

# Self-disclosure in EFL writing by computers

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## Reference data:

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Self-disclosure during the pedagogical process of English language learning is shown in this paper to enhance the likelihood of a positive outcome. A computer-mediated communication (CMC) environment designed to facilitate and promote effective English writing skills and learner autonomy in Japan is outlined within, along with a review of current work in this area, focusing on computer-mediated self-disclosure of Japanese university students from a psychological perspective. A self-disclosure technique was implemented in two dimensions online in the form of weekly assignments in paragraph writing and discussion forums given to 203 of the first grade students at Ehime University over a 15-week semester. Students showed a dramatic improvement in both their English writing and their critical thinking abilities, whilst reporting an increase in overall enjoyment and autonomy, as found in their response to a 36-item self-report questionnaire. The paper goes on to discuss the role of self-disclosure supported by computers in EFL writing and also how computer activities can be integrated into the regular structure and goals of English writing courses.

英語学習の教育上の課程で「自己開示」は、確かな成果の可能性を高めることがこの論文で分かる。この論文ではコンピューターネットワークが間接的なコミュニケーションをつくる(CMC)環境が、日本の学生に英語の文書技術と自主性を効果的に促進したことについて述べている。学生自身の情報開示をコンピューターネットワークで行うことについて、心理学の見方で焦点をあてる。自己開示力の向上は、15週間、愛媛大学の一年生203人が、オンライン上で毎週文章を書くこととディスカッションの2つの方法を行うことにより実践した。最終的には、36項目の自己評価に示されたことは、文書力と自己表現力のレベルは劇的に改善を示し、楽しみながら自主性を促進ということである。この論文ではコンピュータには「自己開示」を助ける役割があること、英語のライティングの課程の中にとどのようにコンピュータを取り入れるかを説明する。

**A**UTONOMY, WHICH is defined as the extent to which learners demonstrate the ability to take control of their learning, has been investigated by learner autonomy researchers during the past decades on the grounds that it can increase motivation to learn and consequently increases learning effectiveness. In a normal educational context, as Little (2002) points out, learners do not automatically accept responsibility for their learning and they will not necessarily find it easy to reflect critically on the learning process. Ryan (1991) defines autonomy as a process of “self-determination” or “self-regulation”. He also links autonomy to “relatedness needs”, which are the needs for contact, support, and community with others. According to Ryan, this results in “autonomous interdependence” (p. 210). There is therefore a need for an intervention in ongoing classroom practice to promote learner autonomy.



### ***Autonomy and self-disclosure***

Self-disclosure can be defined as communication that relates to one's self (Canary & Cody, 1994). One feature of self-disclosure is its reciprocity, meaning that a person's disclosure increases the likelihood that the other party will also disclose. Numerous authors suggest that self-disclosure plays a critical role in student participation (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994), facilitating student-teacher interaction (Fusani, 1994) and achieving learning objectives (Cayanus, 2004; Downs, Javidi, & Nussbaum, 1988; Sorenson, 1989).

Morton (1978) classified self-disclosure in three dimensions: descriptive, evaluative, and topical. Descriptive intimacy was explained as "presenting very private, otherwise unavailable facts about oneself" (p. 73). To illustrate, an individual's presence provides a variety of easily observable characteristics (height, weight, etc.). So, as one reveals personal information that is not apparent, but nonetheless descriptive (marital status, place of birth, siblings, etc.), the intimacy and probability of reciprocity between the interactants increases. Of the three types of self-disclosure mentioned in the literature, descriptive intimacy presents the least amount of risk for the interactant because it is explanatory in nature. In contrast, the evaluative dimension pertains to disclosures that judge phenomena (Monsour, 1992). For example, a statement of like or dislike for a particular television program provides a deeper level of insight into one's cognitive schemata, and includes considerably more risk than does descriptive intimacy. Lastly, topical intimacy refers to disclosures regarding sensitive topics (Canary & Cody, 1994; Siegman & Reynolds, 1983). For example, the ability to talk about topics such as abortion, sexual orientation, and political affiliation and tell opinions signifies a significant bond with another individual. Similar to evaluative intimacy, the interactant assumes more risk when engaging in communication over sensitive topics.

