

## **Indonesian University EFL Learners' Perspectives toward Self-Assessment in Writing Processes**

**Kristian Florenso Wijaya**

[kristianwijaya500@gmail.com](mailto:kristianwijaya500@gmail.com)

**Cita Hati International School, Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

Concerning the sophisticated, contextual, and valid development of language learning assessment in EFL writing fields, it is highly recommended for EFL teachers to advance their learners' writing skills progression under the supervision of self-assessment. It has been a widespread belief by previous researchers that the continual utilization of self-assessment in writing learning processes can potentially breed more proficient and independent writers. Coupled with this premise, this present small-scale qualitative study was conducted to profoundly investigate Indonesian university EFL learners' specific perceptions toward self-assessment in writing learning dynamics with the help of qualitative content analysis. 10 online Likert-scale questionnaire items along with 5 open-ended written narrative inquiry questions were distributed to 15 English Education Master Students, Sanata Dharma University. The obtained research results unfolded that the ineluctability of self-assessment activities is pivotal in breeding more professional EFL writers capable of creating more qualified writing products. For the further advancement of this current investigation, future studies are strongly prompted to thoroughly involve ample research participants to be accompanied by more comprehensive research instruments.

***Keywords:** self-assessment, EFL writing processes, qualitative content analysis*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the EFL realm, one of the essential skills that should be mastered fully by our modern learners is writing. In the Indonesian EFL learning context itself, it has been a high demand that qualified writing competency is a must for university learners to accomplish various college courses for a better purpose. Taufiqulloh (2014) postulates that all university EFL learners are commissioned to possess more robust writing skills at the onset of their college life unless they will encounter varied frustrating learning experiences throughout the chosen disciplines. This issue has simultaneously induced more acute impediments in this archipelago when discerning the ubiquitous fact that university EFL learners are easily demotivated while confronting a vast range of writing learning barriers such as organization, grammar, dictions, and ideas they need to incorporate in their designated writing products. This perspective is in line with the finding of Taufiqulloh, Yuvita, and Sulistianingsih (2018) discovered that the majority of Indonesian university EFL learners did not exhibit a higher level of writing endeavor due to the complex nature of writing learning dynamics requiring them to inculcate richer vocabulary, advanced writing knowledge, and appropriate deliverance to the wider audience. In the same respect, another taxing obstruction hindering

Indonesian EFL learners in developing their writing competencies to the utmost potentials is the lack of teachers' supports. It has been a common ground that EFL writing instructors in our nation solely become more product-oriented than appraising the ongoing writing learning enterprises learners have already strived for. As a result, learners only obtain the written scores without becoming more aware of the particular mistakes forming in their writing results. This issue is in partnership with the theory of one-way writing assessment adduced by Ratminingsih, Marhaeni, and Vigayanti (2018) stating that since a considerable number of Indonesian EFL writing instructors intensively accentuate more exhaustive concern on the final writing products produced by their learners, the fruitful writing learning outcomes and holistic writing skills growth cannot be fully attained by them.

To better overcome all these aforementioned writing learning hurdles, authentic writing assessment is one of the best and rewarding pathways for EFL teachers to wholly gauge their learners' real-time as well as contextual writing competencies. This may be due to the nature of this assessment necessitating learners to constantly hone their writing skills in obvious writing learning trajectories and tangibly internalize those obtained specific writing competencies in everyday real-life events. This aforesaid description is closely interlinked with the theory of authentic writing learning assessment proposed by Marhaeni (2015) avowing that authentic writing assessment can bring about a wider array of advantageous values for learners' writing motivation along with skills development since they are continually requested to incorporate all the attained knowledge in the manifestation of apparent writing practices. Furthermore, one of the precise forms of authentic writing assessments inextricably associated with nowadays EFL writing learning contexts in colleges is self-assessment. By conducting continual self-assessment writing practices, Indonesian university EFL learners are capable of profoundly reflect on their writing products, improve their writing skills more prolifically, and navigate their future writing learning venture in a better direction. This argumentation is tightly interwoven with the theory of self-assessment devised by Buyukkarci (2014) avers that the appropriate utilization of self-assessment will potentially navigate the present writing learning enterprises in a more meaningful manner due to the constant evaluative nature of this assessment in a way that learners are fully empowered to elevate their writing competencies, volition, and perspectives.

