EFL Learners' Attitudes Towards Online Reflective Journals' Impact on Creative Writing: An Analytical Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating EFL learners' attitudes toward the impact of online reflective journals on creative writing. The study has adopted a descriptive-analytical design, through which both quantitative and qualitative research methods were utilized. 30 EFL students enrolled in an intensive B1/unlock course were trained to write online reflective journals regularly and post them on a messenger group where all students could read and reflect on them. The study lasted for eight weeks during the second semester of 2020/2021. An attitudinal questionnaire was distributed to all the participants at the end of the intervention, and appropriate statistical analyses were used to figure out the participants' attitudes. In addition, all participants were asked to share their reflections by writing online reflective journals via the messenger group. Participants' reflections and responses were deliberately analyzed qualitatively to extract and read their attitudes deeply. Both the questionnaire's responses and the personal reflections have shown positive attitudes towards the impact of online reflective journals on improving EFL learners' creative writing. Hence, some recommendations were suggested.

Keywords: attitudes, creative writing, reflective journals

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) has a significant status in many countries. However, it is not an effortless process. On the contrary, many hardships face teachers and learners. EFL teachers frequently try to innovate new EFL teaching methods to make learning the language an exciting and communicative process that can excrete excited, enthusiastic, and well-engaged learners. These methods aim at enhancing students' learnability of the language skills. On top of the language skills, students consider that among the toughest is writing. Despite being introduced to students from an early age at schools, most students keep suffering from weak writing skills. They start to feel an urgent need to improve this skill as they become university students. Students need and use writing intensively in different university courses, not only in English language courses. Therefore, it is fundamental to utilize new strategies in teaching writing to make a drastic change in students' abilities and attitudes towards writing. New methods and strategies are also needed to make learning and to apply writing enjoyable rather than a dull and tiresome task. Students need to feel that they can unleash their thoughts, ideas, and feelings freely and creatively.

Schon (1987) described reflection as a conversation between action and thought in the learner's mind. Consequently, reflection improves how learners think and evaluate their learning outcomes. Turning reflection from a random cognitive process into a regular and practical practice is essential to increasing efficiency. Writing reflective journals can contribute to achieving this goal as reflective writing can improve learners' cognitive awareness and promote their thinking abilities and insights (Andrusyszyn & Davie, 1995). Reflective journals are also essential to increase learners' abilities to reconsider their experiences in learning, reflect on them and discover their strengths and needs (Sumsion & Fleet, 1996). Reflective journals can help students develop their automatic thinking and be more interactive in dialogues, hence, more liberated in presenting their thoughts and expressing their feelings (Hubbs & Brand, 2005). This significant contribution of reflective writing may enhance students' tendency towards writing and make the process more exciting and creative.

In this sense, many scholars have discovered a robust connection between reflection and creativity. Cramar (2003) explained the importance of creative writing in helping students turn their thoughts into words and increase their abilities in communicating their thoughts and feelings. However, creative writing cannot be obtained through conventional methods. On the contrary, it should be boosted by employing innovative strategies that encourage students to think and write creatively (Barbot et al., 2012). According to Davies (1995), reflective writing is one of the powerful and practical strategies that can

help students write freely and creatively. It can also change their attitudes towards writing positively.

Sauvignon (1976) perceived attitudes as a determinative factor while learning a foreign language. Attitudes are reactions to an evaluation of some referent or object, inferred based on someone's beliefs or views about the referent (Gardner, 1980). Brown (1990) defined attitudes as to how people feel and believe in things, thoughts, people, etc. Brown (1990) added that among the crucial agents that influence learners' attitudes towards learning the English language are parents' and peers' attitudes towards English, how often students contact native speakers, bad experiences with native speakers, and their cultural attitudes (cited in Suleiman, 1993). Brown (1990) observed attitudes by saying that attitudes can impact human beings in cognitive processes. These are developed from childhood due to parents' raising, peers' impact, and social contact. These attitudes can leave their profound effects on learners' experiences.

Similarly, learners' negative attitudes can obstruct their progress in learning (Tunde-Awe, 2014). Popham (2005) asserted the importance of learners' attitudes concerning teaching practices and new strategies. Hence, teachers should consider their learners' attitudes while introducing new instructional methods and strategies if they seek the effectiveness of these methods.

Unlock Series

The Department of Languages and Translation at Birzeit University introduced a new English language educational program for its undergraduate students in September 2016. The educational program adjusts to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in its learner-centered philosophy. It depicts five levels of language achievement, beginning from level A1 at the basic learner level to level C1 at the advanced learner level of English language competence. Unlock is an academic English course that is consisted of five levels and was published by Cambridge University Press. It empowered learners' critical thinking skills and was designed to lead students to improve their academic and language skills, hoping to lead them to more success in their studies.