McCarthy and Schmeck (1982) examined the relation between

teacher self-disclosure and measures of student affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning. Furthermore, studies have shown the role of emotional factors in second language learning and language teaching methodologies to specifically address emotional and psychological issues in the field of foreign language learning (e.g. Suggestopedia), some of which were motivated by Krashen's (1981) claims in the Monitor Model, specifically the part about the affective filter. Learning a foreign language is a potential cause of stress and anxiety, especially for adults in Japan. The aim of these methods is to eliminate the psychological barriers and to empower the learners to express themselves freely, overcoming their stress and anxiety. In addition, to be an autonomous learner, according to Dam (1990), "one is characterized by a readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the services of one's needs and purposes" (p. 17).

This paper describes how online self-disclosure can require students to take charge of their own learning in order to appear knowledgeable and competent in English writing. The online-published assignments of the English course provide a place where students need to practice their autonomous learning and participate in the reciprocal self-disclosure process with their classmates by searching for information to support their views and arguments. In addition, the paper explores the notions of learner and teacher responsibility and learner interaction in order to best understand how the online environment integrated with classroom activities can support EFL university students in Japan to take autonomous learning approaches.

### ***The Japanese learner***

A number of studies have compared the communicative behavior of Japanese with the behaviors of those in other cultures. Ishii (1984) argues that Japanese are relatively quiet and reserved, and expect listeners to read their minds. Japanese speak less compared with Americans (Ishii, 1984) and show



less self-disclosure (Barnlund, 1975, 1989). The assertiveness of Japanese was the lowest when compared with Malaysians, Filipinos, and Americans (Niikura, 1999), and Japanese are more introverted than British people are (Iwawaki & Eysenck, 1977). In classrooms, Japanese students are sometimes characterized as passive, introverted, unmotivated, inactive, and unresponsive (Hadley & Evans, 2001). Japanese students tend to be self-critical, blaming themselves for their failures more than they admire themselves for their successes (Kurman, Tanaka, & Elkoshi, 2003). A self-effacing attributional style in turn is known to be negatively related to a number of personality traits, such as self-esteem, and positively related to others, including trait social anxiety (Leary & Kowalski, 1995). Furthermore, some students will accept the certainty of negative evaluation in the form of bad grades for poor attendance or class participation rather than risk the possibility of being negatively evaluated or laughed at by their peers for making a mistake in public. Students are also concerned about standing out and appearing to show off their abilities. Kurmann (2001) states that one who displays one's knowledge is regarded in Japan as immodest, and immodesty is a negative behavior in Japan. Students' self-presentation is apparently internalized between the second and fifth years of primary school (Kurman, 2001). Students are caught in a double bind: If they make a mistake, they may face embarrassment and if they answer correctly, they become intentionally prevented from taking part in the activities of their group. This also indicates a significant degree of discomfort at judging peers being common in the group as a whole in Japan. Such discomfort may be a result of lack of confidence or experience in rating peers, or the stress caused by fear of hurting, or being hurt by, classmates (Wen & Tsai, 2006). Some studies (e.g., Sengupta, 1998) even found that because the traditional role of a teacher has been deeply rooted in students' minds, students do not trust peers' comments and think peer review is "a waste of time" (p. 22).

Power relations are also a factor, as students often dislike having power over their classmates, or peers exercising power over them (Liu & Carless, 2006). As a result, many students prefer to remain silent in the English classroom, where oral productive communication is the central concern and learners are expected to participate actively. Accordingly, writing allows Japanese people to release real emotions and feelings because there are no immediate repercussions if their words or feelings are not well received. Writing allows them to put more thought into what they communicate as opposed to letting powerful feelings and self-disclosure influence speech when faced with an emotionally charged situation of any kind.