It is also worth emphasizing that in the optimal presence of self-assessment, university EFL learners can also transfigure into more self-regulated writers ingraining a higher level of confidence, awareness, and positive writing perceptions. These above-explained conceptions are germane to the theory of self-assessment put forward by Butler (2018) asserting that university EFL learners having been consistently exposed to self-assessment will have more tendency to transform into more autonomous writers confidently participate in every challenging writing learning dynamic. All these rewarding EFL learning merits are holistically obtained since learners engaging in self-assessment processes are more prone to make a clearer discernment toward the writing products they have enacted. Simply saying, learners are capable of exerting a vast range of appropriate writing learning actions in an attempt to generate high-quality writing products after observing specific aspects in breeding meaningful writing results. Spiller (2012) theorized that it is because of self-assessment EFL learners can yield more meaning-making writing products by the end of writing sessions since every evaluative action is pondered more conscientiously by them leading them to exactly realize how to fine-tune their writing results. The soundness of self-assessment in EFL writing learning venture is also determined by the proactive learners' evaluative participations. Meaning to say, learners have to play more active roles in judging, evaluating, monitoring, and planning on the particular topics they are going to write. By doing so, they

are more liable to bridge the huge gap between their prior and existing understanding of the targeted subject-specific matters resulted in a more gratifying writing learning progression. This line of perspective has mutually adhered with the theory of self-assessment advantage propounded by Weisi and Karimi (2013) strongly suggesting university EFL learners exhibiting more proactive writing learning behaviors in the guidance of self-assessment to increasingly maximize their desired writing learning outcomes as well as prolifically cultivate a more exhaustive understanding of the chosen writing topics. To fully promote these positive writing learning climates, EFL teachers are also prompted to rejuvenate their existing roles as supportive writing learning facilitators always readily helping learners to forge their writing awareness, objectives, concerns, and preferences to reach the targeted writing learning benefits. Brown and Harris (2013) consented that it is of crucial importance for EFL teachers to play their roles as supportive writing learning facilitators and loyal counselors in the maximization of self-assessment implementations to sustainably foster learners' writing learning accountability directing them to seize more satisfying writing learning outcomes. In like manner, EFL teachers are jointly advocated to conduct more in-depth need analysis before applying self-assessment in diverse wide-ranging writing classroom contexts to familiarize themselves with the specific writing learning objectives and hardships generally undergone by learners. By carrying out this careful-planned analysis, teachers can devise ample effective writing solutions compatible with their learners' writing learning situations. In the same line of argument, Nation and Macalister (2019) assert that it is extremely pivotal for EFL teachers to run more exhaustive need analysis before implementing self-assessment in their writing classes to better inform learners concerning their strengths along with weaknesses beneficial to promote high-quality, pleasurable, and meaningful writing learning enterprises in the upcoming events.

To restate, since a robust construction of self-regulation levels will lead EFL learners to fully obtain more gratifying language learning outcomes as well as achievements, it is of critical importance for language teachers to train their learners to be more strategic thinkers, planners, and managers for the ongoing learning dynamics. By becoming more strategic academicians, EFL learners will be more capable of exhaustively reflecting on their ongoing learning venture leading them to capitalize on various strategies beneficial to heighten their learning effectiveness. This argument is closely correlated with the advantageous value of self-regulation theory invented by Lavasani, Mirhosseini, Hejazi, and Davoodi (2011) arguing that the exuberant proliferation of self-regulated learning behavior can bring about a significant degree of benefits for EFL learners in terms of becoming more autonomous, responsible, and proactive academicians desirous of magnifying their learning outcomes by vehemently controlling their learning circumstances as well as expendable actions. As such, strategic EFL academicians can also be presumably assumed as the figures capable of harnessing a vast range of second language learning strategies more flexibly in responding to the current learning obstacles they are facing. This kind of adaptive attitude emerged since these self-regulated learners uphold a strong contention that diverse wide-ranging of employed learning strategies will lead them to be more innovative, creative, and perseverance academicians readily to adapt themselves toward following unpredictable learning situations. This above-explained perspective is compatible with self-regulated EFL learners theory devised by Yilmaz (2010) articulates that EFL learners infusing more robust growth of self-regulation are more liable to harness a considerable number of variegated language learning strategies harmonious with their existent learning vicinities since they strongly believe that these chosen appropriate strategies can guide them supportively to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

