

HOW SCHOOLGY FACILITATES EFL LEARNER AUTONOMY IN WRITING PRACTICE

Truong Le Bao Nhi*; Tran Quang Ngoc Thuy

University of Foreign Languages, Hue University

Received: 15/09/2020; Revised: 20/10/2020; Accepted: 28/12/2020

Abstract: This research investigates how Schoology can facilitate students to apply autonomous learning skills in writing practice, and finds out what student desire in a writing course on Schoology to improve learner autonomy (LA). Participants of the research included 60 grade-10 students who experienced practicing writing skill on Schoology during the first 26 periods of a semester. Questionnaire and individual interview were employed to collect data, which were then analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings show that Schoology could enable improvement of LA in writing practice by providing the students with an interactive community to voice their ideas, individualizing their learning, helping them to track their learning, and offering other facilitating activities. On the other hand, some minor challenges including encountering technical problems, having insufficient knowledge of using online learning platforms, lacking persistence, and being overwhelmed with core subjects were conducive to passive learning of several students on Schoology. To achieve better outcomes for the next course on Schoology, most of the students expected to have a larger number of learning references, writing tasks, recommendations on writing samples, and frequent teachers' feedback and encouragement on their writings.

Keywords: Learner autonomy, Schoology, writing practice

1. Introduction

The advent of technology has played a pivotal role in the delivery and accessibility of learning. Technology could never be separated from language learning (Ibrahim, Saad, Md Tahir & Primsuwan, 2018). Recently, learning management systems (LMSs) such as Schoology implemented into teaching and learning language skills have gradually become ubiquitous. The increasing demand of learner autonomy (LA) has been regarded as a need and online educational technology would effectively create opportunities for the development of LA. Therefore, how to effectively integrate technology into the teaching and learning process to improve LA has been of the utmost importance in EFL pedagogy.

Several researchers believed that educational settings in Vietnam seem not to facilitate learners to be autonomous in learning although Vietnamese learners are aware of being autonomous in their learning. Le Van Canh (1999) indicated that Vietnam's learning environment is "cultural island" where the teacher is viewed as the provider and controller of the knowledge; meanwhile, Tran Quoc Thao and Duong My Tham (2018) indicated that students had good perceptions on LA, and were willing to conduct autonomous learning tasks.

In language learning, writing skill has been considered to be challenging for language learners. In Vietnam, there have been few studies investigating the integration of Schoology into

* Email: truonghoangbaonhi@gmail.com

learning writing skill, as well as the use of this LMS to promote LA in writing practice. This study aims to investigate how the integration of Schoology facilitates LA in writing practice and find out what students expect in a writing course on Schoology to develop LA in writing practice. Specifically, it seeks the answers to the following research questions:

1. How does Schoology facilitate the students to apply autonomous learning skills for writing practice through Schoology?
2. What are students' suggestions for effective improvement of LA in writing practice through Schoology in the next course?

2. Literature review

2.1. Learner autonomy

LA has been considered as one of the educational objectives. Although there have been plenty of definitions of LA, the one by Holec (1981) has been considered as the most integral one over the years. In his definition, LA is referred to as an “ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (Holec, 1981, p. 3). On the other hand, there are still various definitions on LA which have been of enormous interest to researchers. Dam, Eriksson, Little, Miliander, and Trebbi (1990) defined autonomy as “a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a social, responsible person” (p. 102). This indicates a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with their peers and teachers. The roles of teachers are worth giving attention to for preparing the ideal conditions for the exercise of LA. As the present study is carried out with EFL students at high school who need to interact with their classmates and teachers in learning, LA is operationally defined as learners’ ability and willingness to be actively involved in their own learning to learn independently, and in cooperation with others.

There are leading factors contributing to the improvement of LA in education. According to Holec (1981), taking charge of one’s own learning refers to determining the objectives, defining the contents and progressions, selecting methods and techniques, monitoring the procedures of acquisition, and evaluating what has been acquired.

2.2. Learning managing systems and learner autonomy

An LMS is a software application or a web-based technology used to plan, implement, and assess a specific learning process. Numerous LMSs have come out to satisfy the academic needs such as Moodle in 1999, Edmodo in 2008, Schoology in 2009, and Google Classroom in 2014.

Many researchers have shown their interests in investigating the role of technology in teaching and learning in relation to LA. Integrating LMSs into education can boost the development of LA by facilitating interactive collaboration among students (Motteram, 1997), providing materials for self-learning that helps students to be independent in their learning (Godwin-Jones, 2011), individualizing learning, and enhancing students’ motivation (Mutlu & Eroz-Tuga, 2013). Motteram (1997) considered interactions facilitated by the technology integration as a crucial aspect to LA development. The researcher clarified that LMSs provide

students with the ability to use interactive features such as threaded discussions, and discussion forums. Besides, the findings obtained by *Godwin-Jones (2011)* show that computer technology can contribute to autonomous learning, which can be done through available materials for self-learning anywhere and anytime. In other words, a wide range of materials is considered as a prerequisite of LA. Moreover, *Mutlu and Eroz-Tuga (2013)* asserted that students who learn with computers could work individually at a comfortable pace since computers and Internet technology seem to encourage LA by allowing students to choose the time, places, and circumstances that are conducive to their learning and thus, they are more likely to take personal responsibility for learning both inside and outside the classroom. Moreover, *Mutlu and Eroz-Tuga (2013)* claimed that computers and the Internet could raise learners' levels of motivation in language education by offering topics that are of interests to the learners. The findings obtained also indicated that the participants displayed higher motivation, were more willing to take responsibility for their own learning, and were engaged in extra-curricular study.