### Study objective

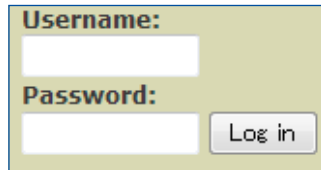
The aim of this research is to show how self-disclosure can help students become more autonomous in their learning and achieve a higher level of engagement in EFL writing classes and activities through computers, along with face-to-face instruction. In particular, the research identifies changes in the students' attitudes as autonomous learners, and in their autonomous learning practices.

### Participants and learning activities

This study was conducted at the Japanese national university of Ehime in Matsuyama, which has the largest number of students in the Shikoku region. The research was conducted with two groups of university students who had enrolled in the same English language writing course. Both groups were gender heterogeneous. One group served as an experimental group and the other as a control group. The participants were university intermediate learners of English with a TOEIC score range from 400 to 600 who were enrolled in a compulsory English writing course. In this course, students were expected to acquire the

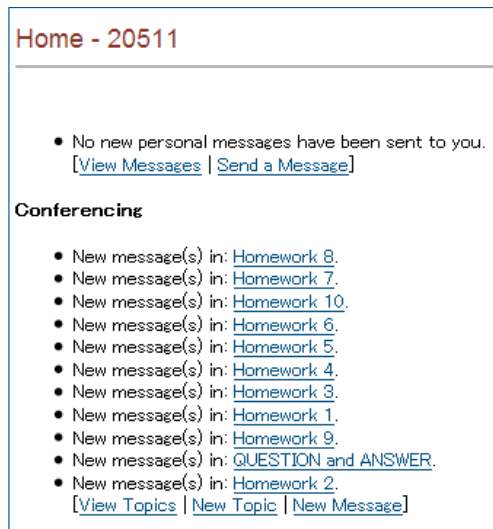


basics of composing written passages in English, the ability to write organized passages related to everyday topics, and the ability to give appropriate advice to others about their writing. The targeted online learning activities for this study were discussion forum assignments and weekly paragraph writing.



A screenshot of a login form. It has a light green background. At the top, it says "Username:" followed by a white text input field. Below that, it says "Password:" followed by another white text input field. To the right of the password field is a button labeled "Log in".

Figure 1. Log in using username and password



A screenshot of a web page titled "Home - 20511". Below the title, there is a message: "• No new personal messages have been sent to you." with links for "[View Messages](#)" and "[Send a Message](#)". Below this is a section titled "Conferencing" which contains a list of ten new messages, each with a link to a homework page (e.g., "[Homework 8](#)"). At the bottom of the list are links for "[View Topics](#)", "[New Topic](#)", and "[New Message](#)".

Figure 2. Writing course home page

The experimental group could log into the online system using usernames and passwords as shown in Figure 1 and thereafter access further pages via the course homepage shown in Figure 2. This provided them with a certain degree of learner control over postings, content, and time. The control group received the same learning materials as the experimental group, but the delivery method differed. For example, when a document was uploaded onto the homepage for the experimental group, the same material was printed and given to the control group.

### *Peer-to-peer evaluation using a rubric tool*

A rubric is a scoring tool for subjective assessments. It is a set of criteria and standards linked to learning objectives that is used to assess a student's performance on papers, projects, essays, and other assignments. Rubrics allow for standardised evaluation according to specified criteria, making grading simpler and more transparent. Rubrics are a practical and widely used evaluative structure throughout the writing process. Bargainnier (2003) argues that a rubric is often necessary when one wants to measure a performance in a more objective and meaningful way. In this research, a rubric was created by studying the extensive collection by Crawford (2001) and adapting it with special consideration for the unique Japanese context. In the rubric, paragraph-writing format, topic sentence, supporting sentences, supporting details, concluding sentences, unity, and accuracy were assessed.

Both the experimental and control groups started writing their first drafts as homework using pencils and papers. Students were then involved with reading each other's written paragraphs in class as they were being developed, checked, and proofread, for which pens or pencils were used for problematic grammatical, syntactical, lexical, organizational, and mechanical problems such as spelling and punctuation. The instructor was

responsible for proofreading the final drafts. The whole process was carried out face to face for the control group and electronically, using a projector to view the web pages in class, for the experimental group.