There are still plethoras of advantageous values potentially promoted by self-assessment internalization in EFL writing learning dynamics. Through the appropriate use of this student-centered writing learning approach, learners will be more capable of constantly exhibiting a higher level of advanced writing learning performances amid adverse writing learning circumstances. Nielsen (2014) unfolded that most university EFL learners are capable of maintaining their best writing performances in the light of self-assessment since they heed more profound concern on developing their writing progress gradually. Self-assessment can also elevate learners' higher-order thinking, metacognitive, and self-regulatory skills since they are constantly advised to reflect on their writing products critically based on the facts as well as writing conventions approved globally. Sadeghi et al., (2017) strongly encouraged globalized EFL teachers to introduce their learners with self-assessment at the onset of writing learning processes to progressively improve their critical thinking skills, metacognitive awareness, and learning independence. The thoroughness of self-assessment advantageous values and EFL writing achievements can also potentially bring about more conducive, efficient, and time-saving writing learning activities where learners can steadily focus on enhancing their writing skills, motivation, and products harmonious with the expected learning outcomes. Amo and Jareno (2011) highly advocated that the majority of EFL teachers and learners infuse more positive perceptions on the use of self-assessment in variegated writing classroom vicinities due to the pleasurable as well as stress-free nature of this student-centered learning approach. Coupled with this fact, self-assessment can intensively elevate EFL learners' writing learning responsibility since they are commissioned to consistently showcase a greater degree of reliability while evaluating their writing products. Mazloomi and Khabiri (2016) exclaimed that it is vitally essential for worldwide EFL teachers to impart more mushrooming attention to the more proper utilization of self-assessment in their writing learning dynamics to foster learners' writing learning responsibility into the utmost levels.

There are 4 relevant previous studies closely associated with this prospective study. The first study was conducted by Nawas (2020) revealed that the majority of Indonesian university EFL learners encountered serious hurdles while engaging in self-assessment writing activities since they did not believe in their evaluative capabilities. Abas and Aziz (2018) unveiled that most Indonesian university EFL learners ingrained more robust writing learning desires and improved their writing skills progressively after being exposed to the use of authentic writing assessment. In another investigation, Warni (2016) highly encouraged globalized EFL teachers to sustainably address more supportive writing learning supports for all learners to ensure the desired writing learning objectives come into the realization. Suherman (2019) strongly advocated Indonesian EFL teachers provide better, contextual, and compatible writing learning scaffolding instructions for learners by critically informing their particular writing strengths along with weaknesses to promote more gratifying writing learning outcomes for them.

The underlying reason motivating the researcher to run this present small-scale qualitative study is to better promote more rewarding insights for Indonesian ELT experts, educators, practitioners, and policy-makers concerning the importance of self-assessment implementations in diverse wide-ranging writing classroom circumstances. English Education Master Students were the participants taking part in this study since they have been trained in harnessing the accurate usage of self-assessment in varied writing tasks during their study journey. Thus, the researcher felt assured that the obtained research results could shed more enlightenment for Indonesian ELT parties regarding the more proper utilization of self-assessment through various writing learning dynamics resulted in more

holistic writing learning practices that may happen in the future EFL learning enterprises. To fulfill this research objectivity, one following research problem was posed: (1) how do Indonesian university EFL learners value the use of self-assessment in their writing processes?

