avoid making the same mistakes (M=4.17, SD=0.663). Overall, students displayed a positive attitude towards monitoring strategy on writing. The aspects of meta-cognition and self-efficacy in monitoring strategy were the next category to be explored. In Table 5, for item 8, nearly 88.6 % of the subjects claimed that they would try to get back to checking when they lost concentration on monitoring writing (M=4.05, SD=0.639). Even more than 77 % of the students found they had the capability to identify their writing purpose before writing.

Similarly, many students responded to item 9, saying they could stop from time to time to think about what they write (M=3.94, SD=0.838). Nevertheless, the lower percentage in item 10 indicated that many subjects disagreed that they were motivated and confident while writing (M=2.85, SD=0.845). Nevertheless, the overall data suggested that a majority of students had sufficient meta-cognition and self-efficacy awareness when practicing monitoring strategy.

On item 12 relating to focus and meaning improvement, the majority of the students agreed that they could understand the main point of classmates' essays (M=3.71, SD=0.572). And on item 15, about 65.7% of the subjects expressed that they could use description and details that were relevant to the story. Some students indicated that they realized what they write completely. Concerning content and development improvement on item 18, 71.5% of the learners pointed out that when they were monitoring writing, they could incorporate a variety of new ideas to increase the quality of their content. Moreover, on item 16 and 17, the majority responded that they could both develop their own ideas fully and creatively (M=3.25, SD=0.78), and they understood how to use information or statistics to support their ideas (M=3.62, SD=0.731). Further, item 21 showed 74.2 % of the students responded that they knew how to apply the transition signals to connect the ideas of their compositions. On the other hand, 60% of subjects on item 19 (M=3.42, SD=0.850), claimed to have developed the ability to capture the readers' attention through an introduction with an appropriate thesis statement.

On Item 20 (M=3.68, SD=0.832), 68.4% of students could focus on one idea per paragraph. Fourthly, concerning language use and style improvement, Item 26 (M=3.68, SD=0.832) indicated that most subjects could change verb tense appropriately within sentences or paragraphs. And item 23 and 25 indicated that students could use well-structured and sentences with variety (M=3.4, SD=0.847) in general. However, even though 31.5% of students agreed that they could underline wordy expressions in each sentence and revise the sentence using concise wording, still 37.1% of them disagreed. Finally, as for mechanics and conventions improvement, as indicated on Item 27, 80% of the students could avoid spelling errors in writing. On item 28, about 68.6% of the subjects could avoid fragments. Consequently, the whole results demonstrated that by using monitoring strategy in writing courses, the EFL students' five necessary writing skills were strengthened.

The results in Table 3 also showed the majority of the students felt monitoring strategy helped them activate linguistic competence in correcting errors. As we observe on item 30 and 32, error feedback from peers likely helped students produce essays with better quality and higher accuracy (M=3.88, SD=0.866). Most learners believed the variables concerning critical thinking affected their self-editing and peer-editing, and the 88.5% on Item 36 showed that if students received comments from classmates, they tended to be critical about the comments instead of accepting all comments blindly. What's more, 71.5% of the learners on item 33 (M=3.57, SD=0.978) agreed that by applying self and peer-editing in writing class, they had an opportunity to criticize misconceptions and become aware of their inappropriate writing habits. On item 37, 80% of the students expressed how peer-editing enabled them to see outside perspectives, and it also inspired them to consider better solutions to their problems (M=3.91, SD=0.742). Over 77% of students on item 38 (M=3.82, SD=0.785) showed that by editing peers' essays, they could pay more attention to plot, structure and grammar, but also appreciate classmates' ideas, plans, and solutions and apply them to their own self-editing. In brief, the section on error correction and feedback received the highest degree of agreement concerning the advantages of monitoring strategy (M=3.92), suggesting that most students believed it was the most successful and practicable advantage of self-editing and peer-editing.