According to *Garcia, Amat, Garcia, and Colomina (2018)*, Schoology is a free educational platform allowing teachers to give lessons digitally. *Rama and Wahyudi (2019)* pointed out that students could access Schoology through its website (www.schoology.com) or an application on smartphones.

Similar to other LMSs, Schoology has many potentials, one of which is to boost interaction. Schoology “offers the possibilities of adopting this collaboration and learning tool to customize learning for each student” (*Sicat, 2015, p. 162*). Also, *Muhtia, Suparno, and Sumardi (2018)* claimed that Schoology can allow for effective communication between teachers-students, and students-students. Besides, *Sicat (2015)* concluded that Schoology can be available for different types of devices and considered Schoology as a useful tool giving students and teachers 24/7 access. However, *Muhtia et al. (2018)*, *Rama and Wahyudi (2019)* indicated the challenges of using Schoology which made students reluctant in using it include poor internet connection, inadequate technological knowledge and skills, insufficient infrastructures, and lack of training about LMSs.

A significant feature that enables Schoology to support students is that this LMS allows students to monitor their own learning. *Sicat (2015)* found that Schoology enabled students to see when important assignments are due. Another advantage is the possibility of knowing the students' individual needs. The results from the study by *Garcia et al. (2018)* showed that learners can gain more personalized learning experiences when learning with Schoology. *Apriliani, Asib, and Ngadiso (2019)* also claimed “Schoology makes learning more accessible, personalized” (p. 93). *Irawan, Sutadji, and Widiyanti (2017)* confirmed that this LMS allows students to explore the material individually and independently.

2.3. Previous studies

The impacts or potentials of Schoology on teaching and learning have become the focus of a growing number of researchers. *Muhtia et al. (2018)* found out some benefits of integrating Schoology into education including enhancing learning motivation and handling large class size problem. On the other hand, some researchers expressed concerns over lacking experience of using Schoology, using computer excessively, and other problems.

There have been numerous studies investigating the effectiveness of using Schoology in teaching and learning writing skill. These advantages include motivating them to practice writing (Sicat, 2015), or enabling them to receive grades, and feedback (Apriliani et al., 2019). However, Rama and Wahyudi (2019) indicated that they found learning on Schoology time-consuming, monotonous, and difficult to access.

Regarding the relationship between LA and Schoology, Priyatno (2017) asserted that Schoology provided students with greater control over their EAP learning. However, the limitation of this study is that the focus merely fell on the application of Schoology, not its website. Furthermore, the majority of the studies concentrated on identifying whether the use of Schoology can improve writing proficiency or not (Sicat, 2015), without giving an emphasis on LA, or considering LA as a crucial factor contributing to what learners achieved in writing skill practice.

It can be seen that little research has gone further to investigate how Schoology's features allow high school students to practice a language skill with the aim of promoting their autonomous learning skills. The current study is supplementary to the previous research as it focuses on using Schoology for practicing writing skill, and determining to what extent LA in writing practice can be achieved via the features of Schoology.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research methods and instruments

This study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Questionnaire and interview were employed to collect data. A questionnaire consisting of open-ended and close-ended questions was designed in both English and Vietnamese. The close-ended questions with a five-point Likert scale were used to elicit students' opinions about the given statements while open-ended questions were to gather participants' extended responses. Meanwhile, the semi-structured interviews were prepared partly based on the participants' responses to the questionnaire. The purpose of these interviews is to clarify unclear responses in the questionnaire and obtain more in-depth information.

3.2. Research participants

The participants of this research are 60 non-English majors from two grade 10 classes at a high school in central Vietnam. Most of the participants were pre-intermediate learners of English who have been learning English for more than six years, perceived themselves as good users of technology, had no experience of learning with LMSs, and frequently used smartphones and/or tablets to access Schoology.

3.3. Schoology instruction set-up

The set-up of Schoology instruction consisted of two major phases. In the first semester of the school year, the researcher showed her students how to create their own accounts and prepared the course on Schoology, i.e. designed learning resources, created "Schoology Badges", set "Privacy" for each course, adjusted *grade* settings, developed "scales and rubrics" for correcting writings, and selected activities for students to practice writing. The second phase

of the research was conducted in the first 26 periods of the second semester right after the first phase ended. In this phase, the students practiced writing skill on Schoology with three units 6, 7, and 8. During the writing course, the students took part in discussions, wrote a short paragraph on the topic derived from the three units, gave feedback on their peers' writings, and read materials on Schoology to support their writings.

3.4. Data collection and data analysis

The questionnaire was distributed online through Google Forms to 60 students who might complete it for about 10 minutes. Then, interviews were conducted with six students chosen at random from the volunteers for 20 minutes each. In order to make the questionnaire respondents and interviewees feel at ease while answering and avoid possible misunderstandings, the questionnaire and the interview questions employed to collect data were prepared in Vietnamese.

