



EFL Learners' Training on IELTS Writing Skills and Their Possible Self Construction

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Abstract

There is research paucity concerning EFL learners' self-formation, taking the role of IELTS writing skills into account. With a view to this, the present study aimed to see what a model of possible self-construction before and after training on IELTS writing skills emerges and what the psychometric properties of the emerged model are. To this end, a grounded theory approach was used. Of the IELTS candidates taking part in five IELTS preparation centers in Kerman, 90 (55 males and 35 females) candidates were selected as the participants of the present study through cluster sampling. A semi-structured interview was used to identify the possible self of the participants. Coding procedures (i.e., open, axial, and selective coding) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) were used to analyze the data. According to the results, a model of possible self-construction before and after training on IELTS writing skills emerged wherein before training on IELTS writing skills, feared possible self were more dominant than expected and responsible possible selves. Furthermore, after training on IELTS writing skills, expected and responsible possible self were constructed more dominantly than feared possible selves. Implications of the results for EFL curriculum planners, teachers, and learners have been discussed.

Keywords: Expected Possible Selves, Feared Possible Selves, Identity, IELTS Writing Skills, Possible Selves, Responsible Possible Selves

* Received: 05/11/2023

Accepted: 04/05/2024

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How to cite this article:

Farnia, S., Fatehirad, N., & Shahabi, H. (2024). EFL Learners' Training on IELTS Writing Skills and Their Possible Self Construction. *Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly (Formerly Journal of Teaching Language Skills)*, 43(2), 111-132. doi: 10.22099/tesl.2024.48631.3238



EFL LEARNERS' TRAINING ON IELTS WRITING SKILLS

The globalization phenomenon has turned English as a foreign language (EFL) into a necessity in recent years. A main concept in EFL learning is identity (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 2013), which has generally been defined from the pioneers' point of view. It is believed that "identity is not something one has, but something that develops during one's whole life" (Beijaard et al., 2004, p.107). Marcia (1980) considers identity in terms of personal choices. As a result, identity is formulated based on the realities perceived by people in general and adolescents in particular. Identity is a multi-dimensional concept whose construction involves several domains. Identity development involves several domains. The notion of possible self within the field of identity development relates to how individuals envision their potential and future selves. (Barkhuizen, 2013; Barkhuizen et al., 2014; Hamman et al., 2010). Indeed, both 'self' and 'identity' are characterized by a high level of complexity since they rely on a variety of theoretical issues, such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, and psychotherapy (Day et al., 2006). Possible self represent the ideal versions of ourselves that we aspire to become. They also include the self we might realistically turn into, as well as the self we fear becoming. Desired possible self might include being successful, creative, wealthy, fit, or loved and admired. Conversely, feared possible self could involve being lonely, depressed, incompetent, struggling with alcoholism, unemployed, or homeless (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Mahendra, 2020). An individual's range of possible self reflects the cognitive representation of their long-term goals, aspirations, motivations, fears, and perceived threats. These possible self give form, meaning, organization, and direction to these personal dynamics, thereby connecting self-concept with motivation. (Hamman et al., 2010). This view of self-construction suggests that rather than being subjective, self are constructed through a reflexive learning process through which individuals accumulate their values, attitudes, and behaviors. However, these initial and developmental views of self do not make the distinction and the relation between the identity and self clear. What these views actually suggest is that both constructs can be used interchangeably (Mahendra, 2020).

According to Day et al. (2006), the early writers tended to view the self as an essence that is singular, unified, and stable and which can be little affected by people's contexts and biographies. Selves-theory is associated with several implications for EFL writing since it requires ideology transfer as a main element of self-theory. Among different contexts in which academic writing academically and ideology transfer are a necessity, international exams, including IELTS, could be mentioned (Mirhosseini, 2015). Writing skills in the academic module of IELTS consist of two tasks, the second of which is

EFL LEARNERS' TRAINING ON IELTS WRITING SKILLS

argumentative essay writing. Unlike the first task, report writing, which is merely based on the information given on a chart or graph, the second task requires candidates to answer a question, give reasons, and, if possible, include their personal experiences as well, as stated on the IELTS homepage. These features make this task the material suitable for analyzing argumentation in writing skills as the candidates are expected to voice their views and support them with convincing enough arguments.