Statement of the Problem

From her long experience teaching English as a foreign language, the researcher has deliberately noticed EFL learners' hardships while learning and applying writing. Most students feel that their written assignments lack creativity. They tend to memorize written templates and models when they have to write an assignment. Hence, the researcher has decided to utilize the strategy of online reflective journals to improve their creativity in writing and enhance their attitudes towards this crucial language skill.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigates EFL learners' attitudes towards online reflective journals' impact on creative writing.

Questions of the Study

The current study aims to answer the following main question:

What are students' attitudes towards the impact of writing online reflective journals on creative writing?

Significance of the Study

This study has the paramount significance of showing how students' attitudes towards writing can be altered and enhanced by employing new strategies in instruction. In this study, students will express their attitudes towards the impact that online reflective journals have had on their creativity in writing. This can provide deep insights into this important strategy in general instruction and enhance learning language skills.

Definition of Terms

Attitude is a cognitive process in which learners express or respond to how they perceive specific ideas, situations, and learning methods (writing online reflective journals) either positively or negatively. Students' attitudes towards online reflective journals and their effectiveness in creative writing are measured by an attitudinal questionnaire developed by the researcher and their reflections.

Online reflective journals refer to the online reflective journals students had to write weekly and post on a messenger group established for this specific aim.

Creative writing refers to students' ability to write and express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings on topics of interest and relevance to their daily lives and concerns freely without any restrictions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reflective Writing

Writing is an intricate, multifaceted, and deliberate demonstration of correspondence cultivated in various conditions, under different time limitations, and with a variety of language assets and mechanical instruments (The Writing Revolution, 2014). Harmer (2004) defined writing as communication that conveys musings or emotions through-composed structures. Students practice writing every day as part of their routine activities. They take lecture notes, text their friends on what's app or messenger, or even write an application letter to join a club or ask for financial help in their academic institutions. Therefore, writing is part of their regular daily life. However, most of the same students admit that their writing lacks appropriate writing skills, which may put blocks in their graduation routes (Kirst & Venezia, 2001). Alber-Morgan et al. (2007) clarified that writing had gained importance among students in educational institutions and workers in their labor sites, which has resulted in more awareness among them both to improve their abilities in employing this significant skill. This assures the crucial need for introducing new strategies that can eliminate any difficulties students face in writing.

Reflection was proved to be effective in the educational process by many scholars (Farrell, 2013). Reflection helps teachers reconsider their teaching practices and plan efficiently and effectively for future instruction. Moreover, when learners use it, it can assess teachers and educators to understand learners' thoughts, feelings, preferences, and attitudes. Consequently, educators and teachers can access students' feelings and experiences when they reflect on them. This can ultimately help them better understand their educational preferences and interests.

Boud et al. (1985) explained that reflection on learning as a purposeful action is done according to a plan and procedures that lead to reflection, which can be attained through mediation and daydreaming. However, this reflection should be goal-directed critical thinking. This involves the fact that reflection is a complicated process that includes other cognitive processes. Kember et al. (2000) described the components of reflective thinking and reflective practice as

including habitual action (what has been learned before and is frequently used and has become an activity that is done automatically), understanding (which depends on utilizing earlier information without assessing this information in practical or personal situations), reflection, (which is based on criticizing assumptions and beliefs since solving problems requires taking procedures and steps and questioning the validity of these steps), and critical thinking (which involves examining the assumptions and reflecting on them critically.

Imel (1992) suggested the essential position of reflective practice in enhancing significant self-awareness and new experience in professional practice. Reflective practice can result in helping teachers and students recognize the problems they face and deal with them better. Moon (1999) accepted that reflection assists with moving to gain from the surface to profound stages as it helps learners internalize new learning. Harri-Augstein and Thomas (1991) asserted that reflection is a significant effort that should receive external support from teachers so that students can engage successfully in the process. Tomlin et al. (2016) suggested that reflective capacity in professionals can be developed by following a set of regular, community-oriented, secure, intelligent supervisory relationships. Fred Korthagen, in his book Linking Practice and Theory: The Pedagogy of Realistic Teacher Education (2001), believed that the main goal of reflection is to create competent self-directed learners.

Furthermore, he worked to improve a particular model for active reflection. He called it the ALACT model (action, looking back on the action, awareness of essential aspects, creating alternative methods of action and trial). This was designed for practicing reflection effectively. Weatherston and Barron (2009) explained that the reflective practice should be involved within the secure and reflective space provided by the supervisor (teacher), who tends to keep encouraging and fostering the supervisees (learners). They should be wonder, be thoughtful about their experiences, and be aware of their way of thinking. This process is depicted by consistency, trust, transparency, interest, and regard. Reflection in the context of learning was also defined by Boud et al. (1985) as those intellectual and emotional exercises that people engage in to investigate their experience, which prompts new understanding and appreciation (Boud et al., 1985 as cited in Lew & Schmidt, 2011).