All students and the instructor used the scoring rubric which was manually scored. During this process, along with the work mentioned above, the instructor monitored students' work as it developed and vetted student peer evaluations, which makes it different from other notions of peer evaluation. In addition, the instructor made sure that peer reviews were handled smoothly, and ensured that tasks were carried out as they were planned in the course syllabus. Furthermore, there weren't any examination-driven or accuracy-oriented requirements. As a result, peer evaluation was successful in this particular environment.

### **Self-monitoring and proofreading**

The online assignments included writing ten paragraphs in ten weeks throughout the semester. As the course proceeded and students gained greater confidence in their English writing and grammar skills, they were required to also start a self-proofreading loop in their homework for their ten postings. Students were advised to use spelling and grammar checkers, cover the screen (for the experimental group) and read one sentence at a time, use their fingers to point at and read one word at a time, and keep a list of their most common errors to clarify with the instructor.

### **A rational explanation for learning activities**

In the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), researchers such as Schmidt (1990, 1995, 2001), Tomlin and Villa (1994), Robinson (1995, 2003), and Doughty (2001) have taken several concepts from the fields of psycholinguistics and cognitive psy-

chology in formulating their ideas. In particular, the cognitive processes of attention and memory pertain to SLA in general. Attention has been subdivided by Robinson (1995, 2003) into three subprocesses: attention as selection, attention as capacity, and attention as effort.

The self-disclosure technique implemented in two dimensions online, in the form of weekly paragraph writing and discussion forum assignments, combined with peer-to-peer evaluation using an online rubric tool, as well as self-monitoring and proofreading activities, are all pertinent to enhancing the input given to the student. This is because of using the technique of task variation with links between teacher-guided learning and learner-initiated activities outside class, which require the student to pay attention to details and develop the ability to work independently with motivation triggered by his/her self-disclosure and the desire to appear to others in the classroom as intelligent, knowledgeable, and capable. In other words, the goal was to encourage the student to say to him/herself: "I am grateful because my teacher and classmates read and appreciate my comments and postings. They make it possible for me to express myself and my views. I'm going to give them the very best I possibly can."

In addition, students were aware of the necessity to develop their computer skills for their future employment after graduation. Japanese society is so reliant on technology that kids are often using technology at home at younger ages. Therefore, when the students are also able to use their technological skills in the classroom they will be able to continue to sharpen these skills. When students are able to have access to technology in the classroom, they are not only opening the doors of the classroom, but also developing the technological skills that future employers will demand in the workplace. Bringing technology into the classroom is a giant motivator for students because it allows them to step away from traditional learning



methods, and allows them to have a more hands-on approach to learning.

## Methodology

A questionnaire containing 36 self-reporting items was used to assess each group's level of autonomy before and after the intervention. A modified questionnaire based on Cotterall's questionnaire (1995) to measure change in learners' attitudes and perception of themselves as autonomous learners was administered twice to 101 students in the control group and 102 students in the experimental group. The first questionnaire was administered during the first English class in the semester, and the second during the last class in the semester, approximately four months afterwards, in order to determine the extent that changes had occurred in students' perception towards themselves as autonomous learners, as had been engendered by using self-disclosure as a part of the English teaching strategy in writing.

Cotterall (1995) argues that before any intervention occurs, it is necessary to gauge learners' readiness for the change in behavior and beliefs which autonomy implies, after which a teacher can then determine the appropriate support for each learner. Her questionnaire was created using six dimensional factor analysis, and the dimensions used were (1) role of teacher, (2) role of feedback, (3) learner independence, (4) learner confidence in study ability, (5) experience of language learning, and (6) approach to studying. However, Cotterall (1995) concludes that the sixth factor, approach to studying, is not specific to language learning and may or may not be linked to beliefs underlying autonomy. Accordingly, the two questions under this factor were replaced with questions to investigate how CMC can affect student self-disclosure. There were 36 items which were incorporated into a five-point Likert-type rating scale ranging from strong agreement to strong disagreement with each item (see Appendix 1).