Moreover, it can be argued that EFL learners' possible self-construction and reconstruction have been a hot topic of research in recent years (Barkhuizen et al., 2014; Sadeghi & Sahragard, 2016). In addition, as empirically proved (Kuhi & Rahimivand, 2011; Sancar et al., 2021), an aspect of EFL learning that is tightly correlated with self-construction is argumentative writing as a part of IELTS writing. However, reviewing the existing literature shows that the process of self-construction related to EFL argumentative writing is an under-investigated research topic. However, it is important to note that recent studies by Iranian researchers have explored the identity of EFL learners from various perspectives. (Abbasian & Karbalaee Esmalee, 2018; Aghaei et al., 2021; Banjeni & Kapp, 2005; Golzar, 2020; Hawkins, 2005; Moeinvaziri et al., 2020; Shahvand & Rezvani, 2016; Zamani & Ahangari, 2016). However, there remains a lack of research on the formation of EFL learners' selves, particularly considering the role of IELTS writing skills in the Iranian EFL context. More specifically, apparently, as revealed by reviewing the existing literature, little (if any) research has been conducted on the effectiveness of teaching IELTS writing skills on Iranian EFL learners' possible self-construction. Since possible self-construction is an important dimension of identity formation and considering the fact that identity and writing skills are mutually interrelated, this gap is accompanied by negative effects on EFL learning and writing skills simultaneously. By tackling this issue, the EFL teaching/learning community may be helped by unraveling the potential changes in the possible self of EFL learners in the shadow of teaching IELTS writing skills. With a view to the mentioned gap, this study aimed to see what a model of possible self-construction before and after training on IELTS writing skills emerges and what the psychometric properties of the emerged model are. With these objectives and gaps in mind, the following questions were developed:

1. What model of possible self-construction emerges before and after training on IELTS writing skills?
2. What are the psychometric properties of the emerged model of possible self-construction before and after training in IELTS writing skills?

Review of the Literature

Murray and Kojima (2007) examined the language learning process of a Japanese adult female student in an out-of-class environment, focusing on how these experiences influenced her identity development. Their findings indicate that positive learning experiences and personal fulfillment enhance identity development. Zhan and Wan (2016) investigated the possible L2 self-development of college students during their Transition Year. Specifically, they analyzed how a group of five Chinese undergraduates who were not majoring in English developed their possible L2 self as they transitioned from high school to university. The analysis of four focus group discussions, fifty post-diary interviews, and two hundred and two journal entries unveiled a four-stage cyclical progression in the development of possible L2 self among the five participants. This process involved generating multiple potential L2 identities, choosing one to pursue, acknowledging the selected identity, and integrating the realized identity into their current self-concept. Furthermore, the chosen L2 identity was actualized through detailed imagination and alignment with a broader community. McKinley (2017) investigated the process of identity formation in the context of learning English academic writing. The study examined the factors influencing the development of writer identity among Japanese students as they engaged in writing, considering the various self they portrayed in their writing and the extent to which these self were influenced by their experiences in a mandatory writing course. The study involved the participation of four teachers and sixteen students, analyzing students' written work, conducting monthly interviews with both students and teachers and observing classroom interactions. The findings revealed that teachers' expectations exerted the most significant influence on identity formation, although personal beliefs also played a role. Additionally, the research highlighted that students demonstrated a higher likelihood of meeting writing task expectations when teachers set realistic requirements regarding voice. Teng (2019) examined the process of learners' identity formation and their commitment to EFL learning. The study focused on three Chinese college students majoring in English as they navigated and negotiated their identities throughout their English learning process. The findings highlighted that these learners experienced shifts in identity within various communities and contexts, which significantly influenced their engagement with English learning. Conversely, their evolving identities were also shaped by their investment in language learning. The research emphasized the complexity and fluidity of learner identity, emphasizing that it is a complex and evolving phenomenon. It identified four key factors contributing to this process: learners' cognitive awareness and ideology, their sense of agency, perceptions

EFL LEARNERS' TRAINING ON IELTS WRITING SKILLS

of opportunities within the English learning community, and discrepancies between their experienced and envisioned learning environments. In a recent study by Zhou (2023), the correlation between possible selfand willingness to communicate (WTC) among EFL learners was investigated. The findings revealed a meaningful relationship between possible selfand WTC, highlighting the fundamental role of motivational constructs in shaping learners' communicative behaviors and experiences.

Given the association between ideology transfer in argumentative writing and self-construction, EFL learners' weakness in the former may have negative consequences for the latter. However, this can be proposed just at the level of hypothesis, and proving it requires more empirical investigations. This is while reviewing the extant literature, which shows that insufficient focus has been directed towards the process of self-construction as related to EFL argumentative writing. In other words, self-formation as connected to argumentative writing has not been probed as it deserves. Therefore, the research area in the field of possible self-construction and writing skills needs more studies, specifically in the cause-and-effect studies wherein possible self-formation has been influenced by different factors such as training on IELTS writing skills. In order to address this deficiency, the current investigation was undertaken.

Method

Design of the Study

Aligned with the study's objectives, a grounded theory approach was adopted. This method involves developing a theory directly from the data itself (Creswell et al., 2007). It entails concurrent data collection and thematic analysis until reaching saturation, where no new information emerges.

