

# **The Effects of the Station Rotation Model in Promoting Libyan Students' EFL Writing: Blended Learning**

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**Abstract:** In the new digital age, educational technology has been commonly integrated to improve educational practices. Despite the existence of basic facilities in secondary schools of Libya, the use of technology has not been officially encouraged and practiced by instructors. Likewise, there is no empirical account on how technology implementation could improve secondary school students' writing performance. This study aimed to explore how students' engagement in a Station Rotation Model (SRM) using a blended learning approach, could improve their writing performance. This study employed a quasi-experimental design, which includes 51 second-graders for the experimental (26 students) and control group (25 students) in a Libyan secondary state school in Alkhoms, Libya. The comparison of the students' pre-test and post-test writing scores on a 300-word essay indicated a significant improvement in their performance. This study employed a qualitative instrument to investigate students' perceptions of the SRM. The results of the focus group interviews further showed that the students had highly valued the online and collaborative aspects of the intervention for pleasure and pedagogical purposes. It was also found that the process-oriented view of learning is better demonstrated with an SRM writing course. The findings of this study can be a point of reference to stakeholders, teachers, curriculum designers and even students to develop an alternative writing approach to improve EFL students' writing performance.

**Keywords:** Blended learning, Libya, SRM, technology, writing

## **INTRODUCTION**

Many students experience a difficult time learning English as a foreign language (EFL), particularly writing skills. English teachers have used a variety of traditional and blended teaching

methods in order to support students in encountering these learning difficulties. Blended learning in particular has been reported to produce more desirable learning outcomes compared to traditional language learning (Khader, 2016; Wei, Shi, Yang, and Liu, 2017). Blended methods have also been stated to provide students with enormous incentives to understand and improve language skills (Cooner, 2010), and to give them a stronger sense of self than traditional classes (Rovai & Jordan, 2004). Hence, such methods are recommended to be used by both instructors and students in order to develop language skills (Elabbar, 2017), and to be investigated for their effectiveness.

As to the EFL context of Libya, language scholars have illustrated various challenges and difficulties faced by both teachers in professional teaching of a foreign language, and students in learning and communicating in it (Shalbag & Belhaj, 2012; Elraggas, 2014; Pathan, Al Khaiyali & Marayl, 2016; Gibreel, 2017; Mehdi, 2018). Pathan, Al Khaiyali and Marayl (2016) for instance, pointed out at the shortage in basic educational infrastructures, language materials, lack of motivation among majority of the English students, and lack of teacher training for the development of professional teaching skills. In spite of the existing problems and low-tech conditions, the required grounds for the practice of blended language learning are provided in the country. In this vein, Elmabruk (2011) stated that "the availability of Internet access to the wider public has rendered Internet-based continuous professional development within teachers' grasp, for they can individually access and benefit from ELT resources through numerous Internet cafes." (p. 2). Hence, the chances for an individual linguistic adventurism on the web seem to be a credible alternative to the conventional challenged language practices.