Self-reflection has been claimed to be influential in autonomous learning skills development and learners' abilities in setting their learning goals and their core role in student-centered learning (Frances & Rose, 2009; Gronich, 2004). Kember et al. (2000) introduced four basics covering reflective practice: constant action, understanding, reflection, and necessary reflection. Sivasubramaniam (2011) asserted the metacognitive process of self-reflection and its primary effect on the significant elements of a constructivist learning environment that involves viewing the knowledge constructed between teachers and students mutually, using relevant activities and other tasks, in addition to bringing a boost for thinking about understanding and the synergistic development of information through relational affiliations and arrangements. This assumption claims that students' reflection varies according to their beliefs and thoughts towards knowledge. This means that students' knowledge theories can affect how they learn and make judgments. This is mainly known as 'cognitive beliefs.'

Reflection has gained significant status in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). Reflective practice has a substantial status in teaching the English language as in other fields of education (Farrell, 2013). This trend in ELT has been enhanced and encouraged by many experts. Reflective language teaching (RLT) has several aspects and features because it has been affected by many theorists (Farrell, 2013). According to Richards and Lockhart (1994), RLT is seen as an approach through which L2 teachers and instructors gather information about education, analyze their perspectives, convictions, suppositions, and showing practices, and utilize the data acquired for a reasonable reflection. Consequently, some scholars considered the technology to make the reflection more interesting and relevant to learners' daily life. Annamalai and Jagannathan (2017) for example, presented a paper that clarified how reflective writing and e-journals on Facebook could enhance writing skills and reflective thinking. They also believed that reflection related to reflective writing and e-journals could also improve students' narrative skills.

Reflective Journals

Dewey (1933) declared that individuals are responsible for their knowledge construction by doing their interpretations and reflections on their experiences. Hatton and Smith (1995) clarified the importance of reflective journals as they let learners think about past experiences and mediate positively and constructively about future implementations. According to Richards and Farrell (2005), a reflective journal can be important for teachers' professional development. These reflective journals can also have an interchangeable role in measuring learners' improvement in one area of knowledge (Santrock, 2011). Reflective journals have also collected data in different research studies (Griffee, 2012).

Reflective practice and reflective journals are essential components of today's learning. They allow learners to amend undesirable actions by having more constructive insights on future work. Many experts have advocated reflective journals as they can slow down the learning pace, raise the sense of learning ownership, highlight the essential role of feelings and emotions in learning and enhance metacognitive skills (O'Connell & Dyment, 2011; Samuels & Betts, 2007).

Teachers have used traditional journaling with pens and papers for many years. However, with the increase in technology development and its intensive use in daily lives, it has become essential for teachers to use this technology in teaching and learning, especially using social networks (Fogg, 2010). Yancey (2009) believed that the 21st century would present a new trend in teaching writing in an informal way of instruction based on the substantial expansion of technology. In this new trend, the learners can cooperate with their peers to evaluate their authentic texts. For him, this process reflects life-long learning, and electronic journals have become essential in the age of distant learning. Researchers (e.g., Lenhart et al., 2007) explained that a reflective journal is an essential activity through which learners can culminate their knowledge after having experience in learning. This can be an effective and attainable tool for both teachers and learners. Furthermore, it can allow learners to have their pace in learning with complete easiness and flexibility.

Creative Writing

Writing is a recursive process involving cognitive and metacognitive skills (Larkin, 2009). However, it is considered one of the problematic language skills students master (Kollogg, 2008). For English language classes, it is an important goal to help students write creatively and use their imaginations and employ their feelings in writing essays. Boden (2001) defines creativity as the skill of coming out with new thoughts that are astonishing, understandable, and important

somehow or another. Creative writing is the investigation of composing (including poetry, fiction, drama, and creative non-fiction) and its settings through imaginative creation and reflection on the process. Creative writing can utilize any structure or type of composing as an excellent subject of study, yet the creations of creative writing tend not to be enlightening, yet innovative translations of the world that welcome the perplexing interest of the audience or reader (Bennett et al., 2008).

Creative writing is mainly related to letting students use their imagination freely (Nettle, 2009). To get students to write creatively, there are some particular strategies that teachers need to adopt frequently with their students. According to Indira and Sree (2017), teachers should provide their students with clear and direct writing instructions, steps, and techniques. Second, students should write regularly and do enough practice on different topics. Third, teachers should always provide their students with excellent writing models and essays on various subjects. Fourth, teachers should keep presenting and teaching all writing steps and processes as students can easily get lost or forget them while writing different topics. Fifth, it is important to keep directing students and reminding them to be careful in the last stages of writing and continue editing and proofreading to avoid many mistakes and improve their writing accuracy. Finally, providing accurate and specific feedback on time and regularly can help students improve their writing and prevent future errors. These steps can ensure putting learners on the correct route feel more confident and relieved. Consequently, this can result in more creative and innovative writing.