In terms of data analysis, the research used both quantitative and qualitative methods. The data collected from the questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 while the data collected from the interviews was qualitatively analyzed in order to provide a detailed description of the research findings.

4. Findings

4.1. How Schoology facilitates LA in writing practice

4.1.1. Learning interaction

Table 1. How Schoology facilitates learning interaction

Item	N	Mean	SD
1. I had more chances to interact with my classmates on Schoology.	60	4.13	.724
2. I had more chances to interact with the teacher on Schoology.	60	4.07	.821
3. I was willing to give feedback for my classmates' writings on Schoology.	60	4.07	.880
4. I warmly welcomed all feedback from my classmates on my writings on Schoology.	60	3.92	.869
5. I warmly welcomed all feedback from my teacher on my writings on Schoology.	60	4.37	.712

Table 1 shows that Schoology allowed for the increased interaction between students and students ($M=4.13$), and between the teacher and students ($M=4.07$). Besides, students were willing to receive comments on their writings from the teacher ($M=4.37$), and from their peers ($M=3.92$); meanwhile, students expressed that they were relatively willing to give feedback ($M=4.07$).

The proliferation of interaction was a result of Schoology providing learners with another learning space. This result concurred with those found in previous studies and the interview data also provided similar explanations to those stated in those studies. Specifically, increased interaction is thanks to the availability (Rama & Wahyudi, 2019), and useful features (Sicat, 2015) of Schoology that created chances for the students to give and take feedback on writing skill practice, and peer-feedback exercised the students' initiatives in learning. In addition, the students had a craving for teachers' feedback, which they believed would be much more reliable than those delivered by their peers, and they considered Schoology allowed for effective communication with their instructor (Rama & Wahyudi, 2019). However, a minority of students

not involving in sharing their ideas or receiving feedback was recorded due to low levels of English proficiency.

4.1.2. Learning independence

Table 2. How Schoology facilitates learning independence

Item	N	Mean	SD
6. I independently practiced writing skill anytime and anywhere through Schoology.	60	4.02	.748
7. I independently did non-compulsory assignments (Further task) on Schoology.	60	3.73	.918
8. I independently revised my writings completed on Schoology.	60	3.67	.914
9. I independently read writing materials on the Schoology.	60	3.95	.928

With regard to how Schoology facilitated students’ independence in learning and practicing writing skill during the course, a large number of the respondents agreed with the idea that they had chances to independently practice writing skill anytime and anywhere through Schoology (M=4.02). This result is similar to Sicat’s (2015) that Schoology allowed for access with Internet-connected devices anytime and anywhere, enabling students to receive more information and encouraging them to practice writing skill with attractive and interesting activities. Furthermore, they were willingly engaged in reading learning materials (M=3.95), doing non-compulsory assignments (M=3.73), and revising their writings (M=3.67). However, there were different viewpoints on students’ independence to do optional writing tasks, to do optional revision, and to read learning materials on Schoology, as presented in Figure 1.

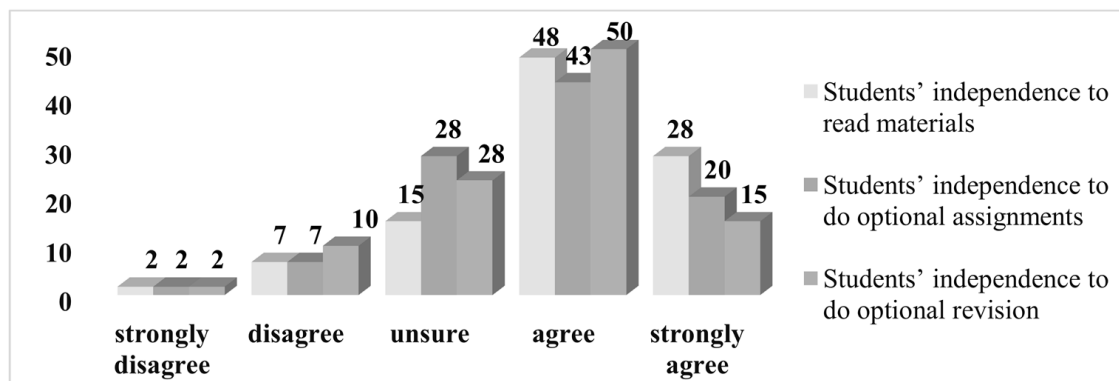


Figure 1. Students’ independence in reading materials, doing assignment, and doing revision

As seen in Figure 1, over three quarters of the students (76% indicating “agree” and “strongly agree”) did engage in materials learning on Schoology. This figure is higher than the figures for students’ willingness to do optional assignment (63%), and their willingness to do optional revision (65%). Chan (2001) reported that being flexible, active, and willing to make use of every opportunity to improve their learning are three of the characteristic qualities of autonomous learners. On the other hand, self-revising received the most disagreement from the respondents, up to 12% compared to doing non-compulsory assignments and reading materials at 9%. The qualitative data reveals that there were some hindrances deterring the students in this research from taking their responsibility for their independent learning including lack of perseverance in learning and heavy workload in their major subject.