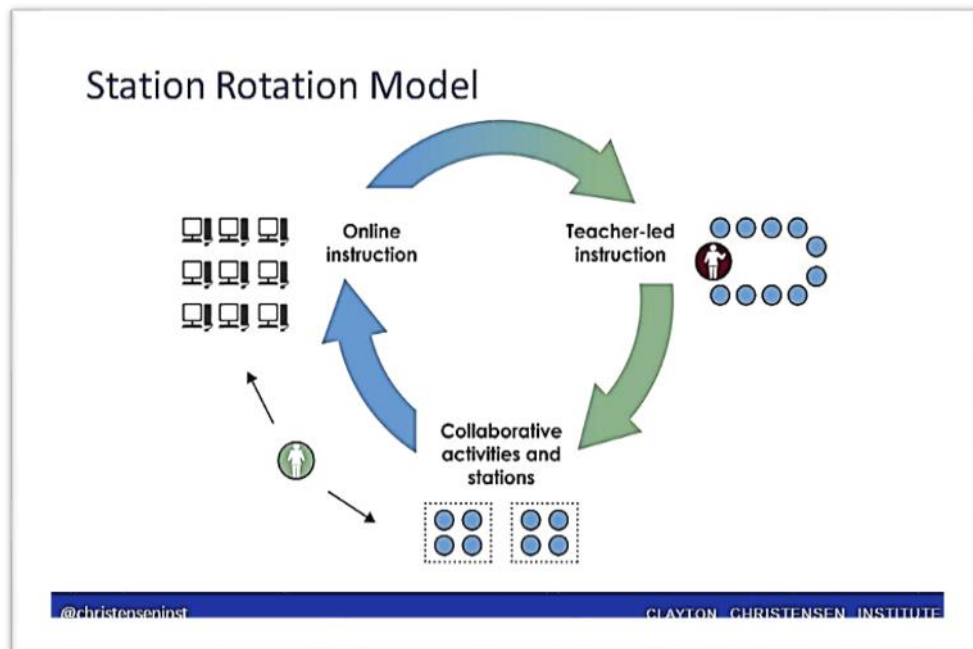
The purpose of the study is to explore the effectiveness of the SRM in teaching EFL writing among selected secondary school students in Libya. This study incorporates blended learning (BL), where the SRM allows language students to rotate between classroom-based learning modalities on a fixed schedule or at the discretion of the teacher in a specific course or subject, where at least one online learning station is needed due to the twist (Christensen, Horn & Staker, 2013). This model allows students to observe and benefit from both face-to-face instruction, online learning, and a range of immersive learning scenarios that their teacher has carefully selected (Christensen, Horn & Staker, 2013). Hence, the research gap is that the blended nature of the model is hence, expected to contribute to its effectiveness for Libyan EFL students who face numerous constraints in their conventional face-to-face classroom learning context. Moreover, it is highly likely that they have unique perceptions of language practice within such a BL domain. So it is hoped that this study will be a different attempt by providing significant pedagogical implications that will facilitate and improve the process of teaching and learning EFL writing using the SRM.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Writing as a fundamental language skill is one of the basic and central components of language (Cole & Feng, 2015). It is assumed to be a useful tool for students to learn their own way of thinking. It can also help students settle their thoughts and ideas by encouraging them to improve their writing. Many researchers however emphasise that EFL students face a variety of difficulties and issues when learning writing (Abdualkareem, 2013; Gibreel, 2017). Libyan students, likewise, face numerous obstacles and difficulties while studying EFL writing (Shalbag & Belhaj, 2012; Elraggas, 2014; Elmadwi, 2015). Despite the importance of this language skill, and the difficulties of its learning, Libyan authors, scholars, and even teachers have paid little attention to it (Abukhattala, 2017; Elabaar, 2017). Although there are increasing international guidelines and interest in classroom teaching and learning methods, few, if any, local

studies have been conducted in this field. Technology's rapid advancement and essential position in a variety of fields, including language learning and teaching, have been overlooked in language studies conducted in Libya. However, technology access has revolutionised educational practices in many aspects. As emphasised by Chew, Jones, and Turner (2008), BL that is a combination of education and technology is now the norm for educational attempts. The use of technology in education is to the effect that scholars such as Staker and Horn (2013) offered BL models like Rotation Model, Flex Model, A La Carte Model, and Enriched Virtual Model. BL is beginning to show its promise as an alternative approach compared to conventional educational models, according to Kumi-Yeboah and Smith (2018), since it puts less resources into classrooms.

The Station Rotation Model (SRM) in particular allows students to rotate between face-to-face and online learning modalities. In practise, this means that students come to school, sit at their desks, and turn between traditional instruments such as tutorials on paper and online learning on devices such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops. It also means that for certain classes, students can transfer from the classroom to a computer lab. For example, students may need to attend a flipped classroom to obtain required course content online before proceeding to a traditional school for face-to-face teacher-guided classroom instruction (Lalima & Dangwal, 2017). The SRM, according to the Christensen Institute (2013), is an extension of the rotation model, in which students rotate between classroom-based learning modalities on a fixed schedule or at the discretion of the teacher in a specific course or subject. At least one online learning station is needed due to the twist. Activities such as small group or whole class training, school events, student tutoring, and pencil and paper assignments may be available at certain stations. This model allows students to observe and benefit from face-to-face instruction, online learning, and a range of immersive learning scenarios that their teacher has carefully selected (Christensen, Horn & Staker, 2013).



**Figure 1.** Station Rotation Model (Christensen, Horn & Staker, 2013)

The SRM differs from other mixed learning rotational models in that it requires students to travel to all training stations on a set schedule (Maxwell and White, 2017). A timer is often installed in an SRM classroom to remind students to move on to the next stop. Classrooms can have two, three, or four learning stations; regardless of the number of stations, all students will

proceed through each station within the assigned class time. This design has become the accepted practice in schools all over the world. Adopting the SRM greatly aids teachers in their professional development. Teachers will interact with students in small groups on a regular basis by dividing the class into small groups. This enables teachers to customize student learning to various degrees of control. Students can get personalised attention at an online station, and in many situations, core skills can be gained through positive training and an engaging environment. When used correctly, the SRM has the ability to improve academic results significantly. Furthermore, various applications can be used via online learning stations to foster the imagination of the students. In addition, the online station allows an immersive learning environment by taking the learning beyond the four walls of the classroom. Teachers can motivate students to participate in a variety of learning events, such as scavenger searches, Twitter messages, and backchannel talks (Miller, Risser & Griffiths, 2013).

