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Attitudes towards Self-editing of EFL University Students

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to study EFL university students' attitudes towards self-editing their own written texts and compare their attitudes with different background (gender and English background knowledge). The samples were 201 undergraduate students enrolled in Fundamental English course at Bangkok University. The instrument in this study was a questionnaire. Results indicated that the average mean of attitudes towards self-editing was at moderate level. There were significant differences at .05 level found in students' attitudes towards self-editing as classified by English background knowledge, but no statistically significant differences in terms of gender. The results from an open-ended question revealed students' positive attitudes towards self-editing, indicating its usefulness in the EFL context.

Keywords: attitude, self-editing, writing, EFL students

Introduction and Theoretical Framework

Self-editing is the part of the writing process when the writer goes back and looking at his/her work from the perspective of a reader and revise his/her work again and again until it is ready for the reader's eye. This process can be done by correcting grammar mistakes, continuity, spelling errors, typos, missing words, repetition, awkward sentences, passive voice, subject-verb agreement, clarity, misplaced modifiers, homonyms, etc.

Charles (1990) proposed the self-monitoring strategy and pointed out that students could play two roles, a reviewer and a writer. Students are provided with opportunities to monitor their composition through self-editing and peer-editing on their own and peer's writing. Kasule and Lunga (2010) studied attitudes of second language students towards self-editing their own written texts and found out that students appreciate the role of self-editing in minimizing errors in their texts and that it helps in eventually producing well-written texts. Therefore, they recommend the recognition of self-editing as a vital element in the writing process.

However, for some students, they have difficulties deciding whether or not their editing is valid. Students at the lower proficiency level may not have abundant experience and awareness with self-editing than those who at the higher proficiency level. As Tsao (2011) pointed out, beginning writers or students who are placed at low to intermediate levels need individual oral feedback with clear directions for essay improvement.

It was very difficult to predict how students would think about self-editing. Therefore, the first specific objective of the present study is that it investigates students' opinions on correcting surface mistakes like grammar, capitalization,

punctuation and spelling. The major research question is 'What do EFL students think about self-editing?'

Purposes of the Study

The objectives of this study were:

1. to study students' attitudes towards self-editing
2. to compare students' attitudes towards self-editing with different background (gender and English background knowledge)
3. to investigate students' opinions on revising their own written work.

Research Methodology

Participants

The participants in this study were 201 students enrolled in Fundamental English course at Bangkok University. The samples were selected by the use of stratified random sampling technique. They all shared the similar educational background of studying English as their EFL. Before the students answered the questionnaire, they had edited their own writing. Throughout the semester, they were required to write several essays and revise them in class without direct feedback from the teacher.

Research Instruments

In order to identify students' attitudes towards self-editing, a questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part gathered personal information from the respondents who were asked to answer the questions on gender and English background knowledge. This general background might have had something to do with students' attitudes towards self-editing. The second part was a survey of attitudes towards self-editing. The respondents were asked to check their opinions on self-editing that they underwent. The questionnaire was prepared in a form of three-point scale that ranged from "strongly agree", "somewhat agree", and "disagree". The last part was a survey of students' attitudes towards self-editing. It included an open-ended question: *Do you like to do self-revision? Why or why not?* This part provided space for students to contribute individual points of view and thus reveal a wide range of participants' attitudes.

Data Analysis

The acceptable statistical significance level was set at alpha (α) < .05. After the receipt of the completed questionnaires, the data were statistically analyzed by using SPSS/Window 12 through the following steps:

- 1 The data of personal information were brought to calculate for average means.
- 2 The data of attitudes towards self-editing were brought to calculate for average means and standard deviation.
- 3 The means of attitudes towards self-editing were divided into three levels and interpreted in the form of range based on the criterion of $\bar{x} \pm .5SD$.

- Three categories of the students' attitudes towards self-editing: the average mean of attitudes towards self-editing was 2.23 and standard deviation was .21.

$$2.23 \pm (0.5) (0.21) \rightarrow 2.23 \pm 0.11$$

Attitudes towards Self-editing	Mean Range
High/Positive	2.35 – 3.00
Moderate/Neutral	2.12 – 2.34
Low/Negative	1.00 – 2.11

- The independent-samples t-test was used to test the mean scores of two groups of subjects concerning attitudes towards self-editing.
- The One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was used to compare mean scores of three and more groups concerning attitudes towards self-editing. Then the Scheffe test was used to test a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of any two groups.
- The data from questions concerning students' opinions on revising their own written work were analyzed through percentage and frequency distribution.

Results

Level of Attitudes towards Self-editing of the Respondents

The average mean of attitudes towards self-editing was used to find appropriate mean range based on the criterion of $\bar{X} \pm .5SD$. The results were presented in Table 1.