Participants

In the current study, 90 (55 males and 35 females) IELTS candidates were selected to be interviewed through cluster sampling. They were homogenized by selecting only those candidates whose sample IELTS Writing Task 2 received an IELTS band score of 18 (as the cut-off score) and above. Since IELTS Writing Task 2 is scored in a range from 0 to 36, as stated on the IELTS homepage, 18 was a reasonable cut-off score. The participants were in the 25-40 age range. They were from different socio-economic background levels. That is, they were from high, middle, and low socio-economic classes in terms of family jobs, income, and social prestige. All participants shared Persian as their mother tongue. Ethical considerations were upheld during the sampling process.

EFL LEARNERS' TRAINING ON IELTS WRITING SKILLS

Prior to participation, consent was obtained from both the authorities of the IELTS preparation centers and the participants themselves. They were fully briefed on the study's objectives and assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their personal details. In the end, a reward was given to the participants as compensation for their cooperation.

Instruments

A semi-structured interview was administered in English with no time limitation to explore EFL learners' possible selves in the future before and after training on IELTS writing skills. This interview was conducted using nine open-ended questions developed based on similar studies (e.g., Mahmoudi-Gahrouei et al., 2016) and the supervisor's guidance. The interview questions addressed the participants' fears in the future regarding their friends, family, job, and education; their expectations concerning their social state and academic aim; and their approach towards their responsibilities in different areas, their classmates, and their surrounding people in society. The interview was conducted online through WhatsApp due to the convenience of the interviewees. With participants' permission, all interviews were recorded in audio and transcribed for subsequent analysis. The interviews were conducted in English. Member checking was used to check the dependability of interview data. That is, the researcher showed some parts of the analyzed interviews to the interviewees to see whether their perceptions were the same as those of the extracted themes. The credibility of interview data was confirmed by using low-inference descriptors. That is, some direct quotations from the interviewees were provided when presenting the results of the thematic analysis.

Moreover, to validate the proposed model, a questionnaire was developed based on the proposed model of possible self-construction before and after training in IELTS writing skills. The rationale behind using this questionnaire was to validate the developed model and estimate its reliability. To develop this questionnaire, the main categories of the model (i.e., possible selves before training on IELTS writing skills and possible selves after training on IELTS writing skills) were defined as the two sub-scales of the questionnaire. Moreover, the components related to each main category were taken as the items of the questionnaire. Accordingly, it included 30 items on a four-point Likert Scale from 1= strongly disagree to 4= strongly agree. The Google Form of the questionnaire was distributed among the participants to be filled. Then, the questionnaire data were exposed to appropriate data analysis procedures to validate the proposed model of possible self construction before and after training on IELTS writing skills and estimate

EFL LEARNERS' TRAINING ON IELTS WRITING SKILLS

its reliability. It consisted of two sub-scales, including possible selves before training on IELTS writing skills (feared, expected, and responsible possible selves) and possible selves after training on IELTS writing skills (feared, expected, and responsible possible selves). The Cronbach's Alpha reliability of the questionnaire was calculated for the two sub-scales: .87 for feared possible selves, .67 for expected possible selves, and .69 for responsible possible selves before training on IELTS writing skills; and .72 for feared possible selves, .79 for expected possible selves, and .66 for responsible possible selves after training on IELTS writing skills. Moreover, its validity was confirmed through EFA and CFA.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The data collection process commenced by carefully selecting the sample and adhering to research ethics guidelines throughout. Then, the study objectives were thoroughly explained to the participants. Next, the semi-structured interview (described above) was conducted with the participants. Then, the participants participated in eight 60-minute training sessions on IELTS writing once a week. During the sessions, which were held through Adobe Connect due to the constraints imposed on the study by the prevalence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher, an IELTS instructor, taught the criteria of the IELTS Writing Scoring Rubric.

That is, in the first two training sessions, the primacy was given to task achievement, wherein the participants were taught how a fully developed response to a writing task in IELTS should be given. For this purpose, a number of samples were given to them, each of which highlighted some of the textual and contextual features as a way to draw learners' attention to them. Here, the emphasis was on the thoroughness of the writing, requiring the learners to include as many details as possible in the given task.

In the next two sessions, cohesion and coherence were the focal points of instruction. Within these sessions, the participants were taught how cohesion should be brought to a text in such a way that it looks natural without attracting the reader's attention unduly. For this purpose, two sets of texts were used and compared in the class, with the former being coherent and the latter being jumbled. In this way, the teacher could raise the participants' awareness as to how cohesive devices can be used to produce well-strung writing. Moreover, the participants received some instruction on paragraphing, learning how each paragraph should stand independently while still in a logical relation with other paragraphs. Here, too, some samples were employed and comparatively analyzed.