In terms of the financial aspect of the SRM implementation, Kim Jun (2013) claims that its implementation saves money for schools and students. It is less expensive compared to many other mixed learning models. For example, the lab SRM and the Individuality Rotation Model both require each learner to have a computer, and the Flipped Model needs students to have both home computers and internet access. However, for a class of thirty students, the SRM requires no more than ten laptops because, when one group uses them, the other two groups would work in two separate stations, such as the teacher-led station and the collaborative station. It also eliminates the need for students to purchase their own computers or have a registered wireless link at home. Since it does not necessitate separate classroom shapes or the construction of laboratories, the SRM can also be used in a normal classroom.

The results of past studies on the effectiveness of the SRM in improving students' writing skills in EFL classrooms have pointed at its appropriateness for writing instructions. Truitt (2016) for instance performed a heuristic case study on the implementation of the SRM in a third-grade classroom. He aimed to provide educators with an accurate explanation of classroom events within the SRM. A group of third graders participated in interviews with a student focus group and completed student questionnaires during the semester-long review, which yielded five positive and two negative themes regarding the SRM. The positive themes were content, technology, fearing, having fun, and getting help, while the two negative ones were challenging work and technology. The overall experience of the SRM, according to Truitt, was very optimistic and involved (Truitt, 2016). Nagy & Mohammed (2018) who examined the effect of the SRM on the writing abilities of preparatory students reported that the model is promising for enhancing the writing performance of students in a number of interventions. A total of 25 students from a Cairo preparatory school participated in the study. The students were randomly assigned to either the SRM group or the control group. The data were gathered both qualitatively and quantitatively. Writing assessments, a critical writing rating rubric, a descriptive checklist for writing results, and writing samples were used to analyze the data. The results showed that the participants performed better in concept brainstorming, reflection, organisation, precision, and fluency. The findings also pointed to slightly higher levels of vocabulary acquisition. Aldukhi (2020) likewise reported that the use of the SRM caused students to become more creative in writing essays. For example, they created Adobe voice notes to express their opinions on various topics.

The effectiveness of the SRM inspires scholars to further implement the model in various language contexts where the minimum affordances are provided for students and teachers. There have been no studies to date that has examined the effects of the Station Rotation Model in Promoting Students' EFL Writing in Libyan EFL context. The SRM implementation in Libyan classrooms would be simple and inexpensive because it will not incur significant costs and would not necessitate specific requirements in schools, as the secondary school where this

study was conducted already has a computer lab and internet connectivity. What further necessitates an implementation of the SRM is that, Libya is in dire shortage of scholarly accounts on how to resolve the abundant writing challenges faced by Libyan EFL students. In view of the fact that the EFL contexts of Libya has its own unique cultural and technological constraints and affordances, the SRM implementation would show how it could help Libyan EFL students with their writing practices. Based on the results of past studies, SRM can be perceived as a potential model for developing EFL students' essay writing skills and address their challenges in writing.

## **Research Questions**

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. To what extent does the SRM in blended learning promote EFL Libyan students' writing?
2. What are EFL Libyan students' perceptions of blending learning when using the SRM to learn writing?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This research is a quasi-experimental design in that it aimed to compare the pre-test and post-test scores of two classes that are not distributed at random (Creswell, 2016). This design was chosen because it does not necessitate the formation of artificial communities, which could interfere with ongoing lessons. The first research question was quantitatively answered using the pre-test and post-test scores gathered at the beginning and end of the SRM intervention. Qualitative data from focus group interviews were used to answer the second research question, the participants' perceptions of their experience.

### **Sample**

The sample of the study comprised 51 second-graders who are high school students aged 16 years old studying in a Libyan secondary state school in Alkhoms, Libya, at the time of data collection. The samples entail students from two different courses. A number of 25 students from the first course was recruited as the experimental group, and another 26 students were selected from another course to participate in the control group. The courses and participants were selected using the purposive sampling technique to ensure the representation of Libyan second-graders. Purposive sampling is used when a representative sample is required or expert opinion in a particular field is sought (Martinez-Mesa, Gonzalez-Chica, Duquia, Bonamigo, & Bastos, 2016). The samples were recruited from a state school, since state schools have students from all social groups, as well as a larger number of students. The selection of second-graders is deemed as having the potential to yield richer data because this level serves as a bridge between high school and university.