## **METHODS**

The researcher runs this qualitative investigation under the guidance of qualitative content analysis to obtain more specific portrayals out of the observed life events. Mayring (2014) articulates that the major advantage of harnessing qualitative content analysis is to enable the researchers to attain the most vivid depictions concerning the intended specific phenomenon. To contribute to this area of study, the researcher prepared 10 online Likert-scale questionnaire items to be distributed to 15 English Education Master Students batch 2019, Sanata Dharma University concerning their specific perspectives they uphold while harnessing self-assessment in various writing learning activities. To corroborate this first data, the researcher also made use of 5 open-ended written narrative inquiry questions investigating more exhaustively the way English Education Master Students value the utilities of self-assessment during their writing learning journey. By relying on this second research instrument, more trustworthy data could potentially be obtained by the researcher due to the truthful, authentic, and judicious sharing disseminated by the targeted research participants. Clandinin and Caine (2013) theorize that with the support of open-ended written narrative inquiry questions, more robust data gathering processes can be ensured since the research participants have extensive freedom to openly share their tangible stories. The major aim of selecting graduate university EFL learners as the participants of this study is they have been trained intensively in harnessing self-assessment whenever they participate in a wide variety of writing learning processes. Considering the ages, maturity, and richer experiences gained by these adult learners, it is conceivable to be hypothesized here that self-assessment had transfigured them to be more independent, critical, and competent writers. During the online data gathering processes, the researcher made use of Google Form in distributing 10 Likert-scale questionnaire items for the targeted research participants. While Whatsapp application was also harnessed to openly distribute 5 open-ended written narrative inquiry questions for randomly chosen 3 interviewees derived from similar populations.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section, the researcher attempted to thoroughly expound all the obtained findings disseminated by the research participants taking part in this study. More specifically, there are 2 themes concluded from the taken research results namely: (1) Self-assessment leads EFL learners to become more professional writers and (2) Self-assessment enables EFL learners to yield more qualified writing products.

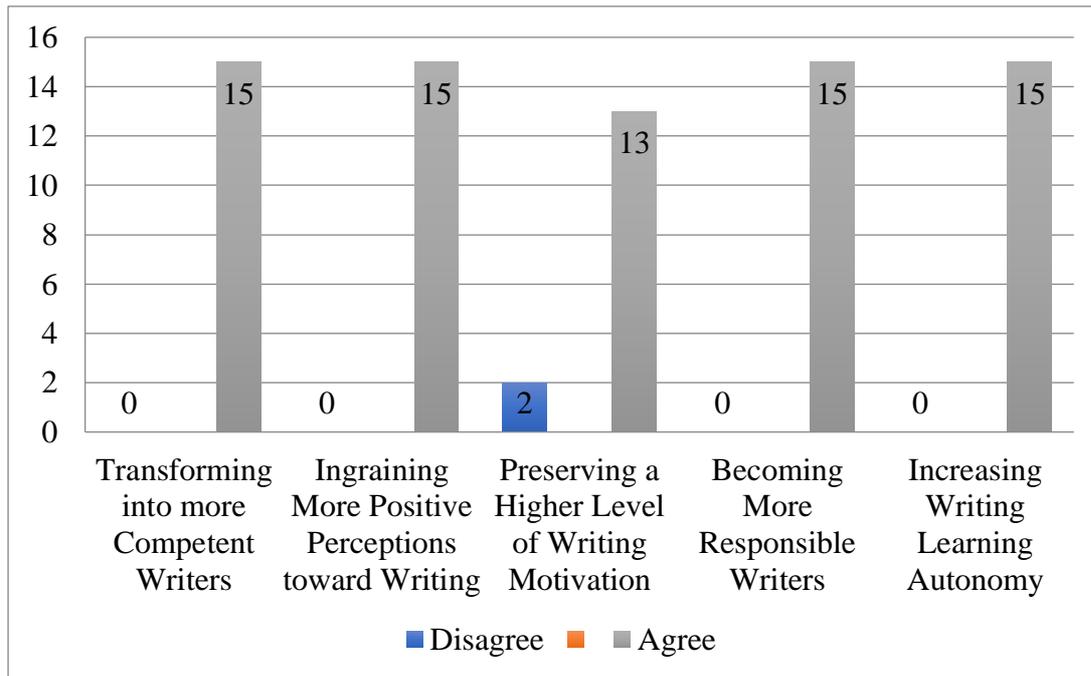


Figure 1.1: Self-Assessment Leads EFL Learners to Become More Professional Writers (97% Participants Agree)