4.1.3. Accessibility

During the writing course on Schoology, the students reported that the fact that Schoology was easily accessible could provide them with another learning space for practicing writing skill, self-practicing writing skill anytime and anywhere, approaching learning materials, and interacting conveniently with others. They agreed that easy access to Schoology helped them develop LA in writing practice.

Table 3. Accessibility to Schoology

Item	N	Mean	SD
10. I received sufficient guidance for using Schoology tools to practice writing skill.	60	3.95	.982
11. I easily managed to use the website www.schoology.com .	60	3.77	.998
12. I easily managed to use the application Schoology downloaded from CH Play or App Store.	60	3.85	.971
13. I easily accessed Schoology anytime and anywhere as long as there are electronic gadgets with the Internet connection.	60	3.92	.907

In the same vein with Hoven (2006), this study found that the students became autonomous and independent in learning when being able to easily access Schoology anytime and anywhere with internet-connected devices ($M=3.92$) and receiving sufficient guidance for using Schoology's tools and features to be involved in practicing writing skill ($M=3.95$).

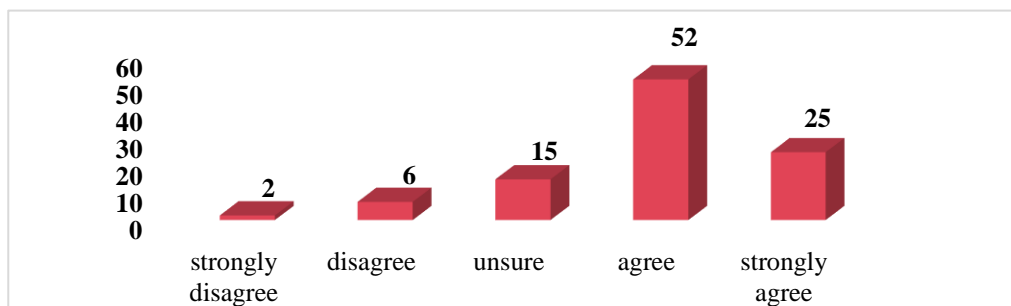


Figure 2. Percentage of Schoology' accessibility with the Internet connection and electronic gadgets

As can be seen in Figure 2, slightly over three quarters (77%) of the survey respondents did access Schoology easily with wireless devices. In other words, the majority of the students could take advantage of the Internet and their own electronic gadgets to access Schoology, which they agreed that could facilitate their autonomous learning skills. This was in line with the research by Sicut (2015) who also found that Schoology accessible with computers, laptops, or smartphones can make learning take place anytime and anywhere. The availability of the Internet is considered to increase learners' chances, and motivate them to learn and practice writing skill.

Figure 2 shows that over 8% of those completing the questionnaire reported they encountered problems related to using the Internet or electronic gadgets; meanwhile, 15% of the respondents were unsure about this idea. This study also found some problems demotivating students in self-practicing writing skill, which were presented in previous research. These challenges include the poor Internet connection (Rama & Wahyudi, 2019), the instability of

Schoology, the risk of digital distraction, the lack of learning experience with LMSs and technological skill, and the interference of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The students also found it much easier to get access to the Schoology application (M=3.85) than the website (M=3.77) and explained that the popularity and convenience of smartphones mainly led to their preferred use of the mobile application of Schoology.

4.1.4. Learning materials

Table 4. How Schoology facilitates use of learning materials

Item	N	Mean	SD
14. I was provided with sufficient guidance to make use of writing materials on Schoology.	60	4.10	.838
15. I made good use of the writing materials on Schoology for writing practice.	60	3.92	.850
16. I accessed useful writing materials categorized into different levels (beginner, intermediate, and advanced).	60	3.68	.948

Godwin-Jones (2011) implied that teachers should instruct students to use materials effectively and critically, so providing learners with sufficient guidance related to how to use the writing materials could allow for self-learning. Table 4 shows that a large number of the students agreed that they received enough guidance to use writing materials on Schoology (M=4.10). Furthermore, most of the students reported that they made good use of these writing materials (M=3.92). The results concur with Irawan et al. (2017)’s claim that the best aspect of Schoology is to provide learners with “material obtained from various sources” (p. 6).

The findings from the questionnaires also indicate that the students were relatively engaged in the multilevel materials (M=3.68) since these references satisfied their needs. However, some of the responses revealed that the learning materials were not informative enough to motivate them to practice writing skill.

4.1.5. Learning tracking

Table 5. How Schoology facilitates learning tracking

Item	N	Mean	SD
17. Thanks to “Schoology Grades”, I could easily access my scores.	60	3.70	1.094
18. Thanks to “Schoology Notifications” or “Schoology Calendar”, I could easily check what I need to do (e.g. what important assignments are going to be due).	60	3.88	1.010
19. Thanks to Schoology “Students Completion”, I could easily check what I finished and did not finish.	60	3.92	.962

Most of the respondents agreed that Schoology enabled them to monitor their learning. The students made use of the function “Student completion” to monitor their flow of learning (M=3.92), “Schoology Grades” to receive notifications on their scores (M=3.70). A similar finding about students’ agreement concerning tracking on Schoology was also found in the research by Apriliani et al. (2019). The respondents also reported that thanks to “Schoology Notifications” or “Schoology Calendar”, they were reminded of what they needed to do (M=3.88).Figure 3 shows the extent to which students strongly agreed and disagreed with the help of Schoology’s tools in tracking their learning.