### **Intervention of SRM**

The SRM intervention for the experimental group was conducted in a 45-minute writing class held twice a week for the duration of 14 weeks. The intervention lasted for 18 sessions, with

the first and last sessions set aside for data collection. The intervention had three stations and differed from other mixed learning rotational schemes in that it depended on fixed timetables that necessitated all students to visit all of the stations. A timer was provided in the station rotation classroom, and the students could move to the next station when the alarm sounded. Every station demonstrated a different method of teaching EFL writing. The first station was a teacher-led instruction station, in which the teacher differentiated instruction, which is a method for teachers to increase students' learning by matching their attributes to guidance and assessment. The second station was an online instruction station, where the instructor used a timer and students completed the station at their own pace. Online resources assisted students in managing specific competencies and scheduling conferences or time slots that allowed for fast feedback loops or processes to verify and validate understanding. The collaborative writing was the third station, where students worked in groups to write an essay based on the syllabus. The number of groups formed was determined by the total number of students in the class. In this station, the students collaborated to complete their task and were given the liberty to also split tasks. While the experimental group was taught through SRM, the control group was taught using the traditional method.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

### **Quantitative Data Collection Procedures**

Students' writing performance was evaluated using pre and post writing tests, as well as the effect of the SRM on their writing. This quantitative data was utilised to establish the SRM's true impact on the participants' writing ability and performance. In pre-post writing tests, students were asked to write a 300-word essay both before the SRM intervention and at the end of it. The topic of the essay was selected from students' textbook. The writing test was adopted from the standardised international tests which have been widely used by many previous studies. Tests are frequently used to examine students' performance and academic accomplishments in relation to the effectiveness of the teaching methods (Jamil, Aziz, and Razak, 2010).

### **Qualitative Data Collection Procedures**

Focus group interviews were conducted to collect the qualitative data on students' perceptions of the SRM. The focus group sample was randomly divided into two sub-groups of 9 members and one sub-group of 8 members to engage in focus group interviews. Fewer number of students in each focus group could serve the collaborative nature of the groups in the construction of knowledge. At the beginning of the interview, the purpose of the study was explained to the participants of each focus group. They were assured, that their personal details would be kept confidential and will be used just for research purposes. The interviewer led efforts to engage the students quite actively in the discussions via establishing rapport with them, informing them of the topics they were to talk about, and explaining the educational advantages of the study to their language learning. The interviewer then asked the students some introductory questions about their education to feel more relaxed and grounded in the study. The focus group interviews included questions based on the advantages and disadvantages of the SRM, the problems of SRM, students' likes and dislikes about the SRM, the differences between the SRM and conventional writing courses, the students' advice to EFL teachers on the use of SRM, and the effects of SRM on students' writing.

## **Data Analysis**

The students' essays were assessed based on the analytical scoring scale proposed by Jacobs et al. (1981), and later adopted by Weigle (2002). This scale was used to assess compositions based on five aspects of writing that have different weightage. Based on this rubric, 30 percent of the composition general score is determined by its content. Language use has a lower weightage of 25 percent in the general score. The two writing aspects of organization and vocabulary usage are equally valued in the analysis, with each presenting a 20 percent score. The least value is given to the mechanics of writing, namely, 5 percent. Each essay was separately assessed for each writing aspect and a distinct score was provided for each aspect of writing. The scores for the five writing aspects were added to represent the final score of each essay. Two English teachers of the secondary state school rated the pre-test and post-test essays based on the given rubric and the average of their rates were used for the analysis. T-test was used to analyse the essays for any improvement in the students' writing under the effect of the SRM intervention.

The focus group interview data were transcribed. The transcriptions were then analysed by two analysts from a high school who have more than 10 years of teaching experience who had been instructed on how to find and highlight the ideas mentioned by the students. They followed a directed content analysis approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) to highlight the codes reflecting their perceptions of the SRM. Only the codes that were extracted by the two analysts were decided to be valid to be included for further analysis. The codes extracted by the analysts were found to be in agreement up to 84 percent. These initial codes were utilised to develop categories of ideas, which were in turn merged to create general themes. In order to avoid the false interpretations in their analyses, they also checked the themes against the students' responses.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Research Question1: To what extent does the SRM in blended learning promote EFL Libyan students' writing?**

The results of descriptive statistics showed that the average mean score and standard deviation were respectively 56.61 and 14.40 for the pre-test while these values were 71.73 and 14.48 for the post-test. An improvement of 15 points was observed in the students' scores after the SRM intervention. The t-test results showed the improvement was statistically significant ( $t = 14.61$ ,  $\text{Sig.} = 0.00$ ). This piece of finding indicates that engagement in the courses managed and run based on SRM principles can significantly improve students' writing scores. This finding is in tandem with that of Nagy (2018), who reported that the SRM can improve the writing performance of Egyptian students. Adas and Bakir (2013) also reported positive effects of blended learning on the writing of Arab EFL students who had difficulties in organization, Arabic structures, run-on sentences, limited vocabulary, and punctuation. Hence, blended learning using technology is conceived to improve several aspects of English writing such as structure, vocabulary, organization, and mechanics.