## Online implementation with gradual self-disclosure

Students submitted their English writing assignments with gradual cognitive exposure to their classmates. Each stage of self-disclosure was given a duration of three to four weeks.

Stage 1: In the first four weeks, random peer-to-peer assessments were used for assessing student performance using the rubric.

Stage 2: Students were asked to post their writing online on the class network web pages either by using anonymous names or their student ID numbers (descriptive self-disclosure) as shown in Figure 3.

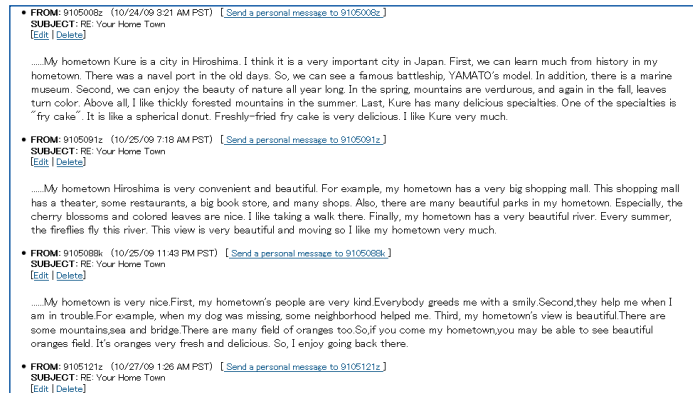


Figure 3. Using anonymous names or their student ID numbers

Stage 3: Students were given the choice of identifying themselves to other classmates by writing their real names at the top of their posted paragraphs as shown in Figure 4. Sample paragraph topics are shown in Figure 5. Paragraph assignments



started with daily life topics including hometowns and hobbies, then gradually shifted towards developing student personal depth and autonomy to one degree or another. Personal depth stands as the way to add richness to their thoughts and values. In addition, defining happiness or writing about one's personal life goal requires substantial autonomous learning efforts.

**FROM:** Sari Kuramoto (11/29/09 2:57 PM PST) [[Send a personal message to Sari Kuramoto](#)]  
**SUBJECT:** RE: Homework 4  
[\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)

.....When I was in America, I was surprised at how they greet each other. First, In Japan, though we hag sometimes, we never kiss each other. I knew the customs that they hag and make a kiss on the cheeks but when I was given kisses I was really surprised. Second, it is common among the teenagers. In Japan, teenagers are shy and never do like that kind of thing. Third, it gives me a happy feeling. I have never thought body language give me happiness. While I was there, people gave me a lot of hags and kisses. At first, I was surprised but loved the way to show their love.

**FROM:** Haruki Ohtsubo (11/29/09 5:02 PM PST) [[Send a personal message to Haruki Ohtsubo](#)]  
**SUBJECT:** RE: Homework 4  
[\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)

.....Japan has many interesting culture. First, for example, Japanese use the words, "I'm sorry", very frequently. We use the words when we want to say "Thank you". Of course, we say "I'm sorry" when we really want to apologize. Second, Japanese love the sliced raw fish, which called 'sashimi'. In other countries, people don't eat raw fish. Third, Japanese celebrate Christmas on a large scale, while Japan is Buddhism nation. Japanese are not interested in the religion. There are any other interesting culture in Japan. Japan is interesting country.

**FROM:** Natsumi Kuwahara (11/29/09 5:08 PM PST) [[Send a personal message to Natsumi Kuwahara](#)]  
**SUBJECT:** RE: Homework 4  
[\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)

.....About my culture, or Japanese culture, I think very interesting that most people are very punctual. This unique aspect can especially be seen in transportation. For example, when you go to a station, you can catch trains on time, and train crews make apologize if the train late even for a few minutes. In addition, in Japan, it is a manner to arrive few minutes before the appointment.

Figure 4. Using real names

- Write a paragraph that describes:
  1. Your hometown
  2. Your house
  3. Your culture
  4. People from other countries
  5. Hobbies in Japan
  6. Your hobbies
- How do young people in your culture behave differently from older people?
- What was the happiest event in your life? Why?