With a detailed look at the above-mentioned table, it can be phrased that a substantial number of graduate university EFL learners had progressively transfigured into more professional writers after being immersed in self-assessment activities. As can be noticed from the first strand of finding, 15 participants strongly agreed that the continual implementation of self-assessment allowed them to become more proficient EFL writers. This positive matter happened since self-assessment constantly required them to conduct more profound evaluation toward their finished writing projects by devising a wide array of effective solutions to create more high-quality works in the end of writing session. A similar research result had also been acquired by Heidarian (2016) revealing that the majority of university EFL learners had progressively fostered their targeted writing competencies in the light of self-assessment since they were strongly motivated to evaluate their writing products in an in-depth manner. In the same respect, 15 participants also consented that after proactively engaging in self-assessment activities, they had instilled a higher degree of positive perceptions toward EFL writing learning dynamics. This positive value was marked by their potent willingness to constantly elevate the targeted writing competencies, even under the adverse writing learning circumstances. By infusing this positive premise, these participants had simultaneously transfigured into more life-long writers during their academic life. Anchored from this second research result, Fristiara et al., (2018) highly motivated EFL teachers all around the globe to continuously implement self-assessment technique as one of the learning approaches in their writing classes to optimize learners' writing learning processes potentially promoting life-long learning behaviours for them. Three chosen interviewees also shared similar notions in the following lines.

[Interviewee 1: *I do believe that self-assessment can improve my writing skills because we can learn from our mistakes.*]

[Interviewee 2: *Self-assessment is the first thing that we can do before we show our writing to our peers or lecturer. Through self-assessment I can improve my writing first before I share to my college.*]

[Interviewee 3: *Yes, I believe that self-assessment will guide me in the learning process because I can monitor my writing progress and manage myself to be a self-regulated writer.*]

The constant utilization of self-assessment can potentially guarantee a considerable improvement of EFL learners' writing motivation. There were 13 out of 15 participants showed their agreement to this third finding. However, it takes extensive time for this core benefit to emerge since language teachers are crucially demanded to promote more holistic, appropriate, and real-time self-assessment activities in varied writing classroom vicinities. By fully integrating all these essential elements, EFL learners will be more highly encouraged to deal with a vast range of laborious writing learning challenges directing them to be more resilient writers. This aforesaid argumentation is inextricably associated with the finding of Mazloomi and Khabiri (2016) strongly encouraging worldwide EFL teachers to incorporate a more accurate, contextual, and authentic self-assessment activities compatible with existing learners' writing learning conditions to simultaneously elevate their self-confidence, motivation, and preparedness in confronting various writing tasks. In the long run, it is also becoming progressively important for language teachers to internalize self-assessment activities at the onset of writing learning enterprises to gradually establish a higher level of writing learning responsibility within their learners. 15 participants exhibited their agreement with this fourth finding. It is optimally understandable at the same time that the suitable utilization of self-assessment can cultivate EFL learners' writing learning responsibility since they are urgently commissioned to ceaselessly plan, monitor, and reflect on their existing writing learning processes in the light of more holistic as well as critical frameworks. These above-explained conceptions were also confirmed by the attained finding of Ratminingsih et al., (2018) mentioning that it is of crucially pivotal for EFL teachers to internalize self-assessment method at the commencement of writing learning venture to instill the robust construction of writing learning responsibility within learners. This positive value took place since learners could plan, monitor, and evaluate their ongoing writing learning processes in the light of higher expectations set by teachers. In the ultimate finding, all research participants strongly agreed that the judicious use of self-assessment could terrifically augment their writing learning autonomy. It is worth underscoring that the robust construction of writing learning autonomy can be fully attained by learners when they were more capable of taking controls over the specific writing learning venture they engaged. In other words, it can be stated that those autonomous learners had more tendency to employ various effective writing strategies to overcome the targeted writing learning impediments to successfully reach their writing goals. This finding agreed with the study of Panadero et al., (2012) finding out that a considerable number of university EFL learners had successfully transformed into more independent writers capable of exerting more potent controls over their taxing writing learning enterprises after being immersed into self-assessment activities. These following 3 interviewees' excerpts also shared some identical perspectives.

