

Using Blended Self- Regulated Learning for Developing EFL Student Teachers' Creative Writing Skills and Attitudes towards Writing

By

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using blended self-regulated learning in developing student teachers' EFL creative writing skills and attitudes towards writing. The design of the study was a mixed research methodology. It combined both quantitative and qualitative methods of collecting data. The participants of the study were forty (N= 40) students enrolled in third- year English section at the Faculty of Education, Benha University, Egypt. They were tested before and after the treatment. They were taught through using blended self-regulated learning based program. The instruments of the study included an EFL creative writing skills test, an EFL creative writing skills rubric, an EFL attitudes toward writing scale and a semi-structured interview. Results of the study revealed a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants in the pre and post administrations of the EFL creative writing skills and attitudes towards writing in favor of the post administrations. These results were ascribed to blended self-regulated learning based program.

Keywords: Blended Self-Regulated Learning- EFL Creative Writing Skills – Attitudes toward Writing

استخدام التعلم المدمج المنظم ذاتيا لتنمية مهارات الكتابة الإبداعية والاتجاه نحو الكتابة فى اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لدى الطلاب المعلمين

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الملخص باللغة العربية :

تهدف الدراسة إلى توضيح فاعلية استخدام التعلم المدمج المنظم ذاتيا لتنمية مهارات الكتابة الإبداعية والاتجاه نحو الكتابة فى اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لدى الطلاب المعلمين..ويعد هذا البحث من البحوث المختلطة / المدمجة التى دمجت أساليب البحث الكمية والكيفية معا. وتكونت عينة الدراسة من أربعين طالب من الطلاب المعلمين تم اختيارهم عشوائيا من طلاب الفرقة الثالثة شعبة اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية جامعة بنها، جمهورية مصر العربية. هذا وقد تم اختبار عينة الدراسة قبل اجراء المعالجة وبعد تطبيق البرنامج القائم على التعلم المدمج المنظم ذاتيا. واشتملت أدوات الدراسة على اختبار فى مهارات الكتابة الابداعية فى اللغة الإنجليزية ، ومقياس الاتجاه نحو الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية ومقابلة شبه منظمة. وأشارت نتائج البحث الى وجود فروق ذات دلالة احصائية بين درجات الطلاب (عينة الدراسة) فى القياس القبلى – البعدى فى مهارات الكتابة الابداعية و الاتجاه نحو الكتابة فى اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لصالح القياس البعدى . وترجع هذه النتائج الى فاعلية البرنامج القائم على التعلم المدمج المنظم ذاتيا .
الكلمات المفتاحية : التعلم المدمج المنظم ذاتيا – مهارات الكتابة الإبداعية فى اللغة الإنجليزية – والاتجاه نحو الكتابة فى اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

Introduction

Communication information technology (ICT) plays an important role in English language teaching and learning. It considered an active means of developing the individuals' abilities. During the present century, the concept of e-learning is clarified and its tools are characterized by the use of the Internet. Nowadays, the possibilities of investing wireless communication technologies in general and mobile become more important. These technologies make remarkable effect on the English language and its four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). They also encourage students to search for the information by themselves. They become active, self-confident enough and more creative. They can communicate and interact with the other easily whether orally through speaking or in written way through writing.

Writing to communicate thoughts and ideas is essential for school success, the workplace and the society. The most effective use of writing to improve student learning occurs when teachers change the way they evaluate it. When the focus of evaluation moves from accuracy and the concrete definition of writing (such as building the paragraph and the basic skills of spelling and mechanics) to the evaluation of students' thinking, a deeper understanding and learning is developed. Thus, writing is a means of communication through which people can express their personal thoughts, ideas and beliefs about a certain situation. It is a process of thinking to invent ideas, thinking about how to express into good writing and arranging the ideas into statements and paragraphs clearly. Therefore, it is considered the most challenging task and the most difficult language skill among EFL students. Students need to employ different cognitive strategies to convey the meaning to the reader. In addition, there is a need for creative teachers and students to increase the level of success and motivation (Butaud ,2013 , Akdal & Şahin, 2014, Olson, 2017, Al-Sobhi,Rashid & Abdullah ,2018, Şenel ,2018).

It can be noted that language learning is based on four basic language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. In addition to these four basic skills, creativity is another skill that the language

aims. Through speaking and writing activities, the skill of creativity is improved and creative ideas are revealed. Creative writing is the activity of reconstructing current knowledge, concepts, sounds, images and dreams in the memory and associating them with each other. Creating a new piece of writing is considered the transfer of an individual's feelings and thoughts about something onto paper. Thus, the process approach rather than the product approach should be adopted in creative writing because creative writing requires editing, planning and the exploration of thoughts without limits (Bayat, 2016).

Creativity is the ability to come up with new ideas. In addition, creativity and writing skill are related. Writing includes creative thinking and relating new information with the prior knowledge. Creative writing means one's putting his or her ideas and feelings about a particular topic on paper by using his or her imagination freely. It aids language development at all levels: grammar, vocabulary, phonology and discourse. It also requires learners to manipulate the language in interesting and demanding ways to express personal meanings. Moreover, many teachers have several problems during writing classes such as low motivation, high level of anxiety, less effort and low interest among students. However, the biggest problem is that students wait for inspiration to produce a written product. Creative writing is an effective way to elicit inspiration and avoid negative factors students have. It promotes students to gain their identity and self-discovery without any fear, threat, teacher-dictated topics, grammar correction, critical comments or grades (Tok & Kandemir, 2015, Şenel, 2018).

Creative writing is the major goal of daily life, through which the writers communicate their ideas with their readers. They are required to be skillful writers in order to use their unique imagination and innovative ideas in writing. Creative writing is intended to help learners to present or convey their imaginative writing ability effectively. It has direct and indirect effect on learners and provides learners with practical ideas to apply in their daily lives. It requires them to use more positive imagination or ideas to produce a desirable product (Chaiyadejkamjorn, Soonthonrojana & Sangkaphanthanon, 2017).

Moreover, it can be noted that writing is one of the most significant skills in people's expressing their views and effective communication. It is an activity including cognitive, affective, social and psychomotor processes. In addition, individual's attitude, interest and desire play an important role in the writing process. Attitude towards writing is an affective feature that related with how individuals feel themselves while writing. Students, who developed a positive attitude towards writing, desire to write, enjoy writing and are more likely to become successful (Erdogan, 2013).

Graham , Berninger & Fan (2007) cited in Williams (2012) clarify that writing attitudes is an affective disposition involving how the act of writing makes the author feel and ranging from happy to unhappy. It affects writing achievement and competence. Therefore, students with a more positive attitude will write more often than those with a more negative attitude. They decide to write even if they are not required to write. On the other hand, students with negative attitudes may choose to avoid writing tasks and put forth little effort when writing.

It can be noted that most students have negative opinions about writing because of the experiences that they lived before and writing is a skill that can be acquired hard and late. At the basis of the negative feeling, students are not being motivated enough to write (Erdogan, 2013). As a result, students need to be motivated in order to begin, continue and complete the writing through using suitable methods, techniques or approaches .These methods, approaches and techniques are student centered and should be used to help them develop their creative writing skills and positive attitudes towards writing . Therefore, it can be concluded that it is important to use recent methods, approaches and strategies to develop EFL creative writing skills and attitudes towards writing among university students. One of these approaches is blended self-regulated learning.

Using SRL in blended context is important for some reasons as clarified by Broadbent (2017).The first one is using SRL in blended context includes variety of activities and strategies related to students performance in English language skills and system. The second

reason is there are differences in the use of SRL strategies between students in an online environment and students in a blended environment. Online students used more critical thinking and rehearsal strategies, while blended students use more help-seeking strategies. In addition BL as the adoption of educational web-based technology (e.g., a learning management system) for online learning, which used in combination with face-to-face, located instruction from teaching practitioners.

Therefore, the present study focused on using blended self-regulated learning to develop EFL creative writing skills and attitudes towards writing among third- year students in English Section at Benha Faculty of Education.

Context of the Study

Traditionally, in teaching writing skills teachers ask the students to write based on a specific topic. Therefore, students must develop the topic and support it without any thinking. There is no interaction between students and teachers in such writing classes. On the other hand, using recent methods provided students with real-life situations when they want to put their thought on paper. All students are actively involved in the process of writing and tried to prepare their assignments. Writing is considered one of the most difficult skills to improve and students have a resistance system towards writing. Many students give up before starting writing or they postpone it as much as possible because writing is taught as a mechanical skill and this causes fatigue, decrease in motivation and failure (Derakhshan, 2018, Şenel, 2018).