The study revealed that the overall of attitudes towards self-editing was at a moderate level ($\bar{X} = 2.23$). Among ten items of attitudes towards self-editing, the highest means were items no. 2, 5 and 9 respectively ($\bar{X} = 2.59, 2.52, 2.51$). The lowest mean falling on item no. 8 was at a low level ($\bar{X} = 1.73$).

Table 1

Mean and Standard Deviation of Attitudes towards Self-editing

Attitudes towards Self-editing	Scale			N	Mean	S.D.	Level
	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree				
1. I like to revise my own compositions.	69 (34.30)	120 (59.70)	12 (6.00)	201	2.28	.57	neutral
2. Self-revising can improve my writing.	124 (61.70)	71 (35.30)	6 (3.00)	201	2.59	.55	positive
3. Self-revising makes me want to write better.	101 (50.2)	88 (43.80)	12 (6.00)	201	2.44	.61	positive

Attitudes towards Self-editing	Scale			N	Mean	S.D.	Level
	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree				
4. I can revise my own compositions effectively.	16 (8.00)	144 (71.60)	41 (20.40)	201	1.88	.52	negative
5. My compositions improved after revisions.	110 (54.70)	85 (42.30)	6 (3.00)	201	2.52	.56	positive
6. I will keep on revising my own compositions.	90 (44.8)	106 (52.70)	5 (2.50)	201	2.42	.54	positive
7. I don't like to revise a piece of composition over and over.	55 (27.40)	115 (57.20)	31 (15.40)	201	1.88	.64	negative
8. I do not know how to revise my own compositions.	77 (38.30)	101 (50.20)	23 (11.40)	201	1.73	.65	Negative
9. I prefer my teacher's revision to self-revision.	6 (3.00)	86 (42.80)	109 (54.20)	201	2.51	.56	Positive
10. I prefer	29	124	48	201	2.09	.61	Negative

Attitudes towards Self-editing	Scale			N	Mean	S.D.	Level
	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree				
my friend's revision to self-revision	(14.40)	(61.70)	(23.90)				
Total	201	100	100		2.23	.21	Neutral

A Comparison between Students' Attitudes towards Self-editing and Their Background

It was found out that not all variables of background information affected students' attitudes towards self-editing. There were significant differences at .05 level found in students' attitudes towards self-editing as classified by English background knowledge, but no statistically significant differences in terms of gender.

The overall mean score of attitudes towards self-editing of female students was higher than that of male students ($\bar{X} = 2.25, 2.22$). Both groups had attitudes towards self-editing at a moderate level. According to the results of the comparison of the overall mean scores of attitudes towards self-editing, there was no significant difference found in students' attitudes towards self-editing between two groups (male and female) at .05 level. This means that male and female students were not different in having attitudes towards self-editing.

The results obtained from applying the ANOVA revealed that there was statistically significant difference at .05 level found in overall attitude towards self-editing among seven groups of English background knowledge (A, B+, B, C+, C, D+, D). This means that English background knowledge had impact on students' attitudes towards self-editing. Also, the results showed that there was a statistically significant difference found in the students' attitudes towards self-editing in items no. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 at level of .05. The results were presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Analysis of Variance of Students' Attitudes towards Self-editing Classified by English Background Knowledge

Attitudes towards Self-editing	Variance	df	SS	MS	F	Sig.
1. I like to revise my own compositions.	Between Groups	6.00	2.69	.45	1.40	.22
	Within Groups	194.00	62.14	.32		
	Total	200.00	64.84			
2. Self-revising can improve my writing.	Between Groups	6.00	8.16	1.36	5.02*	.00
	Within Groups	194.00	52.56	.27		
	Total	200.00	60.73			
3. Self-revising	Between Groups	6.00	12.40	2.07	6.55*	.00

Attitudes towards Self-editing	Variance	df	SS	MS	F	Sig.
makes me want to write better.	Within Groups	194.00	61.19	.32		
	Total	200.00	73.59			
4. I can revise my own compositions effectively.	Between Groups	6.00	4.93	.82	3.25*	.00
	Within Groups	194.00	48.96	.25		
	Total	200.00	53.89			
5. My compositions improved after revisions.	Between Groups	6.00	7.17	1.20	4.22*	.00
	Within Groups	194.00	55.02	.28		
	Total	200.00	62.19			
6. I will keep on revising my own compositions.	Between Groups	6.00	5.02	.84	3.01*	.01
	Within Groups	194.00	54.03	.28		
	Total	200.00	59.05			
7. I don't like to revise a piece of composition over and over.	Between Groups	6.00	2.87	.48	1.16	.33
	Within Groups	194.00	80.26	.41		
	Total	200.00	83.13			
8. I do not know how to revise my own compositions.	Between Groups	6.00	6.46	1.08	2.64*	.02
	Within Groups	194.00	79.04	.41		
	Total	200.00	85.49			
9. I prefer my teacher's revision to self-revision.	Between Groups	6.00	1.24	.21	.66	.69
	Within Groups	194.00	60.98	.31		
	Total	200.00	62.22			
10. I prefer my friend's revision to self-revision	Between Groups	6.00	2.06	.34	.91	.49
	Within Groups	194.00	73.15	.38		
	Total	200.00	75.20			
Total	Between Groups	6.00	1.15	.19	4.62*	.00
	Within Groups	194.00	8.01	.04		
	Total	200.00	9.16			