The rotation from the teacher-led station to the online platform provides students with abundant resources necessary for writing, which are not available in conventional writing courses. As reiterated by Hill and Hannafin (2001), in the new digital age, the educational perspectives and the nature of resources have exponentially changed. Accordingly, both the accessibility and amount of information have extensively grown to the benefit of the individuals who are engaged in education. Although in a conventional writing class, the students feed on their instructors' feedbacks and corrections, in an SRM intervention, they find excessive

possibilities to go beyond their teachers' help. This shows that writing skill is more of an individual adventurousism that requires students to use online resources, negotiate with their peers, and reconsider ideas to come up with better writing ideas. In fact, the quality of writing improves due to having access to the required resources rather than a long time cultivation of skills in the brain. Students need ideas to develop the content of their compositions, and diverse ranges of vocabularies and structures to rely on. Such ideas, structures, and vocabularies are hardly cultivated in the brains of novice writers. What interventions like the SRM do is, it provides the required resources in the form of online pamphlets and peers' comments. The organization of writing is also highly bound to reconsideration of ideas in interaction with other students.

In teacher-led courses, the students are limited to face-to-face paper-and-pencil exchange of ideas with their instructors. The instructors may hardly find enough time to provide constructive feedbacks on different aspects of their students' compositions. This piece of finding signifies that at least part of what EFL language students need for successful writing is beyond teachers' control, time, and energy. , the constructivist nature of the SRM implies a sharp departure in the writing processes of students, when they freely share ideas and use the comments of other students to develop richer mindsets required for writing. Constructivist views on learning and teaching, though proposed by Vygotsky (1978) a long time ago, has come to real terms of use in the face of new technology-oriented educational settings. Shift of focus from teacher centredness (Burton & Carroll, 2001), has enabled students to have a more active involvement in their pedagogical processes. Nagy and Mohammed (2018), points out that the construction of knowledge enhances the creativity of students within the framework of blended learning. When students find the chances to share ideas and take advantage of their peers' comments (Shih, 2011), they start to develop their creativity.

One more benefit of the SRM intervention is that it is relied on process-oriented views to learning, where traditional product-oriented views are wholly debunked. The fact that students personally engage in writing on online spaces underscores the priority of process over final writing outcomes that were conventionally valued in EFL courses. As reported by Ngadiman (2012), the writing processes may vary from learner to learner due to different proficiency levels. Feeding into this are a variety of individual differences such as language learning goals, self-regulatory capacities, aptitude, and short memory (Kormos, 2012), which causes students to follow personal and sometimes idiosyncratic processes to learning writing.

## **Research Question 2: What are EFL Libyan students' perceptions of blending learning when using the SRM to learn writing?**

Diverse fractions of the focus group pointed at various themes to express their perceptions of the SRM-based writing course. The themes that were found to be conceptually tied were merged to be presented under the same category in order to yield a more structured view of the learners' mindsets. This hence necessitated the combination, and discussion of data from more than one interview question in one place. The in-depth content analysis of focus group discussions hence showed the five main themes, namely, the advantages and disadvantages of the SRM, the unique features of the SRM, the main drawbacks of the SRM, the challenges of implementing the SRM, and suggestions on the use of the SRM.

### ***Advantages and Disadvantages of the SRM***

The learners expressed their ideas about the three stations underlying the SRM, which showcases the its advantages and disadvantages. Learners evaluated the three stations, in terms of their pedagogical values and pleasurable features. The learners were mostly positive about the



online phase of the program while the collaborative phase was also approved moderately, as a well-functioning phase. The face-to-face stations were however degraded, as indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Perceptions of the SRM

<b>Parts</b>	<b>Stations</b>	<b>Pedagogy (%)</b>	<b>Pleasure (%)</b>
The best parts	Online station	60	
	Collaborative station	20	
	Online and collaborative phases	20	54
The worst part	Face-to-face station	50	81