Al-shater (2006) documented the problems of students' lack of the writing process skills and negative attitudes towards EFL in general and writing in particular through the collection of student writing samples and teacher observation. She indicated that the problems students faced derived from the lack of time devoted to teaching writing, the lack of teacher training in teaching the stages of the writing process, the reliance on previous teachers' ineffective strategies in the teaching of writing and the lack of student motivation. Zidan (2016) revealed that students encountered problems in creative writing, thus she developed creative writing skills through

using story mapping strategy. She clarified that story mapping strategy had an important role in developing creative writing as students would be able to organize ideas, arrange events, crystalize characters, illustrating the plot with its rising action, climax and falling action reaching the resolution with a very arranged manner of writing.

In her study, El-Sweedy (2019) revealed that EFL preservice teachers had problems in EFL creative writing skills. She clarified that their description of the setting was irrelevant or missing. They always used one type and one element of the setting in different stories. Moreover, they did not use any methods of characterization, they just named them. They did not organize the events of the story. Ideas and scenes were randomly arranged. They always used one type of plot and did not use any technique of plotting. In addition, they wrote a story with no clear narrator reflecting a weak awareness of the audience and wrote with unclear or no sense of tone or voice. Students' style was ineffective and did not aid in the development of the ideas of the story.

In light of the researcher's experience in teaching at the university level, she noticed that students' level in EFL writing skills in general and creative writing in specific and attitudes towards writing is low. In addition, this low level was addressed by reviewing previous studies such as Abdel-Maksoud (2007), Mogahed (2007), Ali (2009), El-Enany (2009), Abdel-Hallim (2011), Ahmed (2011), Okasha (2011), Abou Zeid (2012), Farag (2012), Ibrahim (2012), Ebedy (2013), El-Behery (2013), Haroon (2014), Khater (2015), Abo El-Soud (2016), Ahmad (2016), Al-Sayed (2016), Eldoda (2016), Alsayed (2014), Al-Ashri (2015), El-Mistikawy (2016), Rehab (2016), Gado (2017), Ebrahim (2017), Mohamed (2013), Amer (2017), Ali (2018), Salman (2018), Diab (2019), El-Sweedy (2019) and Ghoneim & Elghotmy (2019). All of these studies reported the low level of EFL creative writing skills and attitudes towards writing among student teachers.

To document the problem, the researcher conducted a pilot study on twenty students (N=20) enrolled in the third -year English section at the Faculty of Education, Benha University. The pilot study

consisted of an EFL creative writing skills test and EFL attitudes toward writing scale. The results of the pilot study revealed that students were afraid of writing because they lacked motivation and interest. They did not understand the structures of creative essays. Their ideas were disorganized. They did not have enough vocabulary to write and had grammatical problems. They also had problems in organization skills. They could not link their thought and ideas in a logical way. In addition, they had negative attitudes toward writing. This negative attitude hindered their ability in writing. The results clarified that there is a lack of EFL creative writing skills and attitudes toward writing among students teachers. Thus, there is a need for developing EFL creative writing skills and attitudes toward writing among students teachers. The present study attempted to overcome such a problem by using blended self-regulated learning.

Statement of the Problem

Based on the researcher's observation and experience, the results of the pilot study and taking into consideration some recommendations of previous studies, she noticed that student teachers' level in EFL creative writing skills and attitudes toward writing is low. In spite the importance of EFL creative writing skills and attitudes towards writing, the third -year students enrolled in English section at Benha Faculty of Education have difficulties in EFL creative writing skills and attitudes toward writing. Therefore, the present study aims at examining the effectiveness of using blended self-regulated learning in developing student teachers' EFL creative writing skills and attitudes toward writing.

Questions of the Study

1. What are the EFL creative writing skills required for the third-year student teachers?
2. How far is blended self-regulated learning based program effective in developing student teachers' EFL creative writing skills?
3. How far is blended self-regulated learning based program effective in developing student teachers' EFL attitudes towards writing?

Hypotheses of the Study

Based on the related studies and research questions, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants in EFL creative writing skills on the pre-and post- administrations of the EFL creative writing skills test in favor of the post- administration.
2. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants in EFL creative writing sub-skills on the pre-and post- administrations of the EFL creative writing skills test in favor of the post- administration.
3. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants in attitudes toward writing on the pre-and post- administrations of attitudes toward writing scale in favor of the post-administration.

Review of Literature

This part is related to the study variables, creative writing skills, attitudes towards writing and blended self-regulated Learning.

EFL Creative Writing Skills

Creative writing can be defined as one's expressing his or her ideas and feelings about a specific topic by using his or her imagination. It involves going beyond the ordinary creating ideas that are different from everyone else's ideas with the help of one's imagination. It also achieves originality and writing fluently while taking pleasure in the act of composing. It is also characterized by originality and imagination rather than truthfulness or standardization of thoughts. It requires organization, planning and discovery of thoughts. Therefore, there are some factors used for motivating students to become involved in creative writing activities such as a higher order of thinking; exploration and observation skills; knowledge; a regular habit of reading; innovativeness; a critical eye for things happening around; richness of emotions and experience; sufficient use of information communication technologies and diversity of methods . As a result, the most suitable genre of creative

writing is narration because it contains both fictional and non-fictional elements in its structure (Temizkan ,2011).

Kırkgöz (2014) indicated that creative writing puts the emphasis on the right side of the brain that focuses on feelings, physical sensations, intuition and the like. This leads to a balance between the logical and the intuitive thinking. Şenel (2018) confirms that creative writing is an effective way not only for students but also for teachers in writing courses. For students, it gives them a lot of opportunities in order to improve academic success. When students feel proud to present their original ideas, it can be a factor to increase motivation among them. When students are motivated to write, the degree of satisfaction among teachers will be higher during writing classes. When students and teachers are highly motivated, writing lessons will be more enjoyable, the academic success will be increased and negative factors such as, anxiety, fear of failure and unwillingness to write may be prevented.

Creative writing helps in engaging and encouraging students to write by using their imagination and other creative processes. It is the process of producing fictional narratives or writing representations. It is an open-ended process that focuses on creativity and is relevant to thinking skill development. It requires originality or the ability to generate unique ideas. It also involves intrinsic motivation, reflects the personal desire to express one's knowledge or thoughts on a topic through compositional activity and requires intention to monitor and direct actions (Barbot,et al , 2012, Murphy, 2012). Moreover, Khater (2015) clarified that creative writing skills means writing fiction pieces such as story, short story, biography and autobiography. It aims at developing the skills of plot, characterization, style and word choice, setting and dialogue. In addition, it includes writing nonfiction pieces namely; memoir, sketch, personal narrative with the aim of developing the skills of narrative, content, reflection and critical thinking and language among college students.

Caine (2013) clarifies that creative writing enhances technological and multi-modal forms of writing that are relevant to students of the 21st century, who have been brought up with instant access to digital modes of communication. It also promotes the

generative quality of creativity as well as divergent thinking. Akkaya (2014) indicates that creative writing can be perceived as a game or enjoyment by the students. It is very effective in making them prefer writing practices and having successful written works at the end. Therefore, teachers should be aware of the importance and necessity of creative writing. Also, Kirkgöz (2014) clarifies that creative writing is a motivated and a personal activity that deals less in facts than in the imaginative representation of emotions, events, characters and experiences. He mentions the reasons behind including creative writing in the language teaching practices. The first reason is that creative writing aids language development at the level of grammar, vocabulary and discourse. When learners use the language in interesting ways to express personal meanings, they necessarily engage with it at a deeper level of processing. This level leads to significant gains in grammatical accuracy and originality of lexical choice. The second reason clarifies that creative writing fosters playfulness that encourages learners to play creatively with the language.

Bizzaro (2004) clarified that creative writers should possess a variety of essential skills such as understanding audience, genre and the writing process. Therefore, Trekles (2012) states that in beginning to learn creative writing techniques and developing related skills, students should be guided toward learning how to approach and solve problems in starting a creative venture and using foundational skill as a starting point. Therefore, creative writing tasks are motivating for students. Tok & Kandemir (2015) indicate that there is a need to find ways to integrate writing with other skills and activities, giving it more relevance and importance and also making it more interesting. Teachers should use meaningful, realistic and relevant writing tasks based on learners' needs and interests. They should also design individual tasks based on what individual learners need to write. Teaching creative writing effectively encourages students to write by drawing upon their imagination and other creative processes that support writing development in all its components. It provides students with an opportunity to choose their own writing subjects and

methods. Through creative writing, students can use their linguistic capabilities and go deeper and further than they cannot do in oral expression. They express more personal thoughts and mental images. Therefore, creative writing tasks are motivating for teachers and students. It is characterized by originality and imagination rather than truthfulness or standardization of thoughts.