[Interviewee 1: *I make sure what I did wrong in previous writing projects are not repeated in the future through self-assessment. I mostly write according to what I have previously planned.*]

[Interviewee 2: *It is about self-reflection to what we write. In my opinion self-assessment is about evaluating our writing. We are trying to be aware to some parts that need to be improved, some part to be maintained to have a better writing.*]

[Interviewee 3: *This tool can be used to measure our writing performances and find our strengths and limitation in the writing process.*]

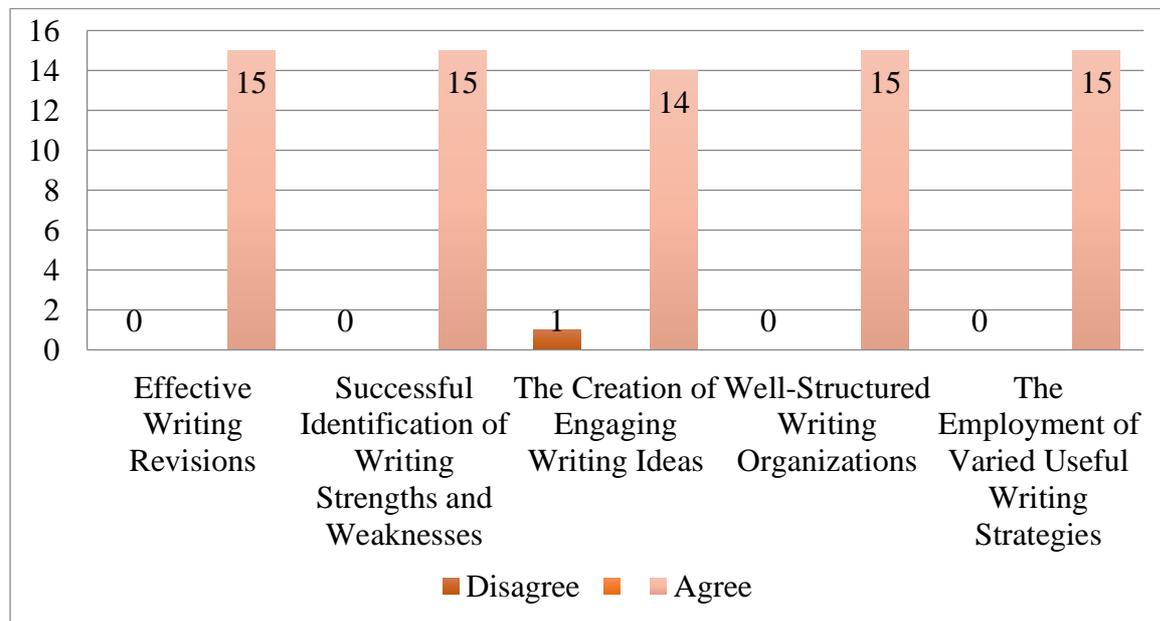


Figure 1.2: Self-Assessment Enables EFL Learners to Yield More Qualified Writing Products (99% Participants Agreed)

Concerning the depicted data forming in the above table, it can be parsed that the continuous incorporation of precise self-assessment activities will potentially allow EFL learners to generate more high-quality writing products. This assertion was well-evinced by the first strand of the finding forming in this second theme where all research participants agreed that self-assessment had supportively assisted them to better revise the existent writing products. There are a host of factors influencing this positive contention. First, under the guidance of self-assessment, EFL learners can forge their higher-order thinking and critical skills upon evaluating their writing products. Second, they showcased more proactive writing learning participations in the light of self-assessment to achieve more gratifying writing learning outcomes. These aforesaid delineations were compatible with the research results of Birjandi and Tamjid (2012) forthrightly acknowledging that the proper utilization of self-assessment in varied writing classroom contexts would bring about more positive learning influences like activating learners' higher order-thinking skills, magnifying learners' proactive learning participations, and leading them to be more critical in improving their works. Moving forward to the second finding, all research participants were also in agreement that self-assessment approach supportively helped them to specifically identify their particular writing strengths and weaknesses. By precisely noticing their specific writing strengths along with weaknesses, these participants can potentially reap more fruitful writing learning outcomes in the upcoming writing events since they know exactly the areas they need to maintain or improve to elevate their writing skills into the utmost potentials. This positive matter accorded with the study of Mungai (2020) unveiling that a great number of university EFL learners were more capable of identifying their specific writing strengths along with weaknesses after being acquainted with self-assessment activities, reciprocally resulted in more gratifying writing products as well as robust writing volition. It is worth highlighting to correlate these aforementioned conceptions with 3 interviewees' excerpts in these subsequent lines.