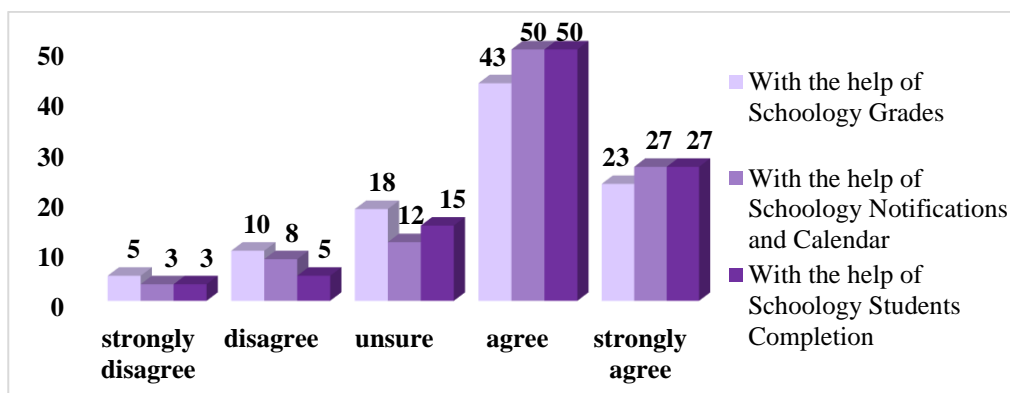


Figure 3. Percentage of the possibility of Schoology to allow for learning tracking

Figure 3 indicates that the students agreeing with the possibility to track what they did and did not finish on Schoology with “Students Completion” are in the majority (77%). This percentage is the same as that of being updated with news on Schoology thanks to “Schoology Notifications” and/or “Schoology Calendar” (77%), but is fairly higher than the remaining idea about “Schoology Grades” (66%). On the other hand, 15%, 11%, and 8% of the students did not agree with the beneficial use of Schoology’s features to catch up with grades, updates and learning progress respectively. For example, some of interviewees reported that they did not take advantage of “Student Completion” to check what they finished and did not finish. The qualitative data revealed that the problems related to receiving notifications were the reason why the students did not agree with the beneficial use of Schoology’s features to catch up with grades, updates and learning progress.

4.1.6. Individualized learning

Table 6. How Schoology facilitates individualized learning

Item	N	Mean	SD
20. I learnt at my own pace (e.g. choosing which materials should be read first, choosing which tasks should be done first, managing time on each task, etc.)	60	3.97	.780
21. I was flexible in choosing which further writing task I would like to do.	60	3.97	.823
22. I was flexible in practicing writing skill (anywhere and anytime).	60	3.85	.880
23. I individually received frequent feedback from my teacher and peers.	60	3.88	.804
24. I individually received on-demand instructional interventions from my teacher.	60	3.82	.892

As seen in Table 6, it can be said that the students can gain more personalized learning experiences with Schoology with all the means from at least 3.82. This finding was similar to that from the studies by Apriliani et al. (2019).

Firstly, Schoology enabled students to move through the writing course at their own pace ($M=3.97$). Some interviewees explained that each learner has his/her own learning style, so learning with Schoology enables them to work at a pace suitable to their needs. Secondly, providing students with non-compulsory tasks did make the individualized learning happen ($M=3.97$). The students denoted that they actively chose tasks that engaged their interests.

The students also customize their learning timetable in practicing writing skill ($M=3.85$). With transcending spatial and temporal limitations, the students could approach the tasks on

Schoology wherever and whenever they wanted, and flexibly did those interesting and meeting their levels. Moreover, they had more opportunities to receive frequent feedback from the teacher and peers (M=3.88), and on-demand instructional interventions (M=3.82). The fact that the teacher provided direct and explicit instructions to them based on their identified needs prepared the students for further learning. The students thereby could practice writing at their own pace and could get assistance as they needed it.

4.1.7. Learning motivation

Table 7. How Schoology facilitates learning motivation

Item	N	Mean	SD
25. I felt motivated when being awarded my effort in completing tasks assigned with different Schoology Badges such as “Completing all the assigned tasks” (Homework), “Most improved student” (Most improved), “Active participation” (Participation), etc.	60	4.10	.838
26. I felt motivated when receiving “Like” for my writings from the teacher or peers.	60	4.03	.758
27. I felt motivated when receiving constructive feedback or encouragement on my writings from the teacher or peers.	60	4.33	.681

Table 7 presents the results that show the students’ motivation in practicing writing can be obtained from the teacher’s and classmates’ encouragement, feedback, and recognition on Schoology.

The students reported that Schoology brought about chances to receive more constructive feedback from the teacher and their peers (M=4.33) and they felt motivated. This result confirms that feedback for students’ writings is a key to motivate students to practice writing skill, which was in line with He (2015) in his conclusion that positive comments or feedback for learners’ writings could promote their enthusiasm in writing.

