

Using Cooperative Group Feedback and Cooperative Group Writing in Writing Classes

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Abstract

The present study compared the effect of cooperative group feedback and cooperative group writing techniques in writing classes. Accordingly, 90 male and female intermediate English language learners sat for a sample piloted Preliminary English Test and 60 who scored one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected as the main participants. Both groups were taught the same course book. Moreover, they received the same hours of instruction and teaching aids in the same physical environment; therefore, the most significant point of departure in the two experimental groups in the present study was the form of writing practices presented in the classroom. One group underwent the cooperative group writing while the other the cooperative feedback procedure throughout the treatment period. The findings of this study based upon the results gained from an independent sample *t*-test run on the two groups' posttest mean scores revealed that the participants' L2 writing improved more significantly in the cooperative group writing class compared to the cooperative group feedback. The findings of this study may be contributory to EFL teachers and syllabus designers in the process of developing more efficient second language writing courses.

Keywords: cooperative learning, cooperative group feedback, cooperative group writing, writing skill

Introduction

Writing is an essential component of language and perhaps a growingly inevitable tool for human communication. As stated by Brown (2004), writing is “a reliable way of expressing ideas and revealing thoughts” (p. 21) and the process of creating a text “as a communicative bridge between the reader and the writer” (Hyland, 2015, p. 1) and a visual print coherently knitted into structured language. Writing has become very much an interdisciplinary field of inquiry while being viewed as a discovery process, providing opportunities for ongoing learning in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Matsuda, 2003). The fact that writing is “a means of structuring, formulating, and reacting to both inner and outside worlds is perhaps indisputable” (Marefat, 2007, p. 146) with writing and thinking being interwoven and writing considered as a complex process that makes possible for the writers “to explore thoughts and ideas and make them visible and concrete” (Saeidi & Kavandi, 2014, p. 190). This complexity is further increased since writing also bears an essentially social act within itself as, “you usually write to communicate with an audience, which has expectations about the text type (or genre) you produce” (Furieux, 1999, p. 56).

Not surprisingly, many ELT scholars have argued in the last two or three decades in favor of attributing a more prominent role to writing in L2 acquisition and that this skill should be incorporated as an integral part of any L2 curriculum and its offshoots (e.g., Celce-Murcia, 1992; Ellis, 2009; Harmer, 2009; Nation & McAlister, 2010; Nunan, 1991; Widdowson, 1990). It is no wonder, then, that a multiplicity of approaches have been adapted to teaching writing throughout the history of language teaching such as process-based, product-based, genre-based, form-based, and meaning-based (Richards & Farrell, 2011). One such approach which is also used for language teaching in general is cooperative learning (CL). Highlighting the significance of cooperative writing, Storch (2005) stated that one way to assist learners in improving their writing is to utilize CL techniques and ask students to write in small groups while Li and Lam (2013) argued that cooperative writing tasks provide learners with an opportunity to elaborate on different topics and exchange opinions and responses.

A very large number of studies regarding the positive impact of CL activities on learners' writing have been reported in the ELT literature (e.g., Bell, 1991; Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Diaz, 1991; Jou, 2008; Kirk, 2001; Mandal, 2009). This is also true about the Iranian context where many such studies have also been conducted in the context of Iran (e.g., Ahangari & Samadian, 2014; Keshavarz, Shahrokhi, & Talebinejad, 2014; Khabiri & Firooz, 2012; Marashi & Khatami, 2017; Moattarian & Tahririan, 2013).

Closely related to cooperative writing is cooperative feedback through which learners give feedback on their peers' progress while they are engaged in a collective activity (Sessa & London, 2006). Brown (2004) argues that cooperative activities in which cooperative feedback is exchanged provide a non-threatening environment for learners. As a result, cooperative writing activities are concerned with peer assessment whereby students provide each other with cooperative feedback on their writing progress (Stevens, 2003).

Cooperative group feedback has also been well-documented in the ELT literature as having a significantly positive effect on L2 writing (e.g., Abu Seileek & Abualsha'r, 2014; Bitchener, 2008; Evans, 2015; Farrah, 2012; Frear, 2009; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Lei, 2002; Ranta & Lyster, 2007; Ting & Quian, 2010). A few such studies have also been conducted by Iranian ELT scholars demonstrating the same results (Ghani & Tahira, 2012; Marzban & Mojtahedzadeh, 2014; Yaghubi & Ghanei, 2015).