[Interviewee 1: *I have become more thoughtful, careful, and critical writers through self-assessment because I am told to recheck my writing for many times.*]

[Interviewee 2: *So with self-assessment in writing I can be more careful and have the opportunity to revise my writing.*]

[Interviewee 3: *To maximize the use of self-assessment, I commonly question myself with several specific questions which can help me to regulate myself better. I believe that the use of self-assessment can lead me to an opportunity to construct a meaningful writing.*]

In correlation with those above-explained perspectives, it is also interesting to discern that 14 out of 15 participants concurred that with the help of self-assessment, they would be more capable of inserting a wide array of captivating, engaging, and meaningful ideas in their writing products. Again, these rewarding writing learning values had been acquired by them since they were persistently willing to evaluate their writing outcomes in harmony with the high writing standards stipulated by teachers resulted in more qualified writing products. This line of perspective is tightly interwoven with the finding of Bing (2016) suggesting university EFL teachers introducing learners with a self-assessment approach at the onset of writing learning enterprises in order to better navigate the overall quality of their writing ideas, structure, and mechanics in a more positive direction. This positive value might occur since learners had thoroughly noticed that more exhaustive self-assessment could lead them to become more proficient writers. Moving on to the fourth finding, it is apparent to be spotted that all research participants concurred that the appropriate utilization of self-assessment could supportively assist them to produce more well-organized writing products acceptable to worldwide readers. Concerning this basic premise, EFL teachers are specifically commissioned to play their major roles as supportive writing learning facilitators, judicious counselors, and attentive listeners for their learners. By embodying these new acts, learners will feel highly supported and appreciated obviously illustrated in their well-structured writing products. These above-mentioned arguments were corroborated by the theory of Sharma et al., (2016) who theorized that under the constant supervision of self-assessment practices, EFL learners would be more capable of expounding all their written ideas more efficiently, obviously, and comprehensively due to the supportive writing learning guidance imparted by teachers. Ultimately all research participants strongly agreed that self-assessment activities had also brought about a vast array of rewarding benefits for their cognitive and metacognitive development aside from writing proficiency. These meritorious benefits emerged since they were able to plan more obvious writing learning goals, conduct more in-depth monitoring toward the onward writing learning venture, and critically reflect on the writing results they had just generated. Armed with these major writing driving forces, it can be posited that the research participants increasingly cultivate their targeted writing proficiency in a more directed, meaningful, and highly motivated manner. These aforementioned conceptions were amplified by self-assessment theory devised by Lush et al., (2020) articulating that the continuous implementation of self-assessment through diverse wide-ranging writing classroom contexts could bring about a substantial number of both cognitive and metacognitive benefits for all learners in terms of planning clearer writing objectives, monitoring the existent writing learning dynamics, and reflecting on the designated writing learning outcomes concurrently impacting their final writing qualities. These 3 interviewees' excerpts are resonated well with these arguments.

[Interviewee 1: *I have become an organized writer and easily construct my ideas after being engaged in self-assessment.*]

[Interviewee 2: *If I know my weakness and strength in writing, I can produce a better writing and train my responsibility in writing.*]

[Interviewee 3: *Self-assessment can greatly help me to improve my specific skills, especially in writing. It can also assist me to evaluate my potential in the writing process.*]

## CONCLUSION

As the final point, it can be safely concluded that the incessant utilization of self-assessment activities should be well-integrated within diverse wide-ranging EFL writing classroom contexts in order to mutually assist learners into more competent, strategic, critical, and confident, and independent writers. Taking into consideration all these rewarding insights, language teachers are strongly suggested designing more contextual, authentic, and engaging self-assessment activities corresponding to learners' existing writing learning situations. Conversely, some drawbacks forming in this study should be taken into account. Firstly, since this small-scale qualitative study only involved graduate university EFL learners enrolling in one private university, it is worth advising for future researchers to invite a considerable number of both undergraduate and graduate university EFL learners derived from the state as well as private universities in order to generate more robust research findings. Secondly, due to the absence of in-depth classroom observation sessions, it will be worthwhile for future researchers to conduct more intensive classroom observation activities with regard to self-assessment internalization in writing classes in order to produce more enlightening research results for global along with nationwide ELT parties concerning the accurate implementations of self-assessment activities through varied writing classroom settings.

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