The students also felt motivated when their efforts were recognized with different types of “Schoology Badges” (M=4.10), and “likes” for their shares (M=4.03). The availability of interesting tools and features on Schoology could raise students’ interests and involvement in their own learning. Likewise, Muhtia et al. (2018) strongly agreed that one of the potentials of Schoology is making the lessons enjoyable. The implementation of this LMS with interesting features encouraged students to practice writing.

4.2. Students’ suggestions to foster LA in writing practice on Schoology and their willingness to practice writing with Schoology in the future

4.2.1. Students’ suggestions to foster LA in writing practice on Schoology

Table 8. Students’ desirability to facilitate LA in writing practice on Schoology

Item	N	Mean	SD
I would like ...			
1. ... more involvement in deciding learning aspects on Schoology (e.g. writing materials, kinds of tasks and activities, etc.).	60	3.78	1.027
2. ... writing tasks and activities on Schoology reasonably assigned in quantity and on time commitment.	60	4.10	.775
3. ... writing tasks and activities on Schoology reasonably designed with different levels.	60	4.08	.743

4. ... writing tasks and activities on Schoology reasonably designed with more collaborative work.	60	3.85	.860
5. ... writing tasks and activities on Schoology reasonably designed with more optional further writing tasks.	60	4.02	.792
6. ... more different types of writing assessment on Schoology (self-feedback, peer-feedback, group-feedback, etc.).	60	3.95	.832
7. ... more references or resources for self-practicing writing skill on Schoology.	60	4.00	.803
8. ... more teachers' recommendations on good and not good writing samples on Schoology.	60	4.27	.756
9. ... more teachers' encouragement and feedback on my writings on Schoology.	60	4.23	.909
10. ... more helpful guidelines for self-practicing writing skill on Schoology.	60	4.20	.708

As seen in Table 8, the students were rather hesitant to make decisions on the aspects of their learning ($M=3.78$). As they further clarified in their responses, they believed that autonomous learners should be responsible for deciding what they need for their learning, but they did not have enough expertise to be in charge of all their learning. A feasible solution is that students should be given chances to suggest their needs and express their interests in writing practice, which would be taken into consideration by teachers.

Besides, the respondents agreed that collaborative work would be beneficial for those at low English proficiency levels. Meanwhile, the students would like to do writing tasks reasonably assigned in quantity and in time allotment as they had to deal with heavy workload of their majors. In addition, the students appreciated chances for further practice ($M=4.02$), which can be a way to facilitate their LA in writing skill on Schoology. Moreover, actively choosing a suitable level of writing tasks can motivate them to write ($M=4.08$). These desires were also mentioned in the research by Sakai, Takagi, and Chu (2010) that reported students appreciated opportunities to choose the number, type, frequency, topic of activities they like.

The highest mean score belongs to item 8 ($M=4.27$) which shows the students' agreement with teachers' recommendations on good and not good writing samples on Schoology as they believed that these samples would allow them to improve their writing skill. Student 4 expressed his idea about teachers' recommendations on writing samples:

[...] Good writing samples could help me learn new structure, vocabulary while not good writing samples with the teacher' notes could help me realize which structures, or vocabulary should not be used or are out of date.

Berger (2003) also confirmed that making students' writings public to their peers could increase their engagement in learning writing. However, some students opposed this idea due to fear of cheating or even plagiarism. Besides, the participants agreed that teachers' encouragement on their writings is necessary ($M=4.23$) as this made their enthusiasm in writing practice increase, which led to LA development. The students also expressed a strong desire with clear guidelines to self-practice writing skill on Schoology ($M=4.20$). Hoven (2006) suggested that it is a need to make learning engaging.

All the students agreed that more learning materials would motivate them to be autonomous learners ($M=4.00$). Besides, the students thought that they should be provided with different types of writing assessment ($M=3.95$). This would stimulate the ability to think

critically about their learning, and to self-practice their writing skill without depending too much on the teacher.

On the other hand, the students who had low level of interests toward practicing writing on Schoology indicated that Schoology was monotonous, which was similar to those in the study by Rama and Wahyudi (2019). In this case, making the design of Schoology more interesting and attractive, adding more types of multimedia, and illustrations into each lesson, are suggested.

4.2.2. Students' willingness to practice writing with Schoology in the future

When surveyed about whether they would like to join in another writing course on Schoology in the next term or not, most of the participants said “yes” although some of the students reported that they were hesitant and uninterested in the next writing course. The students' explanations for agreements on feeling motivated for the next writing course refer to chances to interact with teachers and to approach diverse learning tasks and useful learning materials. In addition, the students believed learning with Schoology would be beneficial for learning outside the traditional classroom, or self-practicing writing skill. Moreover, their interests in technology-related learning encourage them to continue experiencing this platform in the future. On the other hand, some hindrances include the fear of low levels of English proficiency, difficulty of using Schoology, poor internet connection, pressure from their major subjects, and lack of perseverance in practicing writing skill.