Attitudes

Attitudes assume a significant role in people's everyday lives and decisions; they neglect what they like, do not like, and what they choose. Gardner (1980) defined attitudes as the aggregate of man's senses and sentiments, partialities or inclination, assumptions, fears, dangers, and feelings about any predetermined theme. Attitudes can be defined as the summary evaluations of somebody's preferences and feelings (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Some scholars like Breckler (1984) have broken this term into three main components, the affective, the behavioral, and the cognitive components (ABC model), to emphasize the importance and high complexity. Similarly, Baker (1992) identified three main elements of attitude: the affective, the cognitive, and the conative, related to purposeful action. In any learning experience, learners' attitudes are of significant importance. Strong (2006) maintained the relationship between positive learners' attitudes and the success of the learning experience as interconnected.

Attitudes are of significant importance in learning English as a foreign language. According to Sauvignon (1976, p. 295), "attitude is the most important factor in second language learning." Falk (1978) claimed that learners who are successful in learning a foreign language are those students who have positive attitudes towards native speakers of that language concerning their mother tongue and their target culture. They are eager to get integrated into their society as well. In teaching and learning, many scholars and experts in teaching and learning languages have confirmed the vital role that positive attitudes have in facilitating learning a foreign language.

According to Oller (1979), attitudes are merely one kind of element that offers ascent to inspiration, which brings about the accomplishment of capability in a second language. This definition has a valued status in EFL learning as it relates the motivation in learning a foreign language with the positive attitudes learners have towards it.

Gardner et al. (1985) believed that attitude could be considered an essential agent that occupies an essential position in learning a foreign language as it determines the efforts paid by learners to learn that language. This implies that EFL instructors have to be aware of fortifying EFL learners' positive attitudes towards strategies used in teaching English inside or outside the classroom.

Omaggio (2001) asserted in her hypotheses, the fourth indeed, the significance of taking students' attitudes and preferences into high consideration to enhance language proficiency. Furthermore, other experts have stated that in any learning strategy, students' attitudes should be considered and considered highly for the vital role they have in bringing interaction with the text (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009). The importance of attitudes in learning is also highly relevant to enhancing motivation toward learning. Oroujlou and Vahedi (2011) emphasized the secure connection between positive attitudes and high motivation in learning. Positive feelings can lead to good influence and great empowerment, leading to dynamic and successful learning. On the other hand, some negative feelings and attitudes can lead to problems and barriers to students' learning, resulting in false interpretations and weakening their active participation and success.

Online Reflective Journals, Writing Skills, and Creativity

Mansour (2011) carried out a study to discover the usefulness of a reflective learning journal in enhancing what students learn. To answer the research question, the researcher has established a personal blog named 'Jurnal Pengurusan Emosi.' The participants in this study were all the registered students in the elective course of managing emotions at the University of Kebangsaan, Malaysia. These students were required to submit reflective journals every week. In these e-journals, students were required to reflect on their learned topics. The results showed excellent feedback from students towards e-reflective journals as the e-reflective journals enhanced the concept of understanding, thought expression, and knowledge sharing. The researcher concluded that this strategy could help lecturers improve their instruction methodology.

Abednia et al. (2013) explored in-service EFL teachers' perceptions of reflective journal writing. Their study followed the qualitative method design that used focused group interviews with six in-service EFL teachers to discover the advantages and difficulties of using reflective journals. The researchers have analyzed the data thematically. The analysis results have shown the effectiveness of using reflective journals by EFL teachers to improve self-awareness, recognize important issues related to EFL, and enhance teacher educator dialogue. On the other hand, the participants also referred to some challenges that should be considered, including the necessity of in-depth reading content and material and the need for active participation in all discussions to write well-written and quality reflective journals. Based on the gained results, the researchers advised cultivating the culture of dialogue and writing reflective journals in teacher education programs and sharing these journals with a broader circle of colleagues and peers.

Chang and Lin (2014) investigated the effectiveness of electronic reflective journals on reading and communication in language learning based on a university web-based English course for (EFL) learners. In this study, the researchers have developed a multimedia program using the English language. This program has comprised fifteen units and was taught online for one semester. The sample consisted of 98 undergraduate students split into two groups. The experimental group used reflective e-journals, and the control group followed the usual way

through exercises related to the content. The research aimed at investigating the expected effects of using reflective e-journals to help enhance students' learning reading comprehension and communication in English as a foreign language in Taiwan. The researchers have used a pre-/post-test and a questionnaire to investigate the treatment's effect on students. The study outcomes showed that students who used reflective e-journals in learning excelled in producing those who followed conventional content-based learning. Reflective e-journals improved students' learning and helped students enhance their organizational skills and writing abilities. Students also declared that e-journals aided them in reviewing the course material and preparing for their exams.