Therefore, because of the importance of EFL creative writing skills, many researchers conducted various studies to develop these skills at the university level such as El-Enany (2009), El-Behery (2013), Kirgoz (2014), Abdurraheem (2015), Khater (2015), Diab (2019), El-Sweedy (2019) and Ghoneim & Elghotmy (2019). Thus, it can be concluded that EFL creative writing is an important variable that should be developed among student teachers.

Attitudes Towards Writing

Attitude, interest and desire play an important role in the writing process. Brown (2007) describes attitude in language learning as a set of beliefs that a learner holds toward the target language whether it is important, interesting, boring and so forth. Erdogan (2013) stated that attitude towards writing is an affective feature that related with how individuals feel themselves while writing. Students, who developed a positive attitude towards writing, desire to write, enjoy writing and are more likely to become successful. Moreover, Charlton (2015) indicates that attitude is how students feel about writing whether positive or negative. Malloy (2016) indicates that attitudes toward writing among preservice teachers play a significant role in how they will approach writing instruction in their future classrooms. Teachers, who engage in regular writing practice, possess knowledge of English language foundations and grammar and have a positive attitude about writing will be better prepared to address the challenges of teaching students how to write.

Students who are interested in writing are less frustrated when facing challenges in writing tasks. Students' attitudes toward writing seem to be manifested in the level of interest, perceived usefulness and self-beliefs in writing and writing performance. In his study, Lee

(2013) examined the relationships among students' writing attitudes, learning-related behaviors and gender in relation to writing performance. In the same context, Barnes (2015) clarifies that attitude towards writing affects writing performance. It is based on two perspectives. The first one is the premise that students with a positive attitude are more likely to choose to write and spend time writing. The second is students' experiences when engaging with writing influenced their development of positive or negative attitudes towards writing.

Ismail & Albakri (2012) clarify that the students' lack of care when writing is evident. Most of the students turn in their essay after only one hour of writing, even though they are given two and a half hours to complete their essay. In addition, many students often fail to score well for essay writing as their essay lacks in-depth content and is usually full of errors. They clarify that they do not have enough ideas to write about, thus they have this negative attitude. Kirkgöz (2014) pointed that the lack of tasks that contribute to the improvement of learners' creativity in writing is missing. The creative writings are different from writing tasks found in many English language teaching materials, where students are required to use the sentence structure to write about familiar events. In such cases, the presence of a familiar topic could lead students to retrieve known meaning rather than generating imaginative responses, constructing new and surprising meaning.

It can be noted that attitudes towards writing is essential for students' learning. Therefore, researchers conducted studies in order to develop attitudes toward writing at the university level such as Gutensohn (2009), Aydın & Başöz (2010), Johnson (2011), Farag (2012), Erdogan (2013), Aydın (2014), Barnes (2015), Charlton (2015), Malloy (2016), Gado (2017) and Soltani & Kheirzadeh (2017). Thus, it can be concluded that EFL attitudes toward writing is an important variable that should be developed among student teachers.

Blended Self-Regulated Learning

With the development of modern communication system, the use of the computer and the Internet in higher education has greatly increased in recent years. Digital technology has changed the student approach to learning. It has become a necessity and an integral part of their lives. Students are accustomed to using their digital devices for almost everything such as communication, collaboration, and accessing multiple sources of information for solutions. Creating a digital learning environment in higher education is not just about convenience, it is about preparing undergraduates for the future. Digital evolution is the new approach to learning and teaching. Digital learning is learning of any kind which makes use of technology effectively. Digital learning tools offer personalization and flexibility for each student to plan, gather, manage, analyze, and report information. It is a matter of attaining the same goal using different pathways of learning. Additionally, with the current Covid-19 global pandemic, the adoption of digital learning will continue to persist in being the new norm for most universities. Thus, with this situation, the need for students to develop self-regulated skills and digital literacy skills is even more urgent. The rise of blended learning and the prevalence of affordable devices have laid the foundation for digital learning (Anthonysamy, Ah-Choo & Soon-Hin ,2021).

E-learning, as a new mode of modern distance education provides a dynamic, interactive and nonlinear learning environment for learners through a series of synchronous or asynchronous network communication technologies. It breaks the limit of time and space and offers an opportunity for students' self-regulated learning (SRL).The widely adoption of modern technologies of information and communications in the education field has an impact on the traditional structure of teaching and also has brought new ideas about teaching and learning. This new change in the education field is called blended learning (BL), or hybrid learning. BL is a new modality of teaching combining the traditional teaching method and online learning. Compared with the traditional face-to-face teaching-learning method or e-learning mode, BL gains great advantages for it is the hybrid of the two (Shen & Liu , 2011, Zhao & Chen ,2016).

Moreover, online learning allows learners to participate in the

learning process or interact with the classmates freely. Therefore, their ability to regulate and monitor their own learning progress is critical. Learners who cannot regulate their learning process efficiently may experience dissatisfaction that leads to less engagement during online courses .BL can help students become more autonomous. It gives them increased control over their learning, thus lessening their dependence on instructors. It allows teachers to provide support by means of traditional face-to-face instruction. BL is a method of language instruction that blends and integrates the most effective features of both face-to-face teaching activities and online collaborative learning activities (Kuo , 2010, Challob, Abu Bakar & Latif , 2016, Al Fadda ,2019).

It can be said that BL provides less social pressure, support and structure to students in comparison with traditional face-to-face education. Students are required to be autonomous in order to self-regulate .Thus, Vanslambrouck, et al. (2019) clarify that SRL is important in BL environments, which requires teachers to gain insight into their students' SRL skills to be able to adapt their teaching methods to provide students with support. BL provided students with the opportunity to regulate their blended context. Dettori & Persico (2007) investigated the practice and development of SRL abilities in a blended course for trainee teachers, where traditional face-to-face sessions alternate with online collaborative modules. In addition, Shea & Bidjerano (2010) reveal that the learners collaborate with each other whether online, face to face or both. Thus, they are indicators of online learner self and co-regulation.

Success in online courses often depends on students' abilities to successfully direct their own learning efforts. It is suggested that students should have SRL strategies when they study in the online learning environment because they have the potential to drop out if they do not use these strategies. It is indicated that successful students in an online course generally used SRL strategies. Therefore, Tsai & Shen (2009) clarified in their study that in the web-enabled learning environment deploying an SRL instructional method, students' involvement in learning is positive. Xu & Jaggars (2014) indicate that the rapid growth of online learning attracted attention to online SRL.

SRL is critical to success both in online learning and BL environments because in these environments students are more autonomous than traditional face-to-face environments.

Blended Self-Regulated Learning Strategies

There are different SRL strategies that can be used asynchronously. One of them is help-seeking. It has been regarded as a critical SRL strategy that leads to the completion of learning tasks. According to Hao, Wright, Barnes & Branch (2016) online help-seeking is a help seeking supported by online tools. Help-seeking in asynchronous online learning can range from asking questions on online forums to searching information on search engines. Online help-seeking is a key indicator of the extent to which students seek social assistance to enhance their performance through using online resources. As the Internet gained popularity and acceptance, the focus of SRL shifted from the context of computer-based instruction to Web-based or hypermedia instruction. Thus, Hodges (2005) clarified that self-regulation was effective in web based courses.

In digital learning, it is necessary to acquire self-regulated learning strategies because students are expected to have self-management skills as they pursue their academic goals independently. Thus, to learn effectively and successfully in digital learning, students need to equip themselves with self-regulation abilities. It can be noted that for students to learn successfully via digital learning, they need to equip themselves with self-regulated learning strategies (SRLS). SRLS are relevant to students learning performance in both online and blended contexts according to the existing literature because these strategies assist students to become aware of their thought processes and actively participate in their learning process (Anthonysamy, Ah-Choo & Soon-Hin, 2021).

Barnard, et.al.(2009) explored the construct factors of learners' online SRL and classified it into six types: goal setting, time management, environment structuring, help seeking, task strategies and self-evaluation. Su, Zheng, Liang & Tsai (2018) indicate that students' SRL processes in online learning environments may differ from those in traditional classroom-based settings. Online SRL is an

essential factor guiding students' web-based information searching strategies and helps them organize and integrate information into mental models when learning online. In their study, Uz & Uzun (2013) determined the influence of BL environments on self-regulated and self-directed learning skills. The results revealed that the use of blended instruction is more effective than traditional instruction in terms of developing self-regulated and self-directed learning skills.