The analysis of focus group data indicated that 16 learners (approximately 60% of all the learners) perceived the online station to be the best part of the SRM. 5 learners (20 percent) in parallel perceived the collaborative phase of the program as the best part. 5 learners (20 percent) however assigned equal values to both the online and collaborative phases of the experience as complementary parts. Generally speaking, the online aspect of the SRM was underscored as its unique pedagogical feature because it could provide them with excessive information resources that were even lacking in the collaborative phase of the program. The following exchange of responses illustrate how the learners highlighted either the online or collaborative phases of the SRM, or assigned equal pedagogical values to them:

- I really enjoyed the online and collaborative phases of the experience because online resources and friends' comments help me develop a better grasp of writing.*
- But I found the online resources more beneficial. What the use of the Internet provided was far beyond my classmates' knowledge.*
- Collaboration was equally important to me. Although the online station provided more information resources, the role of peers was equally noticeable in the selection and organization of content, vocabulary, and grammar.*

Zhang (2018) has already provided empirical evidence on how the use of online resources can provide EFL students with pertinent knowledge bases required for meaning-making and producing effective writing. In parallel, collaborative writing has been reported to help EFL students in generating ideas and activating background knowledge (Anggraini, Rozimela, & Anwar, 2020). The students' responses in this study and the existing pieces of evidence in the literature signify that the online and collaborative phases of the SRM can function like a complementary pair. The online station provided required knowledge resources, while the collaborative station helped students to create and activate meaning. In practice, collaboration acts like an extension of accessibility to online knowledge bases. The students not only assigned greater values to the online and collaborative phases of the SRM in terms of usefulness, they also found these two stations more pleasurable than the traditional face-to-face station. Although some educational frames that have high pedagogical values are not joyful for students, the online and collaborative nature of the intervention were reported to be both pedagogically useful and personally pleasing for the students. In contrast, they pointed that they did not like the conventional face-to-face stations of the SRM. They reported to have been used to this tradition for years and found no pleasure in it. This signifies the importance of novelty and variety in language class, where there are alternatives to conventional aspects. The following

excerpts highlight students' interest in the online and collaborative aspects of the SRM and their dislike of the traditional method:

- Educational values aside, the online part of the intervention was very pleasing. It was also interesting when we had to collaborate and share ideas with peers.*
- Although the model was new to us, we really enjoyed searching on google for topics and vocabulary.*
- the model was equally interesting and efficient in improving our writing skill.*

In contrast, the conventional face-to-face station of the SRM was found to be boring and even ineffective for improving writing. A larger portion of learners (81 %) did not hesitate to disapprove the face-to-face station. They reported to have been used to this tradition for years and found no pleasure in it. This signifies the importance of novelty and variety in language class, where there are alternatives to conventional aspects. Some learners (50 %) even downgraded the pedagogical efficiency of the face-to-face phase even though the teacher was able to perform his duties, as indicated below:

- However, I found nothing pleasing in the face-to-face part of the program. It was like other courses.*
- When compared, the face-to-face session seems to be tiring.*
- I don't mean we don't need the face-to-face stations. It is just a matter joy and pleasure. The online and collaboration stations were more interesting.*

Theoretically, the face-to-face station of the SRM is determined to have its own inevitable pedagogical contribution to the whole model. Hence, the learners' undervaluing of this part of the SRM can be attributed to either an inefficient implementation, or their comparison of the face-to-face station with the other two sections that are naturally more varied, and pleasing. At least, the basics of a successful writing course are better shared in conventional fields.

### ***Differing Features of the SRM***

Participants claimed that the SRM has its own different features providing them with a unique language learning experience. However, they did not provide solid pieces of evidence differentiating the SRM from other writing courses applying technology and aiming to improve writing in various aspects. Learners again underscored the use of educational technology as the unique feature of the SRM. They also asserted that the program is well-featured to improve their knowledge of spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and writing content (Table 2).

**Table 2:** The Differing Characteristics of the SRM

<b>The characteristics of the SRM</b>	<b>Statistics</b>
Use of educational technology	89%
Spelling	35%
Vocabulary knowledge	50%
Structure	35%
Content for writing	81%

Reliance on educational technology was negotiated to be the main characteristic of the SRM distinguishing it from other language learning venues. A big majority of the learners (89%) explicitly pointed at the use of computers to highlight how their writing experience had been

distinct and novel to them. However, they did not point at the collaborative station as a unique feature of the SRM, probably because of previous implementation of collaboration in their courses. Although the use of educational technology in language class requires both accessibility and professional development in technology use, collaboration-based methods of teaching have a more solid root in language learning theories and are not that innovative to both language teachers and learners. Constructivist approaches to learning have been already enacted in communicative and task-based language teaching methods. In practice, at least a partial practice of constructivism is observable even in face-to-face language classes, but what makes a noticeable difference is educational technology. Despite the claim for its uniqueness, the SRM was not a sharp departure from conventional writing courses, as illustrated in the following excerpts:

- the different part of the program was use of computers and technology.*
- use of computers led to new language behaviours such as typing and surfing the net.*
- technology even changed the way our teacher behaved in class.*

The learners in parallel stated that the SRM is featured to improve various writing aspects. 21 (change to percentage) learners recurrently referred to excessive accessibility to relevant information resources required for writing content. Half the learners (13-change to percentage) also pointed at an improvement in their vocabulary knowledge. A smaller portion of the learners (9-change to percentage) further highlighted how their spelling and structural knowledge improved under the effect of the SRM. The learners mostly referred to the online venue of the SRM in order to state its uniqueness in enhancing various writing aspects. The following extracts illustrate it:

- The program can improve various writing aspects at the same time. This is what we mostly need in a writing course. Content, grammar, and vocabulary are equally touched.*
- Conventional writing courses lack this level of effectiveness in improving diverse writing aspects such as spelling and structure.*
- This uniqueness is mostly due to the use of technology that addresses some of the shortcomings in conventional classes.*

Learners promoted the uniqueness of the program in its effectiveness of improving different writing components, focusing on the online phase of the SRM. In this vein, it is worthy to note that Weigle (2002) champions that fact that, the incorporation of technology into language class can improve more than one writing aspect. The use of technology in language classes is hence, quite efficient in all aspects. Its use is also cost-effective and time-saving. Otherwise, language teachers would have to spend hours of teaching, providing the necessary writing resources and feedback on the writing products of language learners.

### ***Disadvantages of the SRM***

The learners only asserted two shortcomings for the SRM program they had experienced. A sizeable proportion of the participants (18) pointed at the short duration of the SRM intervention in terms of the number of sessions. 16 learners in parallel underscored the short time length of each session as a second drawback for the program (see Table 3).

**Table 3:** The Drawbacks of the SRM

<b>Drawbacks</b>	<b>Statistics</b>
Short duration of the SRM	70%
Short time length of each session	62%

They remarked that a longer intervention could better frame their mindsets in terms of the required skills and information for meaning-making processes. This was the only drawback underscored by the learners in their discussions. Nearly 30 percent of the participants explicitly stated that their experience of the SRM was worthy of noting. In practice, the learners found pleasure in their new experience:

- I think the only problem with the program was its duration. I wish we could longer stay in the course.*
- I agree, a longer stay in the program would be more revealing and we could further use online sources and each other's' ideas.*
- For writing, what we need is having access to knowledge resources and receiving feedbacks on our composition, these were perfectly provided in the program.*

The SRM program used in this study is partially like the intensive language courses', which represent the mainstream course offered as a full-semester. Six sessions during only three weeks were spent on writing practice within the frame of the SRM. There are contradictory reports in the literature regarding the effectiveness of intensive or full-semester courses. Scholars like Kretovics et al., (2005) and Collins et al., (2013), in tandem with the findings of this study, asserted that full-semester courses are more effective than the intensive ones and that students face fewer challenges. In contrast, there are some empirical accounts pointing at the efficacy of intensive courses on full-semester ones due to greater course load, and more efficient knowledge retention (Gao, 2013; Sheldon & Durdella, 2009). The learners did not point at the challenging workload of the program probably because the course was not that intensive to spend several days on tasks and assignments in and out of class. In contrast, they were satisfied with its workload and suggested a longer one in terms of a number of sessions over time. It can be concluded that holding two sessions per week is a satisfactory frame to keep an ideal level of workload with the SRM, but more sessions could result in better writing perspectives among learners.

### ***Challenges of Implementing the SRM***

As to the challenges in regards to the implementation of the SRM, all learners (100%) remarked, they faced no problems in working with the program. Only one-third of the learners reiterated that working with computers was a bit challenging at the beginning of the SRM intervention (Table 4).

**Table 4:** Challenges of Implementing the SRM

<b>Implementation of the SRM</b>	<b>Statistics</b>
No challenges	100%
Problems with computer use at the beginning	35%

Majority of the participants reported that their school was well-equipped and had all the required facilities to efficiently host learners within an SRM framework. They further pointed out, that they had been instructed by their teacher on how to apply the model in their

writing practices. A few students pointed out to the challenges of working with computers at the beginning of the program, but these challenges were gradually resolved when the students were instructed on how to effectively use the school's facilities, as shown below in their responses:

- We didn't have any problems in applying the SRM because the school has all facilities to apply this model as the teacher showed us how to apply this model in learning.*
- The challenges were not with the facilities, but our lack of experience of working with computer.*
- We faced some problems at the beginning of learning through SRM, like; searching for topics on computers and taking notes.*