Ruiz-Ruiz and Herrera-Sánchez (2015) carried out a study entitled "The use of reflective journaling as a learning strategy during the clinical rotations of students from the faculty of health sciences: An action-research study" to explore and find out more about instructors' attitudes, and experiences concerning the reflective journals in clinical learning. This study aimed to upgrade the clinical journal writing in all health science degrees presented by the university. The study followed a qualitative design using the action research method. One hundred and two students from different health sciences were involved in the research. To collect essential data, triangulation of document analysis for the students' journals and teachers' journals and their responses to students' journals was done by the researchers. The results showed that reflective journals could be a useful teaching strategy. They also confirmed the importance of establishing a trustful relationship between students and instructors and the significant position of emotions and the work as a teacher. The study was concluded by presenting some essential recommendations for teachers, including encouraging students to write and reflect freely and adopt this approach in all stages of their research.

Cheng (2017) investigated the effect of automated electronic feedback on students' reflective journal writing in an EFL course. The study followed a mixed-method design that used reflective journals, surveys, and interviews to collect the required data. The study lasted for 13 weeks during an EFL course based on students' reflective journals. Thirty-eight undergraduate students, who took part in the study, were split into an experimental group (82 students) and a control group (56 students). Both groups got the same education in terms of reflective journal writing instruction. However, only the experimental had access to a web-based classification system to produce online-automated feedback on their reflective journals. The study results showed an outperformance of the experimental group in their final scores in writing reflective journals. Similarly, the questionnaire and interviews have shown students' positive attitudes towards using the OAF (online automated feedback) for reflective journal writing, although some concerns have been noticed. To conclude, this study has reflected the positiveness of using OAF for reflective writing and has opened the way for future work and research and further discussion on how to fruitfully integrate teacher's feedback and OAF in successful reflective journal writing.

Hussein (2018) investigated the effectiveness of reflective journals on students' learning and how reflective writing can boost mindset development and their perceptions of the journaling process. Fifteen students were enrolled in this study in writing reflective journals about their eating habits concerning the course content. A qualitative design based on a case study was adopted in the research, and the data were collected through analyzing students' journals and focus group interviews. The researcher also explained the content of reflective journals, and the findings indicated that reflective writing could improve EFL learners' conceptual understanding of the course and promote mindset growth.

Khanjani et al. (2018) followed a quantitative study investigating the effects of journal writing on promoting reflection. The sample included 24 EFL teacher trainees. A survey with closed and open-ended items and an observation checklist were utilized to initiate the investigation. The survey and checklist data were analyzed; quantitative and descriptive analyses were operated. A qualitative content analysis was used for the open-ended items of the questionnaire. The results indicated that journal writing had an essential impact on improving reflective practice in educator trainees. There was a necessary distinction between learners' perceptions and reflective practice before and after the treatment.

METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

In order to answer the research question, the research has followed both quantitative and qualitative methods. A quantitative survey design was employed to explore participants' attitudes about integrating online journals as a learning tool to improve their creative writing performance.

Moreover, students' reflections were extracted and analyzed qualitatively from a group on the messenger app created especially for that aim, where all participants were invited to join and added. They also used to post their online reflective journals on that particular group.

Participants of the Study

One mixed-gender freshmen student section consisting of 30 students was purposefully selected from the researcher's classes at Birzeit University. The students were enrolled in B1/unlock intensive intermediate courses from different specializations.

Research Instruments

The attitudinal questionnaire: a 20-item attitudinal questionnaire developed by Farah (2012) was adapted to assess students' attitudes toward online reflective journals. The attitudinal questionnaire employs a 5-point Likert type scale with frequency anchors ranging 57 from 1, for strongly disagree, to 5, for strongly agree. As such, the total score ranged from 20 to 100. Then, higher scores on the attitudinal questionnaire indicate a higher level of students' attitudes toward online reflective journals. Ranges of agreement with the attributions on the questionnaire were determined using the (n-1)/n formula, and after calculation, the interval width of the range between 1 through 5 was calculated as 0.8. As such, the interval width from 1 to 1.80 showed deficient level, and more than1.80-2.60 interval showed low level, more than 2.60-3.40 range showed medium level, more than3.40-4.20 interval showed high standard, and the more than 4.20-5.00 interval showed a very high level of agreement with the statement on the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was distributed to all students in the section to determine their attitudes towards using the online reflective journals and whether they found this strategy fruitful in improving their creative

Table 1. Summary results of the corrected item-total correlation

Statement number	Corrected item-total correlation
1	.72
2	.96
3	.72
4	.96
5	.96
6	.58
7	.96
8	.72
9	.96
10	.96
11	.58
12	.60
13	.96
14	.60
15	.48
16	.96
17	.72
18	.48
19	.96
20	.72

Table 2. Summary results of the Pearson correlation coefficient for each statement of the questionnaire with total score

Statement number	Pearson correlation coefficient	Significance level
1	.74	<.01
2	.96	<.01
3	.74	<.01
4	.96	<.01
5	.96	<.01
6	.61	<.01
7	.96	<.01
8	.74	<.01
9	.96	<.01
10	.96	<.01
11	.61	<.01
12	.65	<.01
13	.96	<.01
14	.65	<.01
15	.51	<.01
16	.96	<.01
17	.74	<.01
18	.52	<.01
19	.96	<.01
20	.74	<.01

writing. The researcher intended to deepen her understanding of the teaching strategy's students' attitudes and other prospective learning consequences.