Concerning challenges of monitoring strategy on item 44, around 57.2% of learners pointed out that they were not afraid of criticizing their classmates' compositions, neither would they try to keep a peaceful relationship during peer review. From item 42 and 43, it appeared that students did not absolutely believe authority and dared to express themselves. Only 31.4% of the subjects on item 42 (M=2.91, SD=0.950) tended to be obedient and accustomed to silently holding their opinions in class. Moreover, about 37.1% of students on item 43 (M=2.97, SD=1.070) thought they would not totally trust teachers' comments, simply due to their authority. Concerning low-achieving writers, a surprisingly high 68.6% of students responded to item 46 (M=2.42, SD=0.948) that they didn't know how to express their opinions in English clearly.

On the other hand, on item 48, 51.4% of students disagreed that their classmates could not correct essays properly or identify where the problems were (M=2.77, SD=0.910). Regarding the interview, six out of 13 participants agreed that self-editing was a promising method.

It can not only help them clearly understand what they wrote, but reflect on their way of thinking. In addition, they thought this approach would help them avoid using incorrect grammar, spelling, sentences and structure if they wrote essays carelessly or the content was not complete. For instance, participant S4 addressed that "While practicing self-editing, I can check every detail, including grammar and sentences. Besides, I reexamined my whole essay to make sure it was fluent." Nevertheless, seven out of 13 students said that they could not revise their essay very well, and self-editing would not be beneficial to them. Similarly, participant S1 expressed: "I have blind spots on my own essay since I can't identify whether my grammar is correct or not or how to use it properly. Even if I have already recognized the grammar to be wrong, I still can't revise it accurately. Therefore, I prefer peer-editing."

Twelve out of 13 participants said they could compare their point of view with their classmates' and got feedback or benefited from them. They also would not accept all comment or annotations, opting to use a critical, selective judgmental view instead. For example, participant S1 mentioned that "With peer-editing, I think I can gain from other people' writing skills or ideas. My unity and organization ability especially improved in the third and fourth essay. Also, I want to know how they feel about my essay". Participant S7 pointed out that "When my errors are corrected by classmates, I will discuss with them and keep them in mind to remind myself that I cannot make the same mistake again." However, only participant S4 disagreed that peer-editing instruction is really helpful thanks to the presence of low-achieving writers. She addressed that if the editor was an under achiever, she wouldn't trust the peer revision and prefers waiting for the revision by the instructor.

5. Discussion

This paper has explored the effects of self and peer-editing on EFL students' writing. Based on the results collected from MY Access, questionnaires and the interview, several findings can be identified. First of all, the students tend to agree that self-editing helped them discover correct ways of expression in English (M=3.71). About 65.7% of the subjects think monitoring strategy can improve their English writing ability (M=3.65). And they think self-editing assists them in perfecting their organization, grammar and accuracy in writing. The results supported Makino's (2010, p.340) study, "we can reach the conclusion that self-correction is highly effective with grammatical (especially, morphological) errors." Based on MY Access evaluation, the students' essay quality and five writing aspects were improved, especially on language style and conventions. According to the results, students have improved their linguistic creativity through self-correction spontaneously. In other words, the students realize how to apply monitoring to improve writing performance.

Secondly, concerning peer-editing approach, most of the students assume peer-editing is an effective revision tactic. 91.5% of students claim peer-editing allows them to point out weaknesses in their classmates' compositions, and then indirectly help them to avoid making the same mistakes in their own tasks (M=4.17). Students also believe peer-editing is beneficial because two people working on the same essay is better than one (M= 4.17). Because the peer-editing sheet forces the students to focus on the five writing aspects, the essay grades increased, and their writing proficiency grew better than before. According to the results, peer-editing helped students make progress in writing. It helps students engage in critical thinking (reading and writing), gain audience awareness (Berg, 1999) and error feedback, explain their viewpoints (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996), evaluate their linguistic needs, monitor their own language use, experience less writing anxiety through communication with instructors, and then become more supportive with each other (Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992; Schmid, 1999).