* P < .05

Regarding English background knowledge, the Post Hoc analysis revealed that attitudes towards self-editing of students with high English background knowledge (B and C+) was higher than those of students with low English background knowledge (D) at the significance level of .05 as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Test of the Mean Scores of Attitudes towards Self-editing Classified by English Background Knowledge

English background knowledge	A (\bar{X} = 2.27)	B+ (\bar{X} = 2.25)	B (\bar{X} = 2.31)	C+ (\bar{X} = 2.27)	C (\bar{X} = 2.20)	D+ (\bar{X} = 2.11)	D (\bar{X} = 2.04)
A (\bar{X} = 2.27)							
B+ (\bar{X} = 2.25)							
B (\bar{X} = 2.31)							
C+ (\bar{X} = 2.27)							
C (\bar{X} = 2.20)							
D+ (\bar{X} = 2.11)							
D (\bar{X} = 2.04)			.26*	.22*			

* P < .05

Reactions toward Self-editing of the Respondents

The learners' affective reactions toward self-editing they engaged in were analyzed by the responses to the questions in the open-ended questionnaire: Do you like to do self-revision? Why or why not?

Table 4

Number and Percentage of the Respondents Concerning Attitudes toward Self-revision

Positive Reaction		Negative Reaction	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
118	58.70%	83	41.30%

The majority of respondents had positive reaction toward self-editing. When asked whether they liked self-editing or not, the number of students who chose 'like' (58.70%) was higher than the number of students who chose 'dislike' (41.30%). The reasons why the respondents like or dislike self-editing were presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Results of Students' Affective Reactions towards Self-editing

Reasons why students like self-editing	Reasons why students dislike self-editing
1. They have a chance to check and correct their own mistakes.	1. They lack confidence in their writing skills because they are not good at English, so they need someone to help them correct their mistakes.
2. After self-editing, they feel more satisfied with their work and want to write better.	2. They can't read and judge their own written work with the eyes and mind of a reader.
3. They think that authors can understand their own work better than others.	3. They think that authors can't see their own weaknesses.

Reasons why students like self-editing	Reasons why students dislike self-editing
4. Self-editing makes them realize their weaknesses and strengths.	4. They think that reading is boring.
5. When they are aware of their weaknesses, they will try to avoid making the same mistakes again.	5. They don't want to rewrite a paper again and again.
6. They believe that self-editing is a method to learn English by oneself.	6. They believe that only students whose English is good can edit their own writing.

Conclusion

This study attempts to investigate students' attitudes towards self-editing and to determine if gender and English background knowledge affect their attitudes. The findings can be used as a guideline for EFL providers who wish to improve students' writing ability.

Male and female students were not different in having attitudes towards self-editing; they expressed neutral attitudes towards self-editing. However, the results from the open-ended questions revealed most students have positive attitudes towards self-editing. This shows that students realize that they can get better quality of work when they work on their own written work. EFL students can get a lot of benefits from seeing their own weaknesses and getting more motivation to improve their writing ability. Thus, teachers in EFL context should give students an opportunity to edit their own written work and model good self-editing regulations for the students to follow.

Students with high English background knowledge had more positive attitudes towards self-editing than students with low English background knowledge at the significance level of .05. It signifies students' limitations of self-editing skills. The qualitative data supports the information elicited through the quantitative data that the students tended to have many obstacles including a lack of confidence and language knowledge that made it more difficult for them to edit their own work. The results from open-ended questions also demonstrate that the students would like to get feedback from their peers and teacher. They did not think that their editing was fully corrected. Therefore, it is necessary to consider whether students have enough knowledge and experience in reading and writing to edit their own work. Essential grammar and model sentences should be taught before students start to write and edit their written work.

Learning will take place in the best way when students get involved in learning processes personally. Instead of traditional teacher-correction method, students should have the opportunity to look at their own writing. Teachers may take an active role in reflecting and supporting when students need.

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