EFL LEARNERS' TRAINING ON IELTS WRITING SKILLS

In the next two sessions, the participants received all their instructions on lexical resources. The participants were given a list of relevant words along with some sample sentences to demonstrate how those words should be naturally used. The words were of a wide range, so the participants could reach a more reliable level of vocabulary proficiency. To this end, the participants were asked to produce their own sentences right after having learned them. This, the researcher believes, could transform their passively learned words into an active state, thereby improving their vocabulary retention.

Finally, in the last two sessions, grammatical range and accuracy were of utmost importance. The participants taught, exemplified, and practiced a number of complex structures. For a better grasp, some IELTS samples taken from the British Council website were also distributed among the learners. They were then asked to sit in pairs and pinpoint all the structures already taught to them. Furthermore, the importance of accuracy in using grammatical structures was highlighted to them. For this purpose, some intentionally incorrect sentences were given to them to spot the error and then produce the correct form. After the end of the training sessions, the semi-structured interview was re-conducted. Finally, for the purpose of quantitative data collection, to estimate the psychometric properties of the emerged model, the extracted categories and sub-categories of the emerged model were re-written in the form of a Likert four-point items of a questionnaire to be filled by the participants.

The data analysis involved a detailed examination of transcribed interviews conducted before and after the IELTS writing skills training. The process included multiple rounds of meticulous review and utilized the constant comparative method. Initially, transcripts were broken down into units of analysis during the open coding stage, focusing on identifying key terms, phrases, and sentences. These were then organized into categories based on thematic content. Axial coding followed, aiming to uncover connections and relationships between these categories and their sub-categories. Lastly, selective coding involved deriving a core category from the identified categories to construct a comprehensive theoretical framework, forming an “explanatory whole” as per Strauss and Corbin’s method (1990). The outcome of the coding procedures was a model of possible self-construction before and after training on IELTS writing skills, which emerged through bringing the extracted categories together. For clarification, some themes are randomly presented along with a quotation from the participants here:

1. Fearing from not finding a good job

I always fear that I cannot have a good job in future. Having a prestigious job is very important for me. I fear from being jobless in future. (Participant 12)

EFL LEARNERS' TRAINING ON IELTS WRITING SKILLS

2. Fearing from being belittled in the society

I am afraid that I become humiliated in the society. I fear from being belittled by others. I do not like this at all. (Participant 50)

3. Fearing financial problems

A fear that is always with me is fear of financial problems. I fear that I cannot afford my life. This nightmare irritates me. (Participant 39)

4. Attention to excellent academic goals

My concern in life is to achieve my academic goals. I have some academic goals which are very important for me. I think about them very much. (Participant 19)

5. Attention to improving one's social state

I am doing my best to improve my social state. Social level is of importance in human life. What others conceive about us build our social state. (Participant 78)

6. Fearing from losing one's own friends

I fear from being lonely in life. I spook that my friends leave me. This is a big fear for me really. I do not want to lose my friends. (Participant 60)

In order to analyze the collected quantitative data, the questionnaire data were subjected to Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), running exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Moreover, Cronbach's Alpha test was used to see whether the emerged model is of high reliability or not.

Results

Through thematic analysis based on grounded theory procedures, the following model of possible self-construction before and after training on IELTS writing skills emerged to answer the first research question (See Figure 1):