Students' reflections: students' reflections were carried out to let the learners reflect on their experience in writing online reflective journals. The students were asked to write their reflections and post them in the group to describe and narrate how they lived the experience of writing online reflective journals. The researcher then compiled their reflective notes to extract further impacts of writing online reflective journals on students' creative writing and other areas.

Duration of the Study

This study lasted for two months, for eight weeks, with one writing period each week, in the academic second semester of 2020/ 2021. The instructional material, which was used in the study, was Cambridge/unlock B1 textbook.

The Validity of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was translated into the Arabic language through a three-step procedure described by Hansen (1987) to ensure inferential and linguistic equivalence. The English version of the questionnaire was first translated into Arabic by Arabic-speaking researchers, English proficient in research in education. The Arabic version was then backtranslated into English by a second bilingual translator experienced in Arabic/English translation. The back-translated version was then compared with the original questionnaire by another bilingual speaker proficient in Arabic and English who has conducted research studies in education.

Based on the comparison, the researcher developed a new Arabic version. The three translators then discussed the two versions and reached a final agreement. Overall, most items did not have significant differences in meaning, and only a few things were modified to better meet the research's purposes. To verify the face validity of the questionnaire, the original version of the questionnaire comprised 20 statements were presented to a panel of ten experts specialized in educational psychology, English language curricula, teaching methods

in Palestinian and Jordanian universities to ensure the validity of the survey and know their views on the relevance of the questionnaire statements and the integrity of the linguistic formulation of the questionnaire statements. According to the experts' comments, some modifications have been made, and no item was deleted. As such, the final version of the questionnaire includes twenty statements.

Reliability of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire is reliable and applicable to use as an attitude measure. To verify the internal consistency of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha approach has been applied. Results revealed that Cronbach's alpha was .97 and in the accepted range of reliability (Odeh, 2010). **Table 1** illustrates the corrected item-total correlation.

Table 1 shows that the corrected item-total correlation ranged from .48 to .96, and in the acceptance values, the questionnaire is reliable and valid and gives excellent psychometric properties (Odeh, 2010).

Furthermore, to verify the questionnaire's internal consistency, Pearson correlation coefficients for each statement with the total score of the questionnaire were extracted. **Table 2** illustrates the Pearson correlation coefficient for each statement with the overall rating of the questionnaire.

Table 2 shows the correlation coefficient for each questionnaire statement, with the total score of the questionnaire ranging from .51 to .96, and all are accepted values (Odeh, 2010). The questionnaire has good evidence of construct validity (Odeh, 2010). The questionnaire is valid and reliable and can measure students' attitudes toward online reflective journals.

Procedures of the Study

The researcher followed the following procedures to carry out this study by:

1. Review the related literature to establish a theoretical and practical background about using online reflective journals in

Table 3. Means and standard deviations for each statement of attitudes scale

Item no	Item	Mean	SD	LA
7	Online reflective journal writing improved my ability to elaborate more and add more details to my writing.	4.250	.931	Very high
9	Online reflective journal writing helped me produce original ideas.	4.375	.885	Very high
2	Online reflective journal writing improved my ability to express my ideas and opinions in writing.	4.063	.854	High
3	Online reflective journal writing was an opportunity to gain self-knowledge.	3.563	1.153	High
4	Online reflective journal writing helped make me more flexible and willing to accept others' ideas and opinions.	3.875	1.025	High
5	Online reflective journal writing enhanced my fluency in writing.	4.000	.966	High
8	Online reflective journal writing helped me understand what I learned better.	3.750	1.125	High
10	Online reflective journal writing enhanced my communication skills in writing.	4.125	.885	High
12	Online reflective journal writing enhanced my ability to write about my experiences.	3.750	1.183	High
13	Online reflective journal writing offered me a chance to develop and reinforce my writing skills.	4.188	.655	High
14	Online reflective journal writing helped me to connect writing with my interests.	3.500	1.033	High
15	Online reflective journal writing helped me to respond to my thoughts and feelings through writing.	3.813	1.276	High
16	Online reflective journal writing helped me to find inspiration in everyday events.	3.688	1.195	High
17	Online reflective journal writing increased my creativity.	3.500	1.211	High
18	Online reflective journal writing helped me understand what I am writing.	3.813	1.109	High
19	Online reflective journal writing motivated me to write more.	4.188	.655	High
20	Overall, writing online reflective journals was a worthwhile experience.	3.500	.816	High
1	Online reflective journal writing encouraged me to keep a journal and write my reflections daily.	3.188	.911	Moderate
6	Online reflective journal writing allowed me to describe what I understood in writing.	3.063	.998	Moderate
11	Online reflective journal writing encouraged me to share what I wrote in my journal with others.	3.188	.981	Moderate
Total		**3.769**	**.463**	**High**

Note. SD: Standard deviation & LA: Level of agreement

teaching writing for EFL students and its potential impact on creative writing.