Thirdly, concerning the advantages of monitoring strategy, 68.6% of students point out that error feedback from peers help them to produce essays with better quality and higher accuracy (M=3.88). This finding is in accordance with previous studies (Ferris, 1999; Polio, 2001) indicating that error correction and feedback are systematic and clearly help students enhance and produce writing with better quality. Besides, as the result shows, about 88.5% of students can benefit from learning how to give and receive constructive criticism (M=4). Such finding supports Mittan's (1989) research, in which he claimed "by responding critically to their colleagues' writing, students exercise the critical thinking they must apply to their own work" (p. 210). About goal setting and problem-solving skill, 80% of students expressed that peer-editing enabled them to see perspectives from peers and inspired them to consider better solutions to their problems (M=3.91) and also helped them become goal oriented in writing through goal setting (M=3.57). This result is in agreement with Cho, Schunn and Kwon's (2007) study, which suggested that after detecting problems in texts, reviewers are automatically engaged in diagnosing the problems.

Fourthly, it is surprising that most students don't consider cultural block or low-achievers issues which might affect the efficiency of monitoring instruction. 57.2% of students disagree with the notion that they are afraid of criticizing their classmates' essays and just try to keep a peaceful relationship (M=2.48). The possible answer for this statement may be that students would not avoid negative comments on peers' compositions. Also, students just keep a neutral attitude because they want to save face for classmates (M=3). The findings show the EFL learners don't particularly keep the peace and harmonious atmosphere due to cultural block. In addition, as this study shows, about 68.6% of them disagree with the idea that they don't know how to express their opinions in English clearly (M=2.42). This reveals that students think they can give appropriate suggestions to peers since they know how to revise essays and have enough confidence in themselves to edit essays. We can conclude that despite unsatisfying writing proficiency of some low-achieving students, their classmates still believe low-achievers can suggest useful comments. These results suggest that either cultural block or low-achievers would influence the way students use self-editing and peer-editing.

Finally, the findings from this study indicate that monitoring strategy can facilitate students' EFL writing proficiency. Based on MY Access, the students' essay quality has improved immensely, especially on language style and conventions. Also, 68.5% of students think that they can change verb tense appropriately within sentences or paragraphs. Moreover, 80% of them point out that they can avoid spelling errors in writing. As one subject said in the interview "In my third and fourth essay, I find the holistic score visibly increased." It's obvious that monitoring strategy helps students realize how to reflect upon their writing and pay more attention to checking these five aspects. Therefore, it can be concluded that after utilizing self and peer-editing tactics, most students are more actively involved in their learning activities and have better academic performance.

6. Conclusion

Several major findings can be summarized from the current study: (1) After applying monitoring strategy, EFL learners pay more attention to aspects of writing, specifically focus, content development, organization, language style and conventions; (2) With self and peer-editing, EFL learners can enhance EFL writing proficiency, especially on language style, and conventions; (3) Utilizing self and peer-editing can strengthen students' abilities with error correction, error feedback, critical thinking, goal setting, and problem-solving skills; (4) Cultural blocks and low-achievement students can cause challenges to practicing monitoring strategy only to a limited degree. This study was conducted to understand the effects of monitoring strategy on EFL writing performance. Despite the positive outcome of students' writing performances after the intervention, a couple of limitations in this study must be addressed: First and foremost, this study suffered from the limitation of a small sample size of participants. The 13 interviewees may not represent the opinion of the whole population. Also the small sample size could have influenced the reliability of the results.

Second, the experiment was conducted to a group of students only. There is a lack of comparison with the effect of instructor review. For future research, more participants should be involved in the interview. The opinion of the low-achieving writers may provide useful information about how to apply monitoring strategy to writing for students at different levels. For the improvement of the research design, it is suggested researchers include experimental and control groups, so the effects of a teacher's review can be compared. In summation, with monitoring strategy, EFL students are offered opportunities to compare their self-editing with peer-editing on their own writings. The discrepancies between these two evaluations can trigger learners to bridge the gaps and strengthen their writing proficiency, as mentioned by Cho & Cho (2007). However, although this paper offers various advantages regarding application of both self and peer-editing, it is difficult for teachers to implement it if EFL learners are not willing to adopt the strategy or raise their writing to a higher level.

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