The problem of working with computers within the SRM signifies that efficient use of technology for education needs has to take into consideration sufficient instructional time on computers than just their availability. As posited by Ertmer et al. (2012), the main reason for the lack of technology use in class is inadequate professional development on the part of instructors. Due to the crucial role of language teachers within the SRM programs, their professional development in terms of technology implementation can highly benefit learners' language practices and outcomes. Gonzales, Pickett, Hupert and Martin (2002) highlighted how engagement in constructivist-oriented peer-directed workshops can increase teachers' use of technology and constructivist principles in class, and assume leadership positions. It can be stated that language teachers have more or less the same critical position of their conventional face-to-face courses even though collaboration and online knowledge are playing their part in parallel. It is not justifiable to assert that the SRM marginalises the role of instructors. In practice, a change in the responsibilities of instructors is inevitable within the framework of a SRM-based language course, compared to a conventional face-to-face class, rather than a marginalisation of teachers' roles, as reflected:

- We addressed the problems by asking our teacher and following his instructions.*
- The teacher was there to help us with computer use and technology.*
- I think teachers are more responsible for their students within an SRM course as new elements are added to writing practices.*

### ***Suggestions on the Use of the SRM***

Although the role of language teacher is stated to be critical in the implementation of the SRM, the learners tended to advice other students to practice the model not only in class, but also on their own. While all the learners were positive regarding the implementation of the SRM in class, a big portion also suggested that language learners use the principles of the SRM pedagogy in their personal language learning endeavours (Table 5).

<b>Suggestions on the use of the SRM</b>	<b>Statistics</b>
Implementation in the classroom	100%
Personal use by the learners	85%

On the one hand, the learners suggested that students participated in the SRM-based courses. On the contrary, a personal enactment of the model was recommended. These pieces of advice seem to be contradictory in that if an efficient use of technology requires teacher's

help, how is that learners could enjoy the benefits of technological devices on their own. However, technology use for language learning can be different from the educational frame of a state school to a personal application at home. In fact, the learners pointed out that technology use in writing can lead to promising results even in personal utilisation. There are numerous technological devices such as smart phones, and iPad. Every one of these devices can be individually used to access knowledge resources. Educational devices are mostly designed for personal use and the use of them in the class requires professional development because the teacher is simultaneously responsible for some learners who have different learning styles, personality traits, and language learning purposes as stated by some students:

*-I advise all our colleagues and friends who did not try this model to participate it.*

*I also hope to continue applying this model in our English classroom.*

*-I advise all students to experience this model even at home.*

*-a personal use of educational devices can also provide as with the required writing ideas and skills.*

## **CONCLUSION**

This study explored the effectiveness of a SRM's intervention underlying a BL approach to promoting EFL students' writing. A second purpose of the study was to investigate students' perceptions of SRM. It was found that the intervention was exponentially effective in improving EFL students' writing outcomes. Reportedly, various aspects of writing such as organization, structure, vocabulary, and punctuation improved under the effect of a BL approach. Accessibility to alternative information resources in the new digital age has revolutionised students' views of writings and writing skills. The effectiveness of BL in general and the SRM, in particular, is mostly credited with its constructivist and collaborative view of learning, which enables students to share their views with peers. The SRM is perceived to promote a process-oriented view to writing in that students are respected for their personal adventurousness beyond any frame of control within conventional educational settings. The analysis of students' focus group responses indicated that the online and collaborative nature of the intervention functioned like complementary pair in enabling students to have access to online resources and to create, and activate their existing knowledge. The different aspects of the intervention were found to be the implementation of technology. The integration of educational technology into language courses is defined as new learning behaviours and challenges for students. The students suggested that the use of technology even beyond the educational frame of schools for personal purposes can result in great outcomes, as students have diverse learning styles, preferences, and purposes. The teachers in turn find new responsibilities in response to their learners' needs and challenges. This necessitates language teachers to participate in constructive professional development workshops offering instruction on the SRM implementation. The use of technology in general and the SRM implementation was found to improve all the commonly cited writing skills of content, organisation, structure, vocabulary, and mechanics. Hence, its incorporation into writing courses could be quite cost-effective and time-saving.

It is suggested that future studies separately explore the effect of blended learning in general and the SRM in particular on different aspects of writing such as organisation, grammar, vocabulary range, mechanics, and content. The framework of this study can also be replicated among EFL learners in other international contexts globally, because they are pedagogically different learning contexts requiring a distinct set of logistics. A comparison of learners' and teachers' perceptions of the SRM implementation can cast further light on how it could unleash or handicap writing learning among EFL learners.

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