5. Discussion and implications

5. 1. How Schoology facilitates LA in writing practice

The findings show that Schoology did allow the 10 graders to develop LA in writing skill, which was supported with a wide range of available features of Schoology. Most of the findings are consistent with the previous studies while some of them are slightly different from what other researchers concluded. Firstly, Schoology offered a user-friendly environment where students had more opportunities to interact with the teacher and their peers outside the traditional classroom (Garcia et al., 2018; Muhtia et al., 2018; Sicat, 2015), to self-practice writing skill (Sicat, 2015). Some Schoology tools contributed to creating a friendly network where the students could join in dynamic communication. Thanks to this platform, the students had more opportunities for learning from others.

Secondly, easy accessibility to Schoology allows the students to develop LA in writing practice. The ubiquity of the Internet, the availability of electrical devices, and the sufficient provision of learning guidelines were considered to be vital factors leading to chances for students to independently learn and practice writing skill. This also refers to the fact that Schoology seems to be an ideal self-access center where the students were provided with a wide selection of self-studying materials, as well as chances to interact or ask for help from teachers or peers. As a result, that students were comfortable and convenient as they could learn at their own pace and in their own time with Schoology could lead to a considerable increase in their independence during the writing course on Schoology, in which they actively studied and practiced writing skill, read references, or self-revised their writings. Furthermore, Schoology

enabled the students to personalize and individualize their learning through flexibly choosing tasks to do, time and place to study, and materials to read. Schoology provides students with multilevel writing tasks and writing references and this accommodated the students at different levels of English proficiency. The categorized learning resources with three main levels made the students confident to take a full advantage of these references and resources. In addition, that feedback and comments on the students' writings were individually delivered plays a crucial role in their personalized-learning on Schoology.

Thirdly, students' learning motivation could result from their strong desire for on-demand feedback to master their skill, or their teachers' and peers' recognition. Therefore, the students were enthusiastic to actively practice writing skill, read references, and self-revise their writings. Besides, engaging writing tasks and learning materials did contribute to arousing the students' willingness to independently study. In terms of further writing tasks, the students expressed their positive attitudes as these activities did not constrain time to complete and accommodated their levels of English proficiency.

Fourthly, the students reported that they could track their writing practice with Schoology and know how they progressed the assigned tasks that made them fully aware of their own learning.

On the other hand, while the students practiced writing on Schoology, some problems were taken into consideration. These include the students' lack of perseverance due to proneness to distractions, heavy workload with their core subjects, low levels of English proficiency, insufficient learning references and tasks unsuitable to their needs, poor understanding of Schoology as an LMS, lack of technological knowledge and skills, lack of facilities to learn with Schoology, poor Internet connection, incompatibility between their devices, and instability of Schoology during the COVID-19 outbreak.

5.2. Students' suggestions to foster LA in writing practice on Schoology

The students expressed the idea that they should have the ability to make decisions on their learning on Schoology in order to improve autonomous learning skills in writing practice. However, they also implied that these matters should fall under the responsibility of teachers who have adequate expertise in deciding and designing what should be included in a writing course. The students expected their teachers to act as supporters or facilitators and guide them towards being more autonomous. Moreover, the participants showed a clear preference for more learning references, writing samples, writing assessment tools, optional further practice, collaborative works, guidelines for self-studying, teachers' constructive feedback and encouragement, and engaging learning settings in the next course.

5.3. Implications

The findings of this study emphasize the importance of students' awareness of their own involvement in making decisions related to learning aspects on Schoology. In other words, they need to be fully aware of the importance of LA in order to extensively take advantage of Schoology for their writing practice. Students should also balance time between their major subjects and English learning to reasonably manage their time distribution for language learning

since regular language practice would be conducive to skill improvement. In terms of technical matters, students should pay attention to guidelines provided by their teachers, and ask for help when needed during the course.

As for teachers, it would be advisable to provide students with motivational aspects to encourage their LA during a course on Schoology. One of the ways is to diversify online tasks and activities to accommodate students with different levels of English proficiency. Specifically, teachers can motivate students in practicing writing through engaging tasks and collaborative works between strong and weak students as well as among students of similar levels of proficiency. In addition, teachers should select and recommend useful materials throughout the course. Most importantly, teachers should willingly give on-demand feedback and personalized comments for students' writings on Schoology, which may reduce the monotony of Schoology platform and allow for increased motivation in writing practice.

Finally, for educational administrators, they should take it into consideration that teachers' need to be trained on the use of educational technology which includes designing online tasks and optimizing technological tools before they can take responsibility for training students about how to manage their learning on an LMS.

6. Conclusion

The present study provides empirical data on how Schoology facilitates students' autonomous learning skill in writing practice. The findings indicate that Schoology provided the students with an interactive learning space where they could communicate with their peers and teachers, allowed them to practice writing skill anytime and anywhere, encouraged them to be in engaged in their learning, individualized their learning, and enabled them to track their learning. These help facilitate the students' LA in writing practice. On the other hand, a few students indicated some challenges hindering Schoology from developing autonomous learning skills in writing practice. From their experience in practicing writing on Schoology, the students suggested providing proper training to students, increasing the number of further writing tasks, and using various assessment tools in the next writing course on this LMS.