Writing is a basic language skill with its importance derived from its being both contributory to the whole language learning process and an indispensable part of that learning to the point that Nation and McAlister (2010) state that, "second language writing development is an inseparable part of second language learning environment" (p. 112). As indispensable as acquiring writing is, there is little doubt among scholars that it is the most difficult skill for L2 learners to master (e.g., Corbett, 1996; Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Weigle, 2002). This difficulty perhaps lies under the fact that it is not simply limited to the learning of linguistic items, rather a tool to communicate ideas in a target language (Brooks & Grundy, 1998) and "not only a mirror of one's thought but a

medium which provides novelty to established information” (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013, p. 140).

Accordingly, Storch (2017) pinpoints the universal difficulty of teaching writing by asserting that countless revisions are required to check the accuracy and fluency together; hence, it is an endless job both for both teachers and learners. In this regard, Rao (2007) states that, “composing texts is regarded by students as being laborious since this process necessitates utilizing a variety of cognitive and linguistic strategies of which students are unaware and uncertain” (p. 102). Cognizant of this burden, English language teachers tend to assist students to write better, develop useful revision strategies, and think more systematically (Alamis, 2010) while being aware of the fact that, “perhaps the most consuming of all dilemmas for L2 writing teachers is how to best help their students improve their writing” (Casanave, 2013, p. 63).

Among the different attempts to facilitate the mastery of learning to write, one effective strategy is to introduce the concept of writing as a process working toward a final product rather than addressing writing solely in terms of product, and assignments involve “structuring parts of a single assignment, or designing a sequence of assignments so that they gradually increase in cognitive complexity (Hasan & Akhand, 2010, p. 80). Having emerged in the 1970s (Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, & Rosen, 1975), the process-oriented approach to writing culminated in models reliant upon the cognitive process to explain how learners fulfill writing tasks in school (Ferries & Hedgcock, 2004). Many studies have been reported in favor of the success of such an approach in the classroom (e.g., Bashiri & Shahrokhi, 2016; Breen, 1984; Candlin & Hyland, 2014; Curtis, 2001; Hyland, 2016). Naturally, a significant number of developments within the realm of teaching writing – including cooperative writing – emerged via a process-oriented approach to writing.

Cooperative group writing, similar to CL, itself has emerged from the pedagogical approach of social constructionists (Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Kessler, 1992; Slavin, 1995). Silva (1990) maintains that, “we do not find or discover concepts, models, and knowledge as much as we construct or make them” (p. 22). This view has been applied in writing and composition with those teachers who subscribe to this view asserting that writing makes up “a

mode of communication in an academic or discourse community” (Cazden, 1996, p. 167).

The debates about cooperative writing are thus concerned with discourse being a phenomenon which is constructed socially. In this model, the emphasis is on the social community discourse rather than that of individuals (Chim, 2015; Meng, 2010). In other words, the actual focus of cooperative writing is more on how a community (the group of learners) views and defines writing and the way texts depict “that community, how the community, its discourse, and world knowledge are constructed, and how the participants in discourse form the context” (Kennedy, 1998, p. 10).

Similar to CL, cooperative writing is very much associated with Vygotsky’s conceptualization, that is, zone of proximal development or ZPD (Johnson, Johnson, & Stanne, 2000) in that learning to write within the ZPD happens when learners work a task which is too hard to be performed independently; then, they seek support from an expert or other peers to help them in the writing task (Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Porto, 2016). In doing so, the learning and development of the writing skill happens through the acculturation model or the learner’s social and psychological integration with the L2 group (Slavin, 2011). This psycho-social integration is naturally facilitated by the social and affective strategies which writers use in order “to interact with the target community for support and to focus on their emotions, motivation, and attitudes in the process of writing” (Carson & Longhini, 2002, p. 410).

Needless to say, all this is not necessarily an individually oriented activity of exploring one’s own learning strategies; rather, as Kirk (2001) asserts, cooperative writing gives a chance to learners to come to know the strategies their peers use while individual writing cannot provide such an opportunity for the learners. This is perhaps one significant reason why cooperative writing activities have gained noticeable momentum as an efficient approach to teaching writing (Hinkel, 2015; Shehadeh, 2011).

Cooperative group feedback is rooted in the shift in learning paradigm and the importance which has been given to CL rather than individual learning (Abu Seileek & Abualsha’r, 2014). In this way, peer and group feedback has become a popular area for research in L2 learning since peer feedback

primarily engages students in the activity of forming groups, reading each other's compositions, and making comments for revisions (Enginarlar, 1993; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Yu & Lee, 2016).