EFL LEARNERS' TRAINING ON IELTS WRITING SKILLS

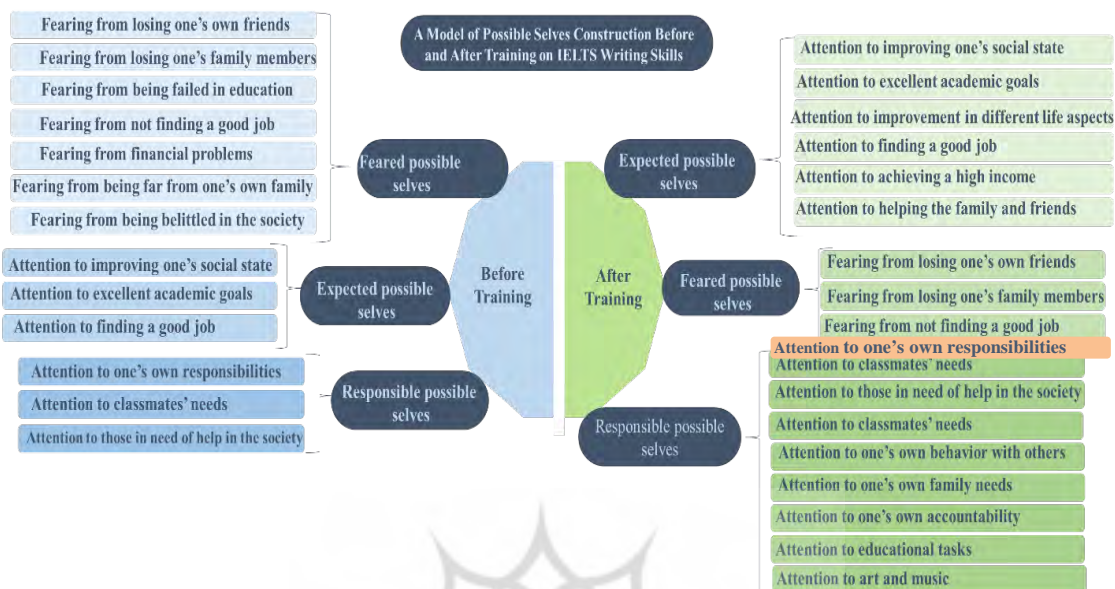


Figure 1. *The emerged model of the possible self-construction before and after training on IELTS writing skills*

As illustrated in Figure 1, before training on IELTS writing skills, feared possible selves were more dominant than expected and responsible possible selves in the participants. That is, the participants feared losing their own friends, losing their family members, failing in education, not finding a good job, having financial problems, being far from their own family, and being belittled in society. Furthermore, in relation to their anticipated potential selves, they were going to pay more attention to improving their social state, excellent academic goals, and finding a good job. Additionally, in terms of their possible responsibilities, they paid attention to their own responsibilities, their classmates' needs (IELTS candidates), and those in need of help in society. From the model, it can be clearly understood that after training on IELTS writing skills, expected and responsible possible selves were more dominant than feared possible selves in the participants. As far as the participants' expected possible selves were concerned, they were going to pay attention to their own social state, excellent academic goals, improvement in different life aspects, finding a good job, achieving a high income, and helping the family and friends. Regarding feared possible selves, the participants feared losing their own friends and family members and not finding a good job. Finally, on responsible possible selves, the participants paid attention to their own responsibilities, their classmates' needs (IELTS candidates), those in need of help in society, their own behavior

EFL LEARNERS' TRAINING ON IELTS WRITING SKILLS

with others, their own family needs, their own accountability, educational tasks, and art and music.

To address the second research question, the validity of the model was estimated first. To this end, the closed-ended questionnaire data were exposed to EFA and CFA. Before running EFA, KMO and Bartlett test was to ensure that content sampling is sufficient and the sphericity assumption is established. The results of KMO and Bartlett's test are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
KMO and Bartlett's test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.826
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	9120.413
	df	639
	Sig.	0.0001

As illustrated in Table 1, the KMO value is bigger than 0.60, indicating that the content sampling is sufficient enough to use EFA. In addition, the result of Bartlett's test was significant at the 0.05 level. This ensures that the Sphericity assumption is not violated and that applying EFA is justified. Then, to determine the number of factors, the Eigenvalue with a value bigger than 1 was used as the criterion, which led to the extraction of six factors. Table 2 presents the results of EFA of the factors rotated using Varimax rotation.

Table 2.
The results of EFA

Possible Self, Before Training on IELTS Writing Skills						Possible Self After Training on IELTS Writing Skills					
Feared possible selves		Expected possible selves		Responsible possible selves		Expected possible selves		Responsible possible selves		Feared possible selves	
Items' number	Factor loading	Items' number	Factor loading	Items' number	Factor loading	Items' number	Factor loading	Items' number	Factor loading	Items' number	Factor loading
1	0.71	8	0.69	11	0.48	14	0.61	20	0.39	28	0.45
2	0.66	9	0.78	12	0.60	15	0.73	21	0.53	29	0.51
3	0.52	10	0.46	13	0.55	16	0.50	22	0.57	30	0.72
4	0.75					17	0.85	23	0.85		
5	0.53					18	0.73	24	0.50		
6	0.64					19	0.44	25	0.69		
7	0.70							26	0.63		

EFL LEARNERS' TRAINING ON IELTS WRITING SKILLS

Possible Self, Before Training on IELTS Writing Skills			Possible Self After Training on IELTS Writing Skills		
Feared possible selves	Expected possible selves	Responsible possible selves	Expected possible selves	Responsible possible selves	Feared possible selves
				27	0.60

The Table 2 shows the factor loading for each item on its related factor. According to the results, all 30 items are loaded adequately and sufficiently on its correspondent factor. In the next step, the explored factor structure was examined using CFA to check the fit of the model with the data. Figure 2 shows the results of CFA.