- What is the most difficult thing about English?
- What is happiness for you?
- What is your biggest goal in life?
- What is a "genius"?

Figure 5. Sample paragraph topics

Stage 4: Students were asked to participate in a discussion forum (evaluative self-disclosure) concurrently with the weekly paragraph writing assignment, by reading posted statements which they needed to decide if they agreed or disagreed with, along with posting original comments and responses to other student comments (one substantive original comment and two responses to other student comments) as shown in Figure 6. Sample discussion forum topics are shown in Figure 7. The class discussion forum provided opportunities for students to write their personal view on topics including university classes, future employment, etc.

**FROM:** toshibaka mochizuki (01/24/10 6:45 PM PST) [[Send a personal message to toshibaka mochizuki](#)]  
**SUBJECT:** RE:  
[\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)

.....I agree to this opinion. In my opinion, there are some lectures unnecessary for me for future like physics. Students should decide which lecture they attend because they do not have to attend unnecessary lectures.

**FROM:** kazuma isitani (01/24/10 6:48 PM PST) [[Send a personal message to kazuma isitani](#)]  
**SUBJECT:** RE:  
[\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)

.....I nearly agree to this opinion. This is because if students are allowed to choose what to study freely, mostly they will chose subjects they like. It's OK. However, there are other things they need for the future. Personally I think people should study not only what they like but also what they need for the future.

**FROM:** Toshiya Matsuda (01/24/10 6:49 PM PST) [[Send a personal message to Toshiya Matsuda](#)]  
**SUBJECT:** RE:  
[\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)

.....I strongly disagree with this idea. If the idea is allowed, more and more students select subjects only they are interested in. The attitude seems to be a child who doesn't eat vegetables. It is true that people say what one likes one will do well, but there is no discovery, no progress.

**FROM:** Yuki Hiramatsu (01/24/10 6:53 PM PST) [[Send a personal message to Yuki Hiramatsu](#)]  
**SUBJECT:** RE:  
[\[Edit\]](#) [\[Delete\]](#)

I think necessary subjects should be given by adults in young age. Students should be allowed to design their own curriculum after they learned a general education.

Figure 6. Discussion forum



Read the statement and decide if you agree or disagree. Please post original comments and responses to other student comments (one substantive original comment by mid-week and two responses to other student comments by the end of the week.

- University classes should start early in the morning.
- People must use helmets when riding their bikes
- Good education brings good jobs
- Students should be allowed to design their own curriculum

Figure 7. Sample discussion forum topics

Weekly assignment topics were written specifically for Japanese students aged 18 to 20 years old, and designed to encourage them to exchange opinions and share information about themselves and their lives. As for the experimental group, the instructor and students could access their online postings and give comments and feedback. Students worked in their peer groups then posted their writing online within at least the last 30 minutes of each 90-minute class, in which they shared their evolving work, exchanged ideas, and developed each other's writing with the instructor in a CMC environment as shown in Figure 8.

For the control group, their postings were paper-based and only the teacher could read and give feedback on the final drafts. It is important to note here that the control group knew that the experimental group had access to an online system, but they did not feel they were disadvantaged because they received the same learning materials as the experimental group. As for HTML links that the instructor posted online, they were written down on the whiteboard for the control group at the end of each class.



Figure 8. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) environment

## Results

### *Pre-intervention questionnaire*

As shown in Table 1, there were no significant differences between the experimental group and the control group on any of the factors investigated based on the F-test and the t-test ( $p > .05$ ).



Table 1. Pre-intervention questionnaire

Factors underlying the construct of autonomy	Experimental group	Control group	p value
Factor 1 role of the teacher	3.66+.66	3.64+.84	.661*
Factor 2 role of feedback	3.73+.81	3.91+.74	.144*
Factor 3 learner independence	3.59+.79	3.43+.85	.911*
Factor 4 learner confidence	3.13+.74	3.12+.88	.542*
Factor 5 experience of language learning	3.01+.85	2.79+.73	.734*
Factor 6 self-disclosure	3.14+.87	2.12+.84	.431*

Note: values expressed as mean + SD.\* p value by unpaired t-test for differences between the experimental group and the control group; significance level  $p < 0.05$ .