Many studies have acknowledged the merits of employing peer feedback: for instance, making students more autonomous (Mo, 2005), providing a more authentic audience (Caulk, 1994), and providing students with more opportunities to assess their own work more critically (Topping, Smith, Swanson, & Elliot, 2000). In fact, a group can change but cannot learn without feedback as a group mainly relies on feedback to learn and regulate itself (Amo & Jareno, 2011). Accordingly, Sessa and London (2006) state that cooperative group feedback helps groups to regulate actions to achieve the group's goals, "assess and respond to outside influences, promote group development and member interdependence, and help members formulate a shared conceptualization of the group's distinct identity and purpose" (p. 25).

Vohs and Ciarocco (2004) believe that firstly feedback help learners to identify what they can do based on their abilities. Such feedback also encourage learners to understand what works and paves the way for them to accomplish their goals and what should be eliminated or modified (Choudhury, 2002). Moreover, cooperative feedback helps a group to realize the impact of their deeds and their probable results and to alter their choices and actions in the process of time to produce other effects (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). In fact, the exercise of cooperative group feedback assists a group of learners to regulate its work through goals (Leki, 2006). In addition, another merit of cooperative feedback is that it not only helps the learners who receive the feedback but also presents a ground for the learners who provide the feedback (Evans, 2015).

In line with what has been discussed so far within the ELT literature demonstrating the advantageousness of both cooperative writing and cooperative group feedback, the researchers found that – to the best of their knowledge – no study had been conducted on the comparison of these advantageous methods. Realizing this gap in the literature, the researchers set out this study to investigate any probable comparative effect of the two aforementioned procedures on EFL learners' writing skill. Based on the aforementioned purpose, the following research question was formulated:

Is there any significant difference between the impact of cooperative group feedback and cooperative group writing on EFL learners' writing performance?

Method

Participants

A total of 60 intermediate male and female students with the age range 19 to 29 in one of Tehran's language schools took part in this study. These participants were chosen from 90 existing intermediate students who were selected based on convenience nonrandom sampling according to their performance on a sample Preliminary English Test (those whose scores fell between one standard deviation above and below the mean); as the PET samples, available in the market, are not original standard tests, the sample was first piloted with 30 students bearing similar language proficiency features with the actual 60 participants of the study.

The selected 60 participants were thence assigned to two experimental groups with 30 learners in each; each group also consisted of two classes. The students in one experimental group were taught through cooperative group feedback and the other experimental group through cooperative group writing. The two groups' mean scores on the PET writing section used for homogenization were compared statistically to make sure of the two groups' homogeneity in terms of their writing before the treatment. Furthermore, the two researchers who enjoyed an acceptable inter-rater reliability in their scoring the writing papers ($r = 0.89$, $p = 0.0001 < 0.05$) participated as the raters of the writing papers.

Instruments

The present section describes the two instruments and the course book used in the present study.

Preliminary English Test (PET)

A sample PET was administered as the pretest for selecting the participants. PET which includes all the four language skills is part of a group of examinations developed by Cambridge ESOL entitled the Cambridge Main Suite. PET consists of reading and writing (paper 1), listening (paper 2), and speaking (paper 3). As this study was focused on

EFL learners' writing, the speaking paper was not administered. Furthermore, the original PET includes 75 items but eight of these items were actually discarded following the comprehensive item analysis which took place after the piloting.

For the assessment of the writing section, the researchers used the PET general mark scheme; this is ESOL's standard rubric for a summative score with the criteria including language range, variety, complexity message communication, grammatical structure, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, content points, length, and target reader. The maximum overall score for the writing paper is five.

Writing Posttest

The writing paper of another sample PET was used as the posttest and administered to both groups at the end of the course.

Course Book

The textbook *Writing with Confidence: Writing Effective Sentences and Paragraphs* (Meyers, 2008) was chosen for instruction in both groups. The ninth edition of the book comprises three units with four chapters in each from which the first five chapters were covered during the treatment. This textbook incorporates "high-interest themes in its exercises and discourse while fully developing the writing process and fundamental writing skills" (Meyers, 2008, p. 3).

Procedure

The learners in both groups took part in class twice a week for ten 90-minute sessions. Both groups were instructed by one of the researchers and received the same amount of instruction regarding the writing structures, paragraph organization, and types of essays taught. During the treatment, the participants in both groups were assigned to compose five essays, the topics of which for both groups were the same.