Dettori & Persico (2007) clarified that SRL can be used in Computer Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL). It appears that CSCL environments are suited to practice SRL both in online and in blended courses. In their study, Santhanam, Sasidharan & Webster (2008) confirmed that using SRL was effective in enhancing e-learning-based information technology training. Therefore, there is a clear relation between self-regulation and technology. Aregu (2013) indicates that SRL is active learning processes through different strategies that help students try their level to maximize their cognition and performance. SRL manages students' behavior and other external factors that could influence their learning. It can be noted that learners tend to lack willingness, focus and skills to participate and be effectively engaged in self-regulated web-based learning. Lili (2013) conducted a study to overcome these challenges and develop SRL in web-based learning environments. In their study, Charoenwet & Zurida (2013) confirmed that that collaborative learning environment in the social network supported by CSCL system has positive influence on SRL of students participating in network activities.

SRL involves strategies that help learners actively engage in learning and apply intentional efforts to manage and direct their learning activities. Ley & Young (2001) clarifies that SRL is the effort put forth by students to deepen, monitor, manipulate and improve their own learning. It includes factors such as resource management, goal setting, success expectations and deep cognitive involvement. Kitsantas (2013) stated that learning technologies can engage learners in SRL. In addition, he discussed how learning technologies supported and promoted college student SRL in distributed and online learning environments. He also clarifies that

SRL processes such as goal-setting, self-monitoring and self-evaluation can be supported by using experience and resource sharing tools (e.g., blogs and wikis) whereas communication tools can enhance help seeking behaviors. Dabbagh & Kitsantas (2005) and Kitsantas & Dabbagh (2010) reveal that self-regulated learners engage in a number of key self-regulatory processes including setting clear, specific and challenging goals, using a variety of task strategies to accomplish these goals and self-monitoring and evaluating their progress throughout practice episodes. Moreover, Web 2.0 social software tools have significant potential to support student SRL. In the same context, Dabbagh & Kitsantas (2012) indicate that personal learning environment is a pedagogical approach for both integrating formal and informal learning using social media and supporting student SRL in higher education contexts.

Learning technologies in higher education contexts have the potential to support different processes of SRL to improve learning. Kitsantas & Dabbagh (2004), Dabbagh & Kitsantas (2005) and Kitsantas & Dabbagh (2011) found that learning management systems (LMS) administrative tools (e.g., course planning and scheduling tools such as the online calendar) supported student self-monitoring and help seeking. LMS collaborative and communication tools (e.g., e-mail, discussion forums, and document sharing tools) were more useful in supporting student goal setting help seeking and time management. LMS content creation and delivery tools (i.e., resource sharing and Web publishing tools) were particularly helpful for self-evaluation, task strategies and goal setting whereas LMS learning tools (e.g., bookmarking tools, search tools, and help tools) were reported as more useful in supporting student use of task strategies. Online course instructors provide students with learning technologies that offer students opportunities to engage in SRL.

Zimmerman, Bonner & Kovach (1996) presented a cyclic model of SRL. This model involves four interrelated processes. The first process is self-evaluation and monitoring. It occurs when students judge their personal effectiveness from observations and recordings of prior performances and outcomes. The second process is goal setting and strategic planning that occurs when students analyze the

learning task, set specific learning goals and plan or refine the strategy to attain the goal. The third one is strategy implementation monitoring. This process occurs when students try to execute a strategy in structured contexts and monitor their accuracy in implementing it. The final process is strategic-outcome monitoring. It occurs when students focus their attention on links between learning outcomes and strategic processes to determine effectiveness. Therefore, these models focus on students' use of specific processes to motivate and guide their learning.

Students with high self-regulation tend to take into account the amount of time they will spend on their learning goals. Having sufficient time is particularly important in asynchronous online courses, because learning time depends entirely on student decisions. The students also have the freedom to prioritize their commitments (Zimmerman, 2002, Kozan, 2016). Mahjoob (2015) clarified that in order to be self-regulated learner, one should know how to do self-study and they must know how and when to allocate the time for language learning. Thus, one of the responsibilities of a good language teacher is to promote SRL so that learners will benefit from different learning environments that they have created themselves .With the new trends in language teaching, more responsibility has been given to the language learners who are in charge of their own learning. In his study, Tomak (2017) confirmed the effect of SRL strategies on developing students' self-efficacy and linguistic proficiency.

Harris, Lindner & Piña (2011) revealed that when online environment is characterized with autonomy, SRL becomes a critical success factor for online learning. Successful online learners must generally be more self-regulated than in traditional face-to face courses because the nature of online courses involves more independent learning. Tsai & Shen (2009) clarify that with SRL ,students take charge of their own learning by choosing and setting goals, using individual strategies to monitor, regulate and control the different aspects influencing the learning process and evaluating their actions. Goda (2017) clarifies that in SRL students set goals for their learning tasks, monitor their learning improvement and self-evaluate

their learning performance to become more independent learners. They also accomplish their learning tasks themselves.

Barnard ,et al. (2009) indicates that online learning requires significant self-regulatory abilities. Because online learning creates an autonomous environment (giving the learner freedom in when, where and how to study), self-regulation becomes an essential component for using that freedom wisely and succeeding in the online space. Thus, Lynch & Dembo (2004) examined the relationship between self-regulation and online learning in a blended learning context. You (2016) indicate that SRL necessary factors in online contexts include planning, initiating learning activities, completing assignments, knowing how to get help and self-evaluating progress. Recently, Arnesen (2019) and Teng (2020) clarify that SRL is necessary for success in any learning context. It plays a significant role in helping students succeed in online settings. Thus, self-regulation abilities that allow students to control and direct their learning are critical for successful academic performance in online and blended contexts.

SRL can be improved at the learning environment that allows and facilitates control of the essential dimensions of learning. BL is one of the environments that allow students to manage and control their learning activities. It is a pedagogical approach that combines the effectiveness and socialization opportunities of the classroom which can be done through face-to-face and online delivery systems. It incorporates direct instruction, indirect instruction, collaborative teaching and individualized computer assisted learning. BL allows students to manage their own pace of learning especially in the online session. This might foster students' SRL. Therefore, in their study, Zhu, Au & Yates (2016) investigated the relationship between university students' self-control, SRL and learning outcomes in a blended course. Adiguzel & Orhan (2017) revealed the essential relation between English learning students' levels of self-regulation and their English academic achievements. Soleimani, Aghayani & Ashari (2018) investigated the relationship among EFL learners' self-regulation, locus of control and preference for vocabulary acquisition. Setyaningrum (2019) examined the effect of blended learning on students' SRL.

Learners' SRL in an online learning environment is different from

that in a conventional learning environment. Online SRL includes six dimensions such as goal setting, time management, environment structuring, help seeking, task strategies and self-evaluation. Zheng , Liang , Yang & Tsai (2016) and Vanslambrouck, et al.(2019) clarified that BL environments combine face-to-face and online learning activities that are meant to complement each other. Although BL environments are autonomous, tailored support for students in developing and maintaining their SRL skills should be provided. In their study, Yot-Domínguez & Marcelo (2017) addressed a set of SRL strategies that university students implemented using digital technologies. Wong, et.al.(2018) explored the effects of supporting SRL strategies in online learning environments.

SRL is as a proactive process that student use to self-regulate their cognition, behavior and resources to achiever goals. In this process, the teacher remains available as an assistant and guide of learning but not as a knowledge transmitter or messenger. Learners take the lead in SRL for a total learning process that involves problem positioning, analysis and finding solutions. They need to organize or reorganize the knowledge and use it practically. Therefore, it is important to manage one's self-regulatory ability to organize self-learning time, process the information, make great use of the resources and make the effective feedback .SRL is the way in which learners metacognitively, motivationally and behaviourally regulate their own learning and is divided into three phases: forethought, performance and self-reflection .It is important because a major function of education is the development of lifelong learning skills (Zimmerman, 2002 ,Lili ,2013).