### Post-intervention questionnaire

Significant group differences were found on all measures ( $p < .05$ ) except the teacher's role as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Post-intervention questionnaire

Factors underlying the construct of autonomy	Experimental group	Control group	p value
Factor 1 role of the teacher	3.71+.83	3.56+.74	.611*
Factor 2 role of feedback	4.31+.76	4.04+.89	.014*
Factor 3 learner independence	4.14+.62	3.85+.83	.004*
Factor 4 learner confidence	3.81+.71	3.07+.75	.001*
Factor 5 experience of language learning	3.92+.75	3.09+.85	.004*
Factor 6 self-disclosure	4.32+.75	3.39+.61	.014*

Note: values expressed as mean + SD.\* p value by unpaired t-test for differences between the experimental group and the control group; significance level  $p < 0.05$ .

### Comparison between pre and post test

A t-test found a significant difference within the experimental group between the pre- and the post-intervention in terms of students' perceptions towards the role of feedback, their independence, their confidence, and their experience of language learning and self-disclosure as shown in Figure 9. There is no significance in terms of students' perceptions towards the role of teacher. Asterisks indicate a significant difference between pre- and post-test within the experimental group ( $p < 0.05$ ; unpaired t-test).

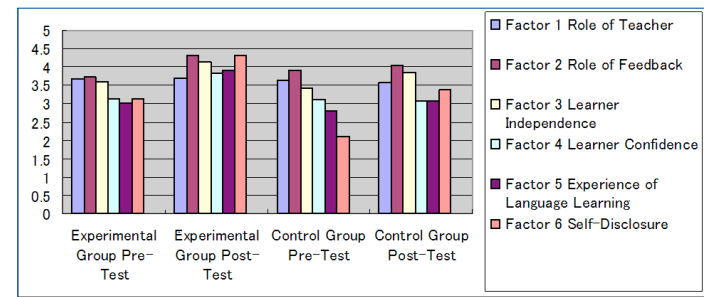


Figure 9. Comparison between pre-test and post-test results.

In addition, the realization of autonomy and self-disclosure was grounded in reflective comments from students including Taiga, who stated, "In my opinion, success from learning through online tools depends on the student. I think we cannot learn from only being taught in class", Miki, who stated "I am now practicing my writing skills. It's good for me to do this homework every week. I am gaining confidence in writing what's on my mind and I enjoy reading other postings. I will do my best to do exercises and show my classmates what I can do",

and Koji, who stated, “I always checked the website to see other classmates’ postings and compared them with mine. I could see how the others did their homework and know more about my classmates’ hobbies and personal views. This helped me improve my English writing skills and make friends”.

## Discussion

The findings from the questionnaire administered before the intervention show that, prior to the instructor integrating the online system into the course, the students in the experimental and control groups were not significantly different in terms of their attitudes towards (1) the role of the teacher, (2) the role of feedback, (3) themselves as independent learners, (4) themselves as confident learners, (5) themselves as experienced and successful language learners, or (6) their ability and willingness to self disclose information about themselves and their lives. The students reported that they perceived themselves as reasonably autonomous, as evidenced by the moderate scores collected for all of the five factors indicating perceptions of autonomy in addition to the sixth factor of self-disclosure. The results of the questionnaire after the intervention show that the experience of using the online system as a supplement in their course changed the way the students viewed feedback and the ways in which they viewed themselves as autonomous learners. To be more specific, they became more aware of the importance of feedback and claimed to have become more independent, more confident, and more experienced in language learning, with willingness to share information about themselves with their classmates in English. However, their perception of the teacher’s role was not significantly changed. This implies that the learners saw the teacher’s role in language learning as central, no matter whether an online system was integrated into the course or not. This is because learners are still unwilling to challenge the traditional authority figure of the teacher in Japan.