2. Make sure the participants are motivated and agree to write online reflective journals to improve their writing skills.

3. Informing students about the research and asking for their interest in participating in the study and telling them of their right to withdraw if they feel like this.

4. Training the participating students on writing their reflective journals by explaining how they should write, what ideas to include, and how to apply this skill online through sharing their regular journals on a messenger group established for this aim.

5. Follow up with the participants to ensure they are writing reflective journals daily or weekly, following the instructions from their teacher and the writing tasks in the Unlock book.

6. At the end of the experiment, distribute a questionnaire to all participants and collect their reflections to extract their attitudes towards the impact of online reflective journals on creative writing.

7. Analyzing the results obtained from the instruments of the study appropriately.

8. Present, explain and discuss the results, then draw conclusions and implications.

RESULTS

This research aimed at answering the following question: What are students' attitudes toward the impact of online reflective journals on creative writing? To answer this question, means and standard deviations of students' attitudes towards the online reflective journal technique as measured by the attitude scale were extracted.

Table 3 illustrates the means and standard deviations for each scale statement.

The mean scores and standard deviations explained the student's attitudes toward writing online reflective journals strategy. Ranges of agreement with the attributions on the survey were determined by using the following rubric: the interval of 1-1.80 showed a deficient level, the 1.80-2.60 interval showed a low level, the 2.61-3.40 interval showed a moderate level, the 3.41-4.20 interval showed high level, and the 4.21-5.00 interval showed a very high level of agreement with the statement on the survey. As shown in Table 3, the results of the descriptive statistics indicated that students' attitudes towards writing online reflective journals strategy as indicated by the mean scores ranging from 3.063 to 4.375 for the items and 3.769 for the entire scale on a five-point scale. With this in mind, students reported moderate to a very high level of students' attitudes toward writing online reflective journals.

DISCUSSION

This research investigated EFL students' attitudes towards the impact of online reflective journals on creative writing. The results showed that EFL students had positive attitudes towards the impact of writing online reflective journals on creative writing. The results also revealed that students preferred writing online reflective journals. The results also showed that online reflective journals helped students improve their creative writing.

The total results in the questionnaire were high (viz. with a mean score of 3.769). The questionnaire results are consistent with a previous study carried out by Farrah (2012), who found that students had very positive attitudes towards writing reflective journals. The researcher attributed EFL students' positive attitudes to the fact that students liked the strategy of writing reflective journals. Furthermore, the researcher believes that students' attitudes were favorable towards writing reflective journals because they witnessed improvements in their writing skills and creative writing, which motivated them to continue writing them. The students felt that this experience had helped them

write better than before, which has affected their academic achievements in writing positively. The researcher also attributed the positive attitudes to other reasons.

As seen in **Table 3**, students' attitudes towards writing reflective journals were positive. The mean, standard deviation, and level of agreement for each were shown. Item 9, *online reflective journal writing, helped me produce original ideas,* and item 7, *online reflective journal writing, improved my ability to elaborate more and add more details in writing* got the highest means. This indicates that students have benefited from writing online reflective journals to improve their originality and elaboration. This is consistent with the posttest results, which showed that students improved in these two creative writing skills.

Other items that have shown high ranking are items 2 *"online reflective journal writing improved my ability to express my ideas and opinions in writing,"* and item 5 *"online reflective journal writing enhanced my fluency in writing.* This indicates the high positive effect of writing online reflective journals on enhancing students' fluency and their effectiveness in improving students' ability to express their feelings and ideas. Items 10 *online reflective journal writing enhanced my communication skills in writing*, and 19 *online reflective journal writing motivated me to write more* have shown high ranking, and both indicate the importance of using online reflective journals to improve students' communication skills and motivation toward writing.

Item 13 *online reflective journal writing offered me a chance to develop and reinforce my writing skills* and a high ranking. This was illustrated by the clear improvements in students' writing and the posttest results of the experimental group. The students recognized the positive impact of writing online reflective journals on their writing skills, which has positively affected their attitudes.