Moreover, Lili (2013) clarified that the social cognitive perspective of SRL suggests that effective learning is determined by the interactions among personal, behavioral and environmental influences. Thus, learners' motivation, learning strategies and feedback behaviors are the major developing strategies of self-regulated web-based learning. It can be said that there is an essential link between SRL and English language skill. As a result, Jansen, van Leeuwen, Janssen, Kester & Kalz (2017) summarized the specific processes in SRL in the online environment. They divided self-

regulation skills in the online environment into five skills; metacognitive skills, time management, environmental structuring, persistence and help-seeking. They concluded that self-regulation skills are necessary to enhance students' self-regulation and performance in online environment. Alkhasawneh & Alqahtani (2019) determined the effect of online course supported SRL in enhancing students' self-regulation and academic outcomes. Recently, Vattoy (2020) explored teachers' beliefs about feedback practice as related to self-regulation, self-efficacy and language skills while teaching EFL.

In light of the critical role that SRL strategies play in online and blended learning, it is essential to assess student uses of SRL strategies and identify students who are likely to struggle in online courses so that institutions and instructors can provide timely support. Previous studies confirmed the importance of SRL in asynchronous and synchronous learning courses and explored how the use of SRL strategies impacts student learning in these environments and improves their language skills such as Za'za' & Ahmed (2012) ; Mason (2013) ;Liaw & Huang (2013) ; Ekici , Coskun & Yurdugul (2014) ; Alkubaidi (2014); Farsani , Beikmohammadi & Mohebbi (2014) ; Mansour & Zaher (2015); Littlejohn, Hood, Milligan, and Mustain (2016) ; Zhao & Chen (2016); Martinez-Lopez , Yot , Tuovila & Perera-Rodríguez (2017); Kim, Yoon, Jo & Branch (2018); Su, Zheng, Liang & Tsai (2018); Zeng & Goh (2018);Al Fadda (2019); Wise & Hsiao (2019) ;Alten , Phielix, Janssen & Kester (2020);Li, Baker & Warschauer (2020) and Teng (2020).

Method of the Study

A. Participants

The participants of the study consisted of forty students (N=40). They were chosen from the third- year students enrolled in English section at Benha Faculty of Education, Egypt. They represented one group who taught through using blended self-regulated learning based program.

B. Design

The present study is a partially mixed research methodology. It combines both quantitative and qualitative methods of collecting data to help in bridging the gap between quantitative and qualitative research. To conduct the quantitative analysis the pre- post experimental group design was used. The study participants were tested before and after conducting the program. In addition a qualitative analysis of the students' performance is provided.

C. Instruments

In order to fulfill the purposes of the study, the following instruments were designed.

A. An EFL Creative Writing Skills Test

The EFL creative writing skills test was prepared by the researcher to measure the EFL creative writing skills among the third-year students enrolled in English section at Faculty of Education, Benha University (*See appendix A*). It was used as a pre-posttest (applied before and after implementing the program). The test consisted of two questions (writing two short stories) suitable for students' level and background knowledge (*see appendix B*). The students are required to write two creative short stories. The time of the EFL creative writing skills test lasted two hours. The researcher calculated time taken by each student finishing the test and the average was found to be two hours. The test was graded by the researcher through using a rubric prepared by her. The rubric consists of seven parts; each part has three items ranging from "3" marks to "1" mark. The students were given "3" marks when their performance is high and "1" mark when their performance is low (*see appendix C*).

B. An EFL Attitudes Toward Writing Scale

The EFL writing attitudes scale was prepared by the researcher to measure attitudes towards writing among the third -year students enrolled in English section at Faculty of Education, Benha University (*see appendix D*). The scale consists of two parts reflect two purposes: general attitudes toward writing and attitudes toward creativity. It consists of (40) items and all answered on a five point

Likert type scale; completely Always= 5, usually = 4, sometimes= 3, rarely =2, never=1 .It was applied before and after implementing the program. The time of the EFL writing attitudes scale lasted one hour. The researcher calculated time taken by each student finishing the scale and the average was found to be one hour.

C . A Semi-Structured Interview

The interview was constructed to examine the importance of blended self-regulated learning among the third-year students enrolled in English section at Benha Faculty of Education and its effectiveness in developing EFL creative writing skills and attitudes toward writing. The interview took the format of face to face semi-structured interview. The researcher interviewed students one time at the beginning of the study, a second time in the middle and a third time at the end of the study to gain greater insight on their EFL creative writing skills and attitudes toward writing throughout ten weeks. The researcher generally asked the students about their participation in the program. She used open ended questions to avoid responding with yes-no (*See Appendix E*). Seven students participated in the interview and their responses were video recorded. The interview lasted for one hour. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher greeted the students and asked them to give brief self-introduction as a way to set the goal for the interview. Then, she told them the purpose of the interview and their own roles. If students did not understand any question, she could simplify it or change it .At the end of the interview, the researcher thanked the students for their participation.

Determining the Validity of the Study Instruments

The EFL creative writing skills test, the attitudes towards writing scale and the interview were submitted to a jury member .They were asked to determine the validity of the instruments in terms of clear instructions, items and its suitability for the students' level. They indicated that the test, the scale and the interview instructions were clear and suitable for students' levels and background knowledge. Therefore, the test, the scale and the interview were considered valid measures of EFL creative writing skills test and attitudes towards writing (Face Validity).To ensure the content validity of the test, scale

and interview, they were developed in the light of a systematic and accurate review of literature and previous studies. This accurate and systematic review determined the general form of the test, the scale and the interview questions and methods of correction. Therefore, the content of the test, the scale and the interview was representative of the skills that were intended to be measured. Thus, the test, the scale and the interview were valid and having a content validity.

Determining the Reliability of the Study Instruments

The reliability of the instruments was measured by using the test-retest method. The instruments were administered to a group of the third –year students enrolled in English section at Benha Faculty of Education. Then, they were administered to the same group again after two weeks. The Pearson correlation between the two administrations was (0.88) at the 0.01 level. Therefore, the instruments were reliable.

Blended Self- Regulated Learning Based program

For achieving the aim of the study, the researcher designed a blended self-regulated learning based program. After assessing the third-year students' EFL creative writing skills and attitudes towards writing, the study participants were required to attend a blended self-regulated learning based program (**See appendix F**).

Aim of the program

The program aimed at developing EFL creative writing skills and attitudes towards writing among the third- year students enrolled in English section at Benha Faculty of Education.

Objectives of the program

By the end of the program, the third- year students will be able to:

- Go in-depth with description clearly that covers all aspects of character.
- Describe the different character through many of direct and indirect characterization techniques.
- Develop the character effectively through dialogue, interactions and situations.
- Describe the setting using many vivid, descriptive words to tell when and where the story took place.

- Use different types of settings in different stories (integral setting or backdrop setting).
- Include all elements of plot (Exposition, Conflict: Rising Action, Climax, and Falling Action, and Resolution).
- Use different types of plots in different stories that are suitable to the all other elements of the story.
- Use many details that highlight the theme of the story and write different stories from different eyes.
- Use the grammatical rules correctly (e.g. verb tenses, subject \ verb agreement, pronouns, articles, conjunctions, prepositions and plural form).
- Apply correct sentence structures.
- Use precise and correct word forms.
- Use correct and appropriate idioms and expressions.
- Write suitable introduction and conclusion relevant to the content of the topic.
- Develop a body that contains one central idea and enough supporting details and examples.
- Use transition words and phrases, lexical connectors and adequate coherence marks.

Content of the Program

The topics chosen for the program were selected from books and studies enriched with topics that motivate students. The program contained variety of topics, situations and discussions designed for developing EFL creative writing skills and attitudes toward writing. They were suitable for the third-year students enrolled in English section at Benha Faculty of Education such as: Harmer (2001), Zimmerman (2002), Harmer (2007), Dabbagh & Kitsantas (2012), Kitsantas (2013) and Teng (2020).

Framework of the Program

The treatment was implemented during the first semester of the academic year 2021-2022. The researcher met her students for three hours per week for ten weeks and also communicated with them via what's app messages, zoom application and Microsoft teams. Week (1) was used for pre-testing and week (10) was used for post testing. Each session was devoted to the following: introduction, objectives, procedures, the role of the researcher and students and finally the performance. During the instructional procedures, different sessions had different learning goals and different methods were applied.

The program was taught to the study participants by the researcher herself. It lasted ten weeks with twenty instructional sessions and each session lasted for 90 minutes. At the beginning of the program, the researcher introduced to the students what they are going to do. First, she told them about the objectives of the program and what they are supposed to gain as a result of their participation in the program (Goal Setting). After that she told them about the importance of EFL creative writing skills and attitudes toward writing. Then, she began to introduce the concept of blended self-regulated learning and its importance for language learning and EFL creative writing skills and attitudes towards writing.