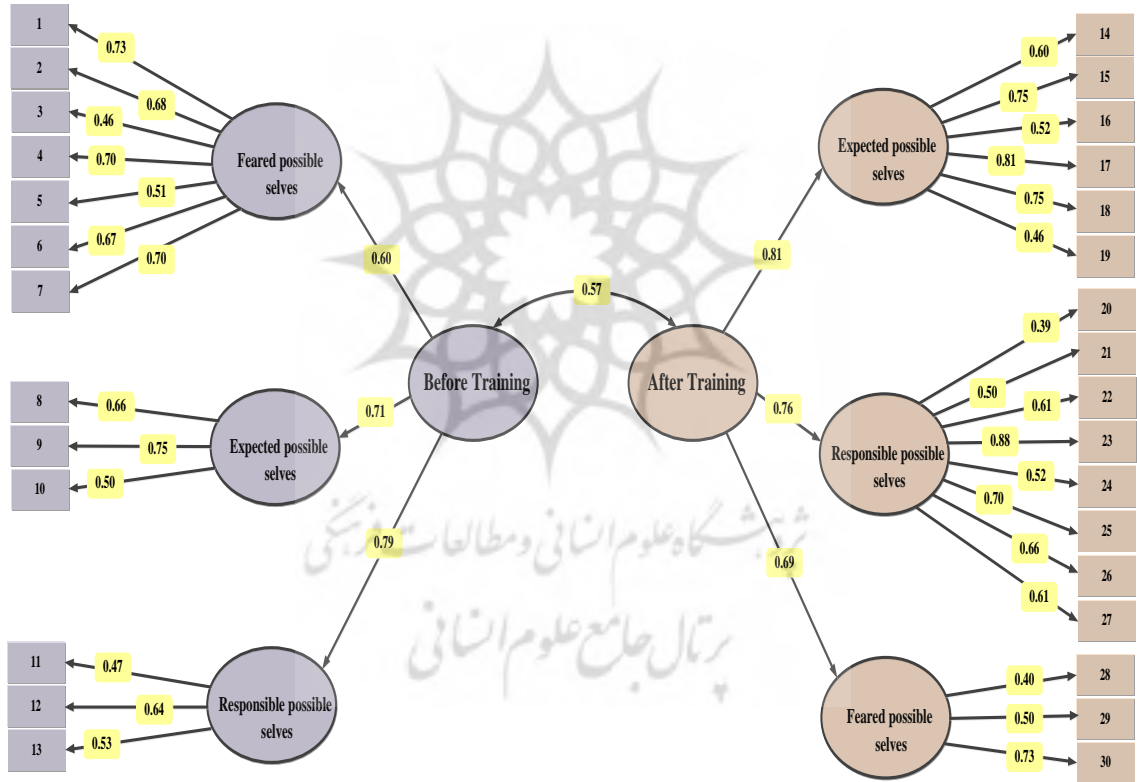


Figure 2. The results of CFA

In Figure 2, the standard coefficients of the paths are relatively strong, and the minimum standard coefficient is 0.39. The values of T statistics and its critical value also showed the significance of the coefficients of all pathways. In addition, three possible variables were loaded on two higher-order latent variables (before and after training on IELTS writing skills), which, in turn, had a significant positive correlation with each

EFL LEARNERS' TRAINING ON IELTS WRITING SKILLS

other. Finally, the measures of the fit indices of the model were examined and presented in Table 3.

Table 3.
Fit Indices of the model

	X ² /df	TLI	CFI	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA	PCLOSE
Fit indices	2.23	0.95	0.93	0.96	0.92	0.06	0.11

It is seen in Table 3 that the model is well-fitted with data based on the criteria introduced by Kline (2016). Next, to examine the reliability of the model, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated and reported in Table 4.

Table 4.
Results of reliability analysis

	subscales	Number of items	Alpha coefficients'
Before Training	Feared possible selves	7	0.81
	Expected possible selves	3	0.67
	Responsible possible selves	3	0.69
After Training	Expected possible selves	6	0.72
	Responsible possible selves	8	0.79
	Feared possible selves	3	0.66

As indicated in Table 4, all the sub-categories of the model of possible self-construction before and after training on IELTS writing skills have acceptable reliability. In sum, the results confirmed that the model of possible self-construction before and after training on IELTS writing skills is valid and reliable.

Discussion

This study was launched to see what a model of the possible self-construction before and after training on IELTS writing skills can emerge and estimate the psychometric properties of the emerged model. According to the results, a model of the possible self-construction before and after training on IELTS writing skills emerged wherein before training on IELTS writing skills, feared possible selves were more dominant than expected and responsible possible selves. In the emerged model, before training on IELTS writing skills, fearing losing one's own friends, losing one's family members, failing in education, not finding a good job, financial problems, being far from one's own family, and being belittled in the society was prevalent among the participants. After training on IELTS writing skills, expected and responsible possible selves were constructed more

EFL LEARNERS' TRAINING ON IELTS WRITING SKILLS

dominantly than feared possible selves among the participants. Concerning the psychometric properties of the emerged model, it was indicated that it enjoyed a high validity and reliability.