References

- Apriliani, A., Asib, A., & Ngadiso, N. (2019). Schoology as a learning media platform for writing skill. *The English Language and Literature International Conference (ELLiC) Proceedings*, 3, 89-94.
- Berger, S. (2003). Comparative history, in S. Berger et al.(Ed.), *Writing History. Theory and Practice* (pp. 161-179). London: Hodder Arnold.
- Chan, V. (2001). Readiness for learner autonomy: What do our learners tell us? *Teaching in Higher Education*, 6(4), 505-519. Doi:10.1080/13562510120078045
- Dam, L., Eriksson, R., Little, D., Miliander, J., & Trebbi, T. (1990). Towards a definition of autonomy. In T. Trebbi (Ed.), *Third Nordic workshop on developing autonomous learning in the FL classroom* (pp. 102-103). Bergen: University of Bergen.
- Garcia, L. S., Amat, S., Garcia, N., & Colomina, S. (2018). Schoology as an alternative to traditional teaching tools for university students. *10th International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies*, 7514-7520.
- Godwin-Jones, R. (2011). Mobile apps for language learning. *Language Learning & Technology*, 15, 2-11.
- He, L. (2015). On cultivation of learner autonomy in English writing in college. *1st International Conference on Arts, Design and Contemporary Education (ICADCE 2015)*. Atlantis Press.

- Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy and foreign language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Hoven, D. (2006). Communicating and interacting: An exploration of the changing roles of media in CALL/CMC. *CALICO Journal*, 23, 233-256.
- Ibrahim, S., Saad, S., Md Tahir, N., & Primsuwan, P. (2018). Promoting learners' autonomy by using Facebook to enhance students' writing skills. *Creative Practices in Language Learning and Teaching (CPLT)*, 6 (1), 56-68.
- Irawan, V.T., Sutadji, E., & Widiyanti. (2017). Blended learning based on Schoology: Effort of improvement learning outcome and practicum chance in vocational high school. *Cogent Education*, 4 (1). Doi:10.1080/2331186X.2017.1282031.
- Le Van Canh (1999). Language and Vietnamese pedagogical contexts. *Proceedings of 4th International Conference on Language and Development* (pp. 13-15). Hanoi, Vietnam.
- Motteram, G. (1997). Learner Autonomy and the Web. In V. Darleguy, A. Ding & M. Svensson (Eds.), *Educational technology in language learning: Theoretical considerations and practical applications* (pp. 17-24). Lyons: INSA (National Institute of Applied Sciences).
- Muhtia, A., Suparno, S., & Sumardi, S. (2018). Blended learning in a paragraph writing course: A case study. *International Journal of Language Teaching and Education*, 2(3), 216-226.
- Mutlu, A., & Eroz-Tuga, B. (2013). The role of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in promoting learner autonomy. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 51, 107-122.
- Priyatno, A. (2017). Promoting learner autonomy through Schoology m-learning platform in an EAP class at an Indonesian university. *Teaching English with Technology*, 17(2), 55-76.
- Rama, A. N., & Wahyudi, I. (2019). The use of Schoology to enhance students' reading comprehension at Lakidende University. *Cetta: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 2(3), 439-448.
- Sakai, S., Takagi, A., & Chu, M.P. (2010). Promoting learner autonomy: Student perceptions of responsibilities in a language classroom in East Asia. *Educational Perspectives*, 43, 12-27.
- Sicat, A. S. (2015). Enhancing college students' proficiency in business writing via Schoology. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 3(1), 159-178.
- Tran Quoc Thao & Duong My Tham (2018). EFL learners' perceptions of factors influencing learner autonomy development. *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences*.

NÂNG CAO TÍNH TỰ HỌC TRONG THỰC HÀNH KỸ NĂNG VIẾT CHO HỌC SINH QUA SCHOOLGY

Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu này được tiến hành nhằm tìm hiểu khả năng học sinh phát triển tính tự học khi thực hành kỹ năng viết với hệ thống quản lý học tập Schoology và đưa ra các đề xuất về thiết kế khóa học thực hành kỹ năng viết trên Schoology nhằm phát triển tính tự học cho học sinh. 60 học sinh đã tham gia thực hành kỹ năng viết trên Schoology trong 26 tiết đầu của học kỳ và cung cấp dữ liệu nghiên cứu qua bảng hỏi và phỏng vấn. Dữ liệu được xử lý và phân tích bằng phương pháp định lượng và định tính. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy hệ thống Schoology có tác động tích cực, giúp phát triển tính tự học khi cung cấp cho học sinh một môi trường học tập có tính tương tác, cá nhân hóa hoạt động học tập cũng như theo dõi tiến trình học tập. Nghiên cứu cũng chỉ ra một số khó khăn học sinh gặp phải vì thiếu kinh nghiệm học tập với các ứng dụng trực tuyến, thiếu sự kiên trì, áp lực đến từ môn chuyên đã phần nào cản trở quá trình tự học kỹ năng viết trên Schoology. Ngoài ra, nhằm nâng cao hiệu quả của khóa học tiếp theo trên Schoology, những học sinh đã tham gia nghiên cứu đề xuất bổ sung tài liệu học tập, bài tập luyện viết, bài viết mẫu, và nhận xét của giáo viên trong khóa học.

Từ khóa: năng lực tự học, Schoology, kỹ năng viết