Following the introduction of the program, the rest of the program were instructional sessions through which the EFL creative writing skills and attitudes toward writing were introduced. At the beginning of each session the researcher told students the objectives of the session, the researcher's role, the student's role, the instructional materials that will be used, the activities they will perform and ways of evaluating their progress. At the end of the each session, the researcher gave students some activities related to what they had learned in order to be sure that they mastered the skills in each session (formative evaluation). At the end of the program, the researcher assessed the students' achievement after implementing the program using EFL creative writing skills test and attitudes towards writing scale (summative evaluation).

Training Procedures of the Program

The program went through four stages as mentioned by Zimmerman (2002), Kitsantas (2013) and Teng (2020).

Stage (1): Orientation Stage

- The researcher tried to make the students familiar with the program.
- She created Whatsapp and Facebook group as ways of communication technology devices in order to communicate with her students during conducting the program. She also used zoom application and Microsoft teams for communicating with her students.

Stage (2): Forethought

2.1. Observation

- Students are exposed to the task (creative writing task) through presenting model for them from the researcher herself, YouTube, or any website.
- The model demonstrates the task to be mastered step-by-step while students observe this process. This phase of learning enables students to develop a basic understanding of the skills needed to complete the task as well as build up basic strategies and plans for learning.
- The researcher demonstrated the steps involved in learning a new skill in creative writing performance by using learning technologies.
- The researcher clearly described the different steps, discussed common mistakes and any strategies to complete the different steps of the task.
- She did these steps through using video uploads to YouTube, which allows students to watch the demonstration at their own pace or any other presentation can be downloaded into devices such as laptops or mobile phones . This makes it very convenient for learners to access information without Internet connectivity.

- The researcher used collaborative and communication tools such as social media applications (WhatsApp, Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Facebook) to model student how to solve a problem or do an assignment. Through this way, the students are provided with the opportunity to ask questions as they are observing the modeling process.

Stage (3): Performance Stage

3.1. Emulation

- Students are instructed to emulate the task that was demonstrated by the model. In this phase, students are provided with support, encouragement and feedback from peers and instructors.
- The researcher divided her students into five groups and scheduled online sessions with each group so that students can emulate a learning task while the researcher can observe and provide feedback on their performance. This allowed students to practice the modeled procedures with careful supervision from the researcher.
- The researcher anticipated that students may experience difficulty with accurately modeling the procedures and provided extensive feedback and guidance to students. She closely monitored student performance and engagement.

3.2. Self- Control

- Students move beyond just emulation and begin to practice the skills independently.
- Students focus on mastering the different steps of the learning task and carefully monitor their progress towards mastery.
- At this stage, students are focusing more on process oriented goals than outcome goals.
- The researcher set up Microsoft Teams class and provided several examples of the assignment to expose students to different strategies while they are practicing on their own.

- The researcher allowed students to practice the procedures independently with limited supervision. They performed the tasks independently and sent them to the researcher through Microsoft teams or Whatsapp group.

Stage (4): Self- Reflection

- Students shifted from setting process-oriented goals to more outcome-oriented goals. Because students have mastered the processes associated with the given task, they can now begin on focusing their attention to outcomes.
- The students engaged in learning independently. They automatized the steps and turned their attention to outcomes. The researcher should shift from emphasizing process-related goals to outcome-related goals. She directed students on where to find reliable resources for self-study and self-improvement. The researcher was available to respond to students using collaborative and communication tools if help was needed.
- Finally, social software and social networking among groups or individuals allowed students to engage in conversational interactions that provided opportunities for feedback and self-reflection.

Findings of the Study

A. Quantitative Analysis of the Findings

The findings of the present study are presented in the light of the hypotheses of the study using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings are stated as follows:

Testing Hypothesis (1)

The first hypothesis states; there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the study participants in EFL creative writing skills on the pre and post administrations of the EFL creative writing skills test in favor of the post administration .Table (1) presents the students' mean scores, standard deviations, t-value and level of significance of the pre and post assessment of the study participants in EFL creative writing skills.

Table (1) : "t" test between the mean scores of the study participants in the pre and post assessment of the EFL Overall Creative Writing Skills

Skill	Assessment	N	Mean	S.D	T-Value	D.F	Sig.
EFL Creative Writing Skills	Pre	40	21.3000	2.50333	27.093	39	0.01
	Post		36.8500	2.10677			

Table (1) showed that the study participants outperformed in the post administration of the overall creative writing skills, where "t-value" is (**27.093**) which is significant at the (0.01) level .Thus, the first hypothesis was supported.

Testing Hypothesis (2)

The second hypothesis states ; there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants in EFL creative writing sub-skills on the pre-and post- administrations of the creative EFL writing skills test in favor of the post administration". Table (2) presents the students' mean scores, standard deviations, t - value and level of significance of the pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL creative writing sub-skills.

The second hypothesis has the following sub-hypotheses

- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants on the pre-and post-administrations of the EFL creative writing skills test measuring setting in favor of the post- administration.
- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants on the pre-and post-administrations of the EFL creative writing skills test measuring character in favor of the post- administration.
- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants on the pre-and post-administrations of the EFL creative writing skills test measuring plot in favor of the post- administration.
- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants on the pre-and post-administrations of the EFL creative writing skills test measuring theme and point of view in favor of the post- administration.

- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants in EFL grammar and sentence structure on the pre-and post- administrations of the EFL creative writing skills test in favor of the post- administration.
- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants in EFL vocabulary richness on the pre-and post- administration of the EFL creative writing skills test in favor of the post- administration.
- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants in EFL organization skills on the pre-and post- administrations of the EFL creative writing skills test in favor of the post- administration.

Table (2): "t" test between the mean scores of the study participants in the post assessment of the EFL creative writing Sub-Skills

Skills	Assessment	N	Mean	S.D	T-Value	D.F	Sig.
Setting	Pre	40	3.9500	.84580	15.329	39	0.01
	Post		7.0250	.83166			
Character	Pre	40	2.8250	.63599	15.910	39	
	Post		4.8750	.64798			
Plot	Pre	40	2.7750	.69752	12.631	39	
	Post		4.6500	.83359			
Theme and point of view	Pre	40	1.3250	0.47434	13.633	39	
	Post		2.4750	0.50574			
Grammar and sentence structure	Pre	40	3.8000	.64847	7.381	39	
	Post		5.0250	.61966			
Vocabulary Richness	Pre	40	3.1000	.77790	15.609	39	
	Post		5.0750	.72986			
Organization Skills	Pre	40	3.5250	.64001	24.895	39	
	Post		7.7250	.93336			

Thus, table (2) indicated that the study participants were much better in the post administration than the pre administration in EFL creative writing sub-skills where "t" value is (15.329) for setting, (15.910) for character, (12.631) for plot, (13.633) for theme and point of view, (7.381) for grammar and sentence structure (15.609) for vocabulary richness and (24.895) for organization skills which is significant at the (0.01) level. Therefore, the second hypothesis was confirmed.

Testing Hypothesis (3)

The third hypothesis states that; there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants in attitudes toward writing on the pre-and post- administrations of the attitudes towards writing scale in favor of the post-administration. Table (3) presents the students' mean scores, standard deviations, t-value and level of significance of the pre and post assessment of the study participants in attitudes towards writing.

Table (3): "t" test between the mean scores of the study participants in the post administration of the attitudes toward writing

Item	Assessment	N	Mean	S.D	T-Value	D.F	Sig.
Attitudes toward writing	Pre	40	119.2500	33.35032	10.180	39	0.01
	Post		178.8750	13.17960			

Table (3) indicated that the mean scores of the study participants on the pre administration are lower than that of the post administration, where "t-value" is (10.180) which is significant at the (0.01) level. Thus, the third hypothesis was supported. Before implementing the program, most of the students were not motivated enough and avoided writing. They had negative attitudes toward writing. After implementing the program, they became motivated, confident and enjoyed writing. Therefore, the third hypothesis was confirmed.

B . Qualitative Analysis of the Findings

The results of the qualitative analysis related to study groups' performance on the creative writing skills are clarified according to their actual usage of the creative writing skills (the character, setting , the plot, the theme and point of view) when answering the EFL creative writing skills test. It can be noted that, writing is the most difficult skill for most students. Students often have difficulty in presenting their ideas into the target language because they are not accustomed to express ideas based on their sensual experiences (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touching) in writing. They are afraid of being corrected by their teacher and this always leads them to avoid writing. They became unmotivated to write and their self- confidence decreased.