Consistent with the current research, Conway and Clark (2003) and Hamman et al. (2010) similarly demonstrated that EFL teachers harbored more apprehension toward their feared potential self compared to their anticipated accountable self prior to undergoing any training or preparatory courses. Zhan and Wan (2016) directed their attention toward the development of college students' L2 identities, with the chosen L2 self being actualized through detailed, imaginative exploration and alignment with a broader community. Similarly, Zhou's (2023) study highlighted a meaningful relationship between possible self and WTC. Regarding identity construction, the results of this study resonate with McKinley (2017), who examined identity formation within the context of learning English academic writing. McKinley found that teachers' expectations exerted the most significant influence on identity construction, and students demonstrated a greater inclination to fulfill writing task expectations when teachers set reasonable requirements regarding voice. Furthermore, the findings align with Teng's research (2019), which concluded that learner identity is a multi-dimensional and evolving process that can be shaped through negotiation and construction over time.

On the contrary, after experiencing a variety of teacher preparation programs, their expected self-proved is more prevalent. In the same vein, Harrison (2018) attributed the changes in possible self to higher education. His research aimed to utilize the theory of possible selves, which has been highly effective in comprehending motivation and behavioral modification. However, its application within education, particularly concerning access to higher education, has not been extensively explored. Similarly, in the investigations by Landau et al. (2017) and Oyserman et al. (2011), educational treatments in their different forms were shown to be influential on possible self-construction. Landau et al. (2017) conducted research exploring the integration of metaphor and potential identities to boost motivation among underprivileged middle-school students. Their findings indicated that students who associated their academic potential identity with a destination along a physical path, as opposed to those without a metaphorical framework, showed increased academic involvement. Extending the impact of metaphorical priming to economically disadvantaged and minority adolescents, a critical group in educational studies, implies the potential effectiveness of cost-effective, theoretically grounded mediations for enhancing academic engagement. Oyserman et al. (2011) investigated the content and outcomes associated with possible identities. Their

EFL LEARNERS' TRAINING ON IELTS WRITING SKILLS

research revealed that possible identities vary across different life phases, transitions, and circumstances, and they intersect with other facets of identity. Additionally, they found that negative possible identities, in particular, can sometimes impact well-being. According to their perspective, possible identities are occasionally, though not consistently, linked to present behavior.

The results can be justified by referring to the effectiveness of different kinds of academic writing education on identity (re)construction (Anderson, 2017). This means that when individuals are exposed to academic writing instruction, their identity aspects are reconstructed. A similar line of argument in this regard is that writing skills regenerate new identity dimensions in individuals (Flores & Rosa, 2015). This is exactly what Berlin (1988) meant when he argued that identity negotiation and writing instruction have always been interplayed and interrelated. These confirm that writing instruction and identity (re)construction are tightly correlated (Kuhi & Rahimivand, 2011). Accordingly, it seems quite reasonable that as a result of being exposed to teaching writing skills, students' possible self, as well as their dimensions, are reconstructed.

The findings can also be interpreted from a different viewpoint: IELTS writing skills training, by nature, empowers the learners by enhancing their self-confidence and self-efficacy and making them more autonomous (Kuhi & Rahimivand, 2011). These transformations, in turn, lead to the students' reconstruction of the possible self in specific ways. To elaborate on this, the possible self is associated with affective factors (Mahmoudi-Gahrouei et al., 2016), and this is why enhanced empowerment, self-confidence, self-efficacy, and autonomy can contribute to transformations in possible self-formation. Further, as shown by Motallebzadeh and Kazemi (2018), self-construction can be changed as a result of changes in knowledge, practice, and experience. Obviously, IELTS writing skills training is considered a new experience with its own power of knowledge generation. Therefore, it affects the learners' construction of their possible selves. To justify the results, it can also be argued that different forms of academic writing influence identity (re)construction. That is when individuals are educated on academic writing, various dimensions of their identity are transformed. Similarly, it can be proposed that writing skill sets new forms of identity in students (Flores & Rosa, 2015). This is exactly what Berlin (1988) meant when he argued that identity negotiation and writing instruction have always been interplayed. These all show that writing instruction and identity (re)construction are strongly tied. Accordingly, it seems reasonable that as a result of being exposed to teaching writing skills, students' possible self, as well as their dimensions, are reconstructed. The other justification that can be put forth is that IELTS

EFL LEARNERS' TRAINING ON IELTS WRITING SKILLS

writing skills training, like any other training type, has the potential to empower learners, enhance their self-confidence and self-efficacy, and make them more autonomous. Such changes, in turn, can help the learners reconstruct their possible selves in specific ways. Moreover, verbalization that occurred during writing training sessions may have contributed to changes in the self of the participants. That is, verbalization helps the construction and reconstruction of identity. Because the self is an inevitable part of the identity of a person, they are consequently changed as a result of verbalization (Hamman, 2010). Additionally, writing tasks ask for negotiation of meaning, which contributes to self-negotiation in its different aspects.