The items: 1 *online reflective journal writing encouraged me to keep a journal and write my reflections daily*, 6 *online reflective journal writing allowed me to describe what I understood in writing*, and 11 *online reflective journal writing encouraged me to share what I wrote in my journal with others* have shown moderate rankings in comparison with other items. However, their means were not low, and they still showed students' good attitudes after they started writing online reflective journals.

In order to learn more about students' perceptions and attitudes toward writing online reflective journals, the researcher asked her students to reflect openly by writing their reflections and posting them on the Messenger group. Most of the students believed that writing online reflective journals has affected their writing skills positively. One of the students reported, "*Reflective journals have improved my writing skills and have enriched my language, I had to write every week and every time I had to search for new vocabulary items that I needed in writing my reflective journals*". Another student reflected, "*Reflective journals enhanced my confidence in writing, now I can write longer paragraphs with more details instead of short paragraphs and sentences*". Another student wrote

> "At the beginning of this semester I had serious problems with essay writing. Now, thanks to online reflective journals, I have been able to overcome my problems. Every time I wrote a reflective journal, I learned new things. Now I can express my ideas and feelings better than before".

Other students believed that online reflective journals were a great experience to write freely and talk about their ideas and feelings. One student wrote that

> "Writing Reflective journals was a great way to help me express my ideas and feelings better; my skills in writing have also improved as I had to write very frequently, and I learned more about my weaknesses and my strengths in writing."

Another student reflected,

> "This was the best way I used to learn to write. I learned new words and synonyms to express my ideas. I felt that I was writing without any restrictions, which encouraged me to express myself freely. I hope other teachers will use it because it is efficient".

Some students expressed the influence of writing reflective journals on their general attitudes towards writing and online learning. One of them wrote,

> "I did not expect to have that big influence on me this semester, I became so excited and passionate about learning the English language and writing. I started to write better than before. I found myself searching for new words to use in my sentences. I started looking for the quality of my writing by revising the structure and grammar before I posted my reflective journals to the group. My experience writing online reflective journals has improved my attitude towards the online learning experience. It was fun and exciting".

Some students expressed their positive attitudes towards writing online reflective journals as they felt they had gained new skills they did not have before. One student wrote,

> "For the first time, I felt I have the ability to write and write continuously without stopping and without any restrictions. Writing ORJ has helped me to express myself more fluently than before. For the first time, I find myself completely independent, I don't have to search on the internet to find ideas for writing. All my ideas are generated genuinely from my experiences. This has benefited me a lot and increased my self-confidence."

Another student wrote,

> "Writing online reflective journals has reinforced my communication skills. Before I started writing online reflective journals, I used to be shy and hesitant to communicate my ideas with my classmates, and then I started writing online reflective journals and posting them on the group with confidence and without any fears. My teacher and my classmates were open and motivating all the time. They used to encourage me by posting positive comments and notes. I believe this strategy should be used by all teachers in all topics, not just English."

Other students were more specific concerning gaining new skills in writing. For example, one wrote,

> "Online reflective journals helped me more than I thought! This strategy made me write better than before. I learned to use correct punctuation marks, grammar, and appropriate word selection in paragraphs. Moreover, now I have a small notebook in which I write daily reflections on my life events and actions in English!"

Another student expressed her special experience by saying,

> "Online reflective journals helped me write and write constantly in English and on topics related to my personal experience. I am happy to write on topics from my daily life. This makes writing more relevant, more meaningful, and easier than before".

Some students reflected positively on the friendly and secure environment in which they used to write and post their online reflective journals. One student wrote,

> "I enjoyed this experience as I could write online reflective journals and share them with my teacher and my classmates, fearing nothing! Even if I had some mistakes, I was always welcomed and encouraged to write and work to improve my writing. I felt at some stages that all the barriers against writing have vanished from my heart and mind and that all English teachers should use this way to encourage their students to write successfully."

Hence, the findings of this research are consistent with other studies carried out and proved the positive attitudes of learners towards writing reflective journals, for example, Abednia et al. (2013), Cheng (2017), and Ruiz-López et al. (2015). These previous studies have confirmed the positive attitudes learners have after living the experience of writing reflective journals, which correspond with the findings of this study.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This research was conducted to investigate EFL learners' attitudes towards the impact of online reflective journals on creative writing. The findings indicated the positive attitudes EFL learners conveyed after adopting the strategy of online reflective journals. The findings also revealed that this strategy could be used to improve EFL learners' basic writing skills as it was apparent how students' tendency towards writing has improved significantly. Based on these conclusions, the researcher strongly recommends that EFL teachers adopt online reflective journals at schools and universities to help their students overcome some obstacles related to writing skills. EFL teachers are also invited to use this strategy to improve other language skills, such as reading comprehension. Teachers and administrators are recommended to utilize this strategy to examine students' learnability in other school and university topics, not just the English language. Hence, the researcher would extend her recommendations to curricula designers and professionals to include this strategy in textbooks to attract more teachers to use it with their students.

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