At the beginning of the program, the students were afraid of writing in general and creative writing particularly. They had problems in presenting their ideas and their writing was full of grammar mistakes and the ideas were disorganized. They also had problems in describing the events and the characters while writing their short stories. They did not organize the events of the short story. The ideas and the scenes were badly arranged with no sense of order. They did not use enough details to highlight the theme and the topic of the short story. They wrote a short story with no theme and sometimes with no title. In their writing, they did not present their point of view. Their writing lacked the skill of organization. They also used unrelated vocabulary and irreverent words and no sentence variety. They lacked sensory language.

After participating in blended self-regulated learning based program, students gained more confidence and began to write in a better way. They used suitable vocabulary and expressions while presenting their ideas. They organized and arranged the events of their short stories and described the events in a good way. They also began their short story by writing a theme and gave title to it. They expressed their point of view while writing. They began to use their senses and expressed about them in writing (used sensory language in a good way).In the interview data, seven students had similar positive reaction towards using blended self-regulated learning based

program, they clarified that in blended self-regulated learning based program, everyone is contributing to move forward in a clear direction. Everyone worked to achieve common and shared goals. They also worked together, collaborating and co-operating to make progress.

Implementing blended self-regulated learning based program provided student teachers with English vocabulary and expressions needed for creative writing. To understand how students perceived the importance of blended self-regulated learning based program in developing EFL creative writing skills and attitudes toward writing, some interview questions were asked. Examples from the researcher's transcripts provided insight into the students' perception about the activities in blended self-regulated learning based program. Students clarified that their creative writing skills were improved because of the various activities that increased their desire to write. Therefore, it can be suggested that the steps of blended self-regulated learning included activities and tasks that are effective in improving EFL creative writing skills and attitudes towards writing. The students' views in this regard are as follows:

Student (1): Blended self-regulated learning helped me to write fluently and generate more related ideas clearly .Help-seeking whether online or offline helped me to understand any ambiguous ideas.

Student (2): Through using blended self-regulated learning based program, I learnt well by doing creative writing assignments online and offline.It helped me a lot in developing my time management skills.

Student (3): Blended self-regulated learning based program was an excellent tool for manipulating and combining words to form longer units of meaning. Really, it helped me a lot in writing.

Student (4): In the past, I did not participate in any writing activity, writing was demotivating for me. After participating in blended self-regulated learning based program activities, I preferred writing. It made the learning experience better for me. Moreover, I learnt well by working with my colleagues in

Edmodo and WhatsApp because we could discuss any question related to creative writing tasks.

Student (5): Blended self-regulated learning based program helped me in my writing. Really, it improved my writing performance. I felt motivated and had self-autonomy while learning, because the program provided me with the freedom in where, when and how to learn. Really, I became an independent learner and I was very happy to participate in creative writing activity. It helped me to use my imagination and write freely about what I want.

Student (6): The program included different activities that developed my language skills and system. In addition, my negative attitudes towards writing in English changed and I become motivated to write essays more and more. I have positive attitudes toward writing.

Student (7): Participating in blended self-regulated learning based program helped in changing my negative feelings and attitudes about writing and became more motivated and interested to practice writing.

For example, regarding "character ", student (1) revealed that before participating in the program, they did not go in-depth with description. They did not use any characterization strategies; she only introduced the characters by their names. After participation, they used different characterization techniques. They introduced the characters by their actions, techniques. Moreover, their skills in setting are developed. Before the experiment, their use of setting was unclear. They described the setting using few details. After the experiment, their use of setting was clear. They described the setting using many descriptive words to tell when and where the story took place. They used all the five senses details in their writing of the short story. Regarding the plot of the short story before participating in the program, they presented a confusing sequence of events. They have difficulty in developing the five elements of plot. They focused on one type of plot in their writing. After the participation, they included

the most of the elements of the plot. They also presented events that create clear narrative and developed the plot.

Concerning the theme, before the experiment, the students used few details to highlight the theme of the story. They wrote a story with no theme. Their stories lacked the meaning or the purpose. After the experiment, the students used more details to highlight the theme of the story. They wrote their short stories with specific theme and title. In addition, they use many descriptive details when clarifying the theme of the story. Their short stories stated clear themes. Regarding the point of view, the students wrote their short stories with no clear point of view. After participating in the program, they wrote short stories with clear point of views. Moreover, their skills in vocabulary and grammar developed through participating the blended self-regulated learning program.

Discussion of the Results

The primary purpose of the study was to develop EFL creative writing skills and attitudes towards writing among the third -year students enrolled in English section at Benha Faculty of Education through using blended self-regulated learning based program. The program included variety of tasks and activities to help students enhance their EFL creative writing skills and attitudes toward writing. The results of the study revealed that the program proved to be statistically and educationally significant in developing EFL creative writing skills and attitudes toward writing among the third -year students enrolled in English section at Benha Faculty of Education.

It can be clarified that using blended self-regulated learning based program in language teaching in general and in EFL creative writing skills in particular helped to increase student teachers' EFL creative writing skills and attitudes toward writing. In addition, blended self-regulated learning based program highlighted the role of various activities in enhancing EFL creative writing skills and attitudes toward writing. The use of blended self-regulated learning based program particularly in language classroom provided non-threatening and motivating learning environment which considered one of the essentials of language learning. It offered various means such as

animation, pictures when presenting the information. This made learning more interactive, interesting and fun.

After implementing the program, students' motivation increased when learning creative writing skills through blended self-regulated learning based program. They stated that conducting tasks through using blended self-regulated learning helped them to spend more time in planning and revising their creative writing tasks and pay more attention to sentence structure. They become more careful about word choice and spelling. Therefore, their grammar skill improved and they had the ability to learn new vocabulary. These results are consistent with Şenel (2018) who clarified that students learn different kinds of strategies to create an original product. It is an opportunity to help them identify their audience and build awareness of the genre structure. Thus, they were provided with the chance to share their ideas and sentences with their friends during the writing stage from time to time.

It can be noted that students made several mistakes in their creative writing. When students attempted the first writing, they did not brainstorm ideas for their writing, their topic sentences were not stated clearly and they did not edit their paragraphs. Consequently, their first writing's performance was poor compared to the second one. After participating in the program, students got very high awareness of the writing process. They started to value the effectiveness of having a very good plan before writing. At the forethought stage, students used different activities in order to develop their creative writing. One of these activities is using blogs. The researcher divided her students into five groups. Each group the students began to choose a topic to write a short story about. The researcher encouraged them to publish any questions online for others to answer. These questions should be related to creative writing skills. Then they received feedback from their peers. They began to discuss what they received asynchronously on blogs and their Facebook group and synchronously through conducting face to face discussion. After that they combined notes related to creative writing skills. It can be noted that in this stage, the students used three self-regulatory processes: self-monitoring, self-reflection and self-efficacy.

At the performance stage, the students used different activities such as social networking especially (Facebook and Whatsapp). The researcher constructed five WhatsApp and Facebook groups for her students to collaborate with each other. She also constructed a group for all the participants to present the final product for each group to all their colleagues and receive comments before submitting the final product. The students also can communicate with others experts in the field if they wanted any help. Through social networking sites they could share and transfer files easily. They also had the abilities to divide the tasks between them. After that each group began to write and put into consideration the skills they wanted to develop. It can be noted that in this stage, the students used two self-regulatory processes: self-monitoring and task strategies. Also in the performance stage, the researcher encouraged her students to use social networking sites to monitor their learning by receiving feedback from their colleagues. The students also used time management strategies in order to identify their participation in online learning and face to face one. Thus, they used online calendar in communicating with their peers and assignment due dates.

During the self-reflection phase, the researcher used blogs to enhance student understanding of creative writing skills by capturing their reflections chronologically on their writing, enabling self-monitoring and self-evaluation. It allows the student as well as the researcher to visually see their progress and development. Blogs permit students to write reflectively, complete assignments, collaborate with classmates and share knowledge, enabling a true learning community. Blogs can be used as e-portfolios. At the end of this stage students' creative writing skills were developed.

Before implementing the program, student teachers encountered problems in dealing with the setting of the story and characters of the story. They cannot describe the setting clearly. They described the event of the story instead of describing the setting or the characters. After participating in the program, they described the setting in a good way. These results are consistent with El-Sweedy (2019) who

clarified in her study that participants describe what they can see, smell, hear or touch in the setting. Their descriptions include many vivid details that make the setting come to life. They used different elements of the setting such as the locale (the place where the story takes place) that can be a town, a city, a street or a house, time (when the story takes place), atmosphere, climate and geography. In addition, they begin to introduce their characters by their actions, feeling and thoughts. They use different methods of characterization such as dialogue, actions and narration. They use different types of characters in different stories.