Last but not least, the topics covered in the training sessions can lead the students to negotiate their personal and professional selves. That is, the topics to which the learners were exposed during the training sessions (e.g., the role of women in the social improvement of societies, financial management skills, training children on question posing, etc.) may have provoked self-reconstruction. That is to say, the reconstruction of self in EFL learners assists them in constructing and reconstructing their possible self.

Conclusions

Due to the important role of identity and self in education and EFL learning, the findings call for the necessity to use IELTS writing skills training in EFL learning in a way that students' possible selves are strengthened in a way that their fears are reduced, their sense of responsibility is corroborated, and their expectations are more positively enhanced. This leads to the formation, transformation, construction, co-construction, and reconstruction of their identity aspects. Considering the strong ties between learner identity construction and EFL learning, using IELTS writing skills training in EFL learning, in turn, can contribute to more improvements in EFL learning in general.

In sum, based on the findings, it is concluded that teaching IELTS writing skills significantly impacts EFL learners' construction of the possible self as well as their dimensions. It can also be concluded that teaching IELTS writing skills reduces the fears of EFL learners and enhances their expectations and responsibilities. This rejects the belief that when possible self-are is formed, it is not changed (Dunkel & Anthis, 2001). According to the findings, this view supports the idea that the possible self is susceptible to changes rooted in instructional treatments.

Therefore, different groups of EFL stakeholders, including curriculum planners and teachers, are suggested to inject IELTS writing skills training into EFL curricula in an attempt to help EFL learners reconstruct their possible selves. Besides, EFL learners

EFL LEARNERS' TRAINING ON IELTS WRITING SKILLS

should be encouraged to improve their knowledge of IELTS writing skills so that they can negotiate their selves for better. Future researchers are recommended to replicate the present study in the longitudinal format to see the possible long-term effects of training on IELTS writing skills on EFL learners' possible self(re)construction.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the editorial team of TESL Quarterly for granting us the opportunity to submit and publish the current synthesis. We would also like to express our appreciation to the anonymous reviewers for their careful, detailed reading of our manuscript and their many insightful comments and suggestions.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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EFL LEARNERS' TRAINING ON IELTS WRITING SKILLS

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Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. What do you fear about your friends in the future?
2. What do you fear about your family in the future?
3. What do you fear about your education in the future?
4. What do you fear about your job in the future?
5. What do you expect in the future concerning your social state?
6. What do you expect in the future concerning your academic aims?
7. What is your approach towards your responsibilities in different areas?
8. What is your approach towards your responsibilities to your classmates?
9. What is your approach towards your responsibilities to your surrounding people and society?

Appendix B

Model Validation Questionnaire

Dear Respondent! Please fill out this questionnaire patiently.

Number	Sub-scales	Items	1= strongly disagree	2= slightly disagree	3= slightly agree	4= strongly agree
1	Possible selves before training on IELTS writing skills	Fearing losing one's friends				
2		Fearing losing one's family members				
3		Fearing failure in education				
4		Fearing from not finding a good job				
5		Fearing financial problems				
6		Fearing from being far from one's own family				
7		Fearing from being belittled in the society				
8		Attention to improving one's social state				
9		Attention to excellent academic goals				
10		Attention to finding a good job				
11		Attention to one's own responsibilities				
12		Attention to classmates' needs				

EFL LEARNERS' TRAINING ON IELTS WRITING SKILLS

Number	Sub-scales	Items	1= strongly disagree	2= slightly disagree	3= slightly agree	4= strongly agree
13		Attention to those in need of help in society				
14	Possible selves after training on IELTS writing skills	Attention to improving one's social state				
15		Attention to excellent academic goals				
16		Attention to improvement in different life aspects				
17		Attention to finding a good job				
18		Attention to achieving a high income				
19		Attention to helping family and friends				
20		Attention to one's responsibilities				
21		Attention to classmates' needs				
22		Attention to those in need of help in the society				
23		Attention to one's own behavior with others				
24		Attention to one's own family needs				
25		Attention to one's own accountability				
26		Attention to educational tasks				
27		Attention to art and music				
28		Fearing from losing one's friends				
29		Fearing from losing one's family members				
30		Fearing from not finding a good job				