## Conclusions

This paper introduced effective strategies to incorporate autonomy into the EFL writing classroom. The findings show that after the intervention, the learners became more independent and increased their confidence. Moreover, they developed their own personal styles of autonomous behavior: for instance, making contributions to the course materials online, setting their own learning goals and planning for more practice outside class, and developing the skills to monitor and evaluate the progress of their learning. Factors that influence students’ positive attitude toward computers include the benefits of reciprocated self-disclosure, which is indispensable to building solid learning autonomy and motivation in EFL writing in Japan. As a result, teachers can promote student learning autonomy by including gradual self-disclosure, enabled by carefully integrating computer activities into their regular course structure.

## Bio data

**Adam Serag** is an Assistant Professor at Akita International University (AIU). He received his PhD in philosophy from Kagoshima University in Japan and a Master’s degree in TESOL from UTS in Australia. His research interests include Learner Autonomy, Applied Linguistics, EAP, FL Education, CALL, and E-learning. < tangaloma2000@yahoo.co.jp >

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## Appendix I

### Modified version of Cotterall's questionnaire (1995) to investigate learners' autonomous perception and self-disclosure

What do you think about learning languages?

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of these statements about your foreign language learning. For each of the questions, please circle a number (1-5):

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3= neutral, 4= disagree, 5=strongly disagree

Questionnaire Items	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
1. I avoid difficult things when I am studying	1	2	3	4	5
2. I know how to study languages well	1	2	3	4	5
3. I know how to study other subjects well	1	2	3	4	5
4. To learn successfully I need a good teacher	1	2	3	4	5
circle a, b or c					
5. I am a. better than average at language learning. b. average at language learning. c. worse than average at language learning.					
	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
6. It is important for me to be able to check the progress I make	1	2	3	4	5



7. I need the teacher to tell me about my progress	1	2	3	4	5
8. I usually know myself what progress I make without asking the teacher	1	2	3	4	5
9. I find it helpful for the teacher to give me regular tests	1	2	3	4	5
10. I have my own ways of testing how much I learn	1	2	3	4	5
11. I like studying alone	1	2	3	4	5
circle a, b or c					
12. I ask the teacher questions a. often b. sometimes c. never					
	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
13. I like trying new things out by myself	1	2	3	4	5
circle a, b or c					
14. I know which aspects of my English I want to improve a. often b. sometimes c. never					
	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
15. I have been successful in language learning in the past	1	2	3	4	5
16. I expect to be successful in my language learning in the future	1	2	3	4	5
17. I have a clear idea of what I need English for	1	2	3	4	5

18. I like to look for solutions to my problems by myself	1	2	3	4	5
19. I know when I make an error in English	1	2	3	4	5
circle a, b or c					
20. I check my own writing for errors a. often b. sometimes c. never					
	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
21. Learning a language is very different from learning other subjects	1	2	3	4	5
circle a, b or c					
22. Learning a language is like learning a. Mathematics b. History c. to play the piano d. to ride a bicycle e. none of the above.					
23. Using English outside the classroom is a. very important b. important c. unimportant d. very unimportant					
24. Studying grammar is a. very important b. important c. unimportant d. very unimportant					



	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
25. I want the teacher to set my learning goals	1	2	3	4	5
26. I want the teacher to tell me what my difficulties are	1	2	3	4	5
27. I want the teacher to tell me what to do	1	2	3	4	5
28. The teacher should make me work hard	1	2	3	4	5
29. I want the teacher to tell me how long I should spend on an activity	1	2	3	4	5
30. I want the teacher to help me	1	2	3	4	5
31. The teacher should always explain why we are doing an activity in class	1	2	3	4	5
circle a, b or c					
32. I ask the teacher for help a. often b. sometimes c. never					
	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
33. I like sharing information about myself and my life with other classmates in writing	1	2	3	4	5
34. I like writing and sharing information about my likes and dislikes in English	1	2	3	4	5
35. I like sharing information about the things that make me especially proud of myself	1	2	3	4	5
36. I like sharing and discussing my personal views on various issues in writing	1	2	3	4	5

37. I like writing and sharing information about my favorite ways of spending spare time	1	2	3	4	5
Comments or suggestions					