Moreover, student teachers encountered problems in dealing with the plot of the story. They dealt with the events of the story randomly without organization. After the treatment, student teachers began to write and clarify the plot of the story in an organized way. They use different types of plots in different stories that are suitable for the theme, characters, setting and conflict. They write a story with no theme and with no title. After participating in the program, they write a story with a clear theme and title. After that, they use many details that highlight the theme of the story and are very appropriate. The story strongly implies and states a clear and insightful theme. Students write a story with clear narrator, telling the story from multiple perspectives. Point of view is clear. Students use different point of view. They also write different stories from different eyes (Innocent Eye, stream of consciousness).

Moreover, the researcher introduced the activities and tasks to the students, modeled them in front of them and trained in using these activities and tasks while writing. Students began to generate novel ideas and large numbers of information while writing. They use the grammatical rules correctly. Moreover, Students began to organize the content at the level of each paragraph to reflect new information and topics; use language effectively to set the genre of writing; use the creative writing genre; convey the meaning correctly and clearly; use precise, correct word forms; and use correct and appropriate idioms and expressions. Moreover, students began to use suitable

words and expressions that helped them in writing their short stories, their skill in vocabulary choice improved. These results are consistent with El-Sweedy (2019) who clarified that students used many rhetoric techniques that are appropriate to make meaning clearer and characters and expressions are more vivid and rich. They also used very rich, precise and appealing vocabulary (sensory language) correctly, and well-varied sentences structures.

Throughout the program, there was a focus on developing students' EFL organization skills through introducing activities and tasks to the students. The researcher modeled the activities and tasks in front of the students and trained in using these activities and tasks while writing. This result may be due to the activities used in the program such as; pair work, group work, team work, role play, modeling and discussions between students. These activities helped students to improve their EFL organization skills. They began to set the purpose of writing topic; communicate the ideas and the purpose of writing clearly to the reader and write appropriately for the intended audience (the reader); communicate the ideas for the audience and write identified sentences in the paragraphs; write minimum 15 sentences for each paragraph in the essay for example and suitable introduction relevant to the content of the topic and develop a body that contains one central idea and enough supporting details and examples.

Blended self-regulated learning based program included different activities that helped students in developing their creative writing and attitudes toward writing. These activities also helped them to use suitable conclusion and transitions and adequate coherence marks; set the topic sentence and conclusion clearly and the beginning, middle and end of the paragraph definitely; use logical transitions for ensuring smooth of ideas and logical sequence of sentences or ideas; be familiar with lexical connectors and transitional words or phrases and combine sentences to create effective paragraph. In addition, Mobile assisted tasks helped in enhancing students' positive attitude towards writing and motivating them to be actively engaged in the

writing instruction and quality. These results are consistent with Ismail & Albakri (2012).

It can be noted that self-regulation is an active, constructive process whereby students are capable of setting goals and then plan, monitor, regulate and control cognition, motivation, behaviour and context, for the attainment of personal goals. These results are consistent with Arana (2018)'s study. She confirmed in her study the relation between self-regulation and EFL writing in blended environment. She also examined the instructional effects of self-regulated learning on a comprehensive set of measures, including content knowledge comprehension, summarization of main ideas, and essay writing. The results revealed that self-regulated learning is effective in developing reading and writing performance.

Throughout the program, the researcher used various online teaching strategies for developing EFL creative writing skills and attitudes towards writing. The researcher used "Zoom Application" as an online platform in order to perform online lecture sessions. Using Zoom is more interactive and helps the researcher to monitor her students' participation and can actively involve them by questioning and soliciting questions. Moreover, the researcher assigned topics for creative writing assignment to students and can ask them to submit before a deadline. Students can submit the written assignments using email or other e-platform like Microsoft teams or telegram. She also used Google Docs for engaging her students in collaborative writing where a group of students can contribute for a single topic both synchronously and asynchronously. She can monitor students' participation and will also be able to identify and evaluate individual student contributions. These results are consistent with Zayapragassarazan (2020) who confirmed the effectiveness of the online engagement strategies in developing the language skills.

It can be concluded that blended self-regulated learning activities provided students with a very safe and a friendly environment where they interacted with each other, brainstormed ideas and commented on various writings. As the students had very limited contact hours in

the lecture, these activities gave them extra time to practice using English outside the classroom. Students also felt very comfortable and confident enough.

Conclusion

The results of the study revealed that the participants' EFL creative writing skills developed after implementing blended self-regulated learning based program. In addition, their attitudes toward writing increased, they became much more motivated and encouraged to express their own confidently without fearing. The effectiveness of blended self-regulated learning based program. may be due to the various activities, tasks and strategies the researcher presented to the students. Through the implementation of blended self-regulated learning based program, major findings of the study were considered as the students' chances for learning by doing and experiences, their belief for better learning and development of learning skills with fun and enjoyment. Moreover, their emphasis on certain personal developments such as thinking, self-confidence, communication skills and team spirit and their consideration of instructor as a guide for learning.

Creative writing tasks are different from writing tasks found in many ELT materials, where students are required to use the sentence structure to write about familiar events. In such cases, the presence of a familiar topic could lead students to retrieve known meaning rather than generating imaginative responses, constructing new and surprising meaning. Erdogan (2013) indicates that most students have negative opinions about writing because of the experiences that they lived before and writing is a skill that can be acquired hard and late. At the basis of negative feeling, opinion and attitudes of the students towards writing, also there lies that students not being motivated enough to writing. As a result, students need to be motivated in order to begin, continue and complete the writing through using suitable methods, techniques or approaches. These methods, approaches and techniques are student centered and should be used to help students develop their writing skills and positive attitudes towards writing.

It can be said that blended self-regulated learning based program is one of the best approaches to develop student teachers' EFL creative writing skills and the attitudes towards writing. It plays an effective role in developing EFL grammar and writing performance. SRL is important in blended learning environments, which requires teachers to gain insight into their students' SRL skills to be able to adapt their teaching methods and materials to provide students with tailored support. Blended learning environments provided students with the opportunity to regulate their blended context. Encouraging students to use more time management and self-evaluation strategies could be productive and teachers could help students manage their schedules by asking them to be transparent about their time via online planning. Self-evaluation could also be encouraged via online prompts and tasks in which students have to evaluate themselves or create lists of possible strategies to evaluate themselves are options. Thus, self-regulated learning is a critical variable for success, especially in blended education as Vanslambrouck, et al.,(2019) clarified in their study .

With the development of hypermedia and internet, the web-based learning has highlighted as an ideal and popular educational method. However, although web-based environment provides students with more flexibility to learn, students who are accustomed to the traditional didactic teaching may have problems to adapt to web-based learning. It can be noted that learners tend to lack willingness, focus and skills to participate and be effectively engaged in self-regulated web-based learning. Lili (2013) clarified that self-regulated web-based learning poses many great challenges to both students and instructors. Thus it is important to find effective strategies to promote and improve the self-regulated learning in web-based learning environments. The social cognitive perspective of self-regulated learning suggests that effective learning is determined by the interactions among personal, behavioral and environmental influences. It can be noted that learners' motivation, learning strategies and feedback behaviors are the major developing strategies of self-regulated web-based learning.

In conclusion, when considering the advantages and positive outcomes of the program, it is clear that the program proved developing student teachers' EFL creative writing skills and the attitudes towards writing. Thus, blended self-regulated learning based program is more successful than the traditional teaching.

Recommendations of the Study

In the light of previous results, the following recommendations could be presented:

- English language teacher should be trained on using blended self-regulated learning while teaching English to their students at different educational stages.
- English language teacher should emphasize the development of the students' creative writing skills in the early educational stages to develop them in the following stages.
- Teachers should be exposed to a qualified in-service training program with regard to creative writing techniques.
- Curriculum designers should make use of blended self-regulated learning when designing English language courses and overcoming any teaching or learning problems.

Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the findings of the present research, the following implications for further research are suggested:-

- The effectiveness of blended self-regulated learning based program in English language learning among student teachers at University level.
- The influence of blended self-regulated learning based program on other language skills such as listening, speaking and reading.
- The effectiveness of blended self-regulated learning based program in enhancing students' linguistic competence.
- The effect of using other strategies on developing students' EFL creative writing skills, attitudes toward writing.

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