Treatment in the Cooperative Writing Group

In this group, the students worked together to write an assignment. This was a cooperative negotiated task in small groups. The lesson plan for this group adhered to the following synopsis:

Table 1
Synopsis of the Treatment in the Cooperative Writing Group

Sessions	Instruction	Chapters
1	Introduction to CL with a special emphasis on cooperative writing	Chapter 1
2	In class assignment: Writing a letter to a pen pal	
3	Writing a powerful paragraph: Building the foundation	Chapter 2
4	In class assignment: Writing a paragraph	
5	Writing effective essays: Building a larger structure	Chapter 3
6	In class assignment: Writing a three-paragraph essay	
7	Writing a five-paragraph essay	Chapter 4
8	In class assignment: Writing a five-paragraph essay	
9	Writing about causes and effects	Chapter 5
10	In class assignment: Writing a five-paragraph essay	

Because most participants did not have any experience in group writing prior to this class, the first half of the class time (45 minutes) in the first session was allocated to informing the students about the process of cooperative writing which entailed brainstorming together, pooling their knowledge, and sharing responsibility to complete a writing task. In order to ensure their full understanding, the teacher/researcher conducted a sample of the treatment in class.

The teacher/researcher taught some important aspects of the writing process such as how to share their ideas, the difference between grammatical points in speaking and writing, how to write to communicate ideas in the third, fifth, seventh, and ninth sessions, and she divided the students into five groups of three individuals to write a composition around a topic in the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, and 10th sessions and in line with what they had learned in the previous session.

It should be mentioned that the teacher/researcher tried her best to do team formation carefully to ensure the practicality of each group. The students in each group were also asked to sit in a circle to be able to speak with each group member easily and to feel more supportive of one another. In order to fulfill the cooperative aim, the students experienced being in different groups and working with different individuals during the treatment.

All the groups worked on the same topic trying to produce a well-written task in terms of linguistic accuracy, content, organization, discourse, syntax, vocabulary, and mechanics regarding their level of language proficiency and instructional points that they received. The teacher/researcher implicitly

monitored all the groups and made sure that all the members expressed their own ideas and functioned equally in the process of writing. Each group handed in the final version of their essays and feedback was provided by the instructor whose suggestions were utilized by the students to correct their errors.

Treatment in the Cooperative Feedback Group

In the Cooperative Feedback group, the participants worked together to provide student-initiated feedback on each individual's writing assignments. This was a cooperatively negotiated activity in either small or large groups. The lesson plan for this group was based on the following synopsis:

Table 2
Synopsis of the Treatment in the Cooperative Feedback Group

Sessions	Instruction	Chapters
1	Introduction to CL with a special emphasis on cooperative feedback	
2	In class assignment: Feedback on last session's homework (a letter to a pen pal)	Chapter 1
3	Writing a powerful paragraph: Building the foundation	
4	In class assignment: Feedback on last session's homework (a paragraph composition)	Chapter 2
5	Writing effective essays: Building a larger structure	
6	In class assignment: Feedback on last session's homework (a three-paragraph essay)	Chapter 3
7	Writing a five-paragraph Essay	
8	In class assignment: Feedback on last session's homework (a five-paragraph essay)	Chapter 4
9	Writing about causes and effects	
10	In class assignment: Feedback on last session's homework (a five-paragraph essay)	Chapter 5

Since most of the participants were not familiar with group feedback prior to this class, the first half of the class time (45 minutes) in the first session was allocated to informing the students about the process of cooperative feedback. Detailed instructions regarding what the subject's reviewers should look at when they provide feedback (e.g., local-level corrections or global-level suggestions) and how feedback suggestions should be made (e.g., explicitly but not in the way that could hurt one's feeling) were given. In order to ensure their full understanding, the teacher/researcher conducted a sample of the treatment in class.

The teacher/researcher taught some important aspects of the writing process such as exploring ideas, selecting subject and purposes, prewriting, brainstorming, clustering, free-writing, organizing, and selecting outlining, writing a first draft, and revising the draft in the first, third, fifth, seventh, and ninth sessions. At the end of these sessions, she assigned the students to write a composition at home on an assigned topic and in line with what they had learned.

The teacher/researcher formed five heterogeneous groups in terms of their writing ability level, each including three learners to provide feedback on each group members' writing assignment in the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, and 10th sessions. Each student read their assignment paragraph by paragraph. At the end of each paragraph, the other students had enough time to express their ideas, discuss the paragraph sentence by sentence, and help the writer with providing feedback in terms of linguistic accuracy, content, organization, discourse, syntax, vocabulary, and mechanics. Accordingly, all the members of this group benefited from peer correction and peer feedback.

It is obvious that intermediate learners were not proficient to fully cover these terms but all students had a chance to actively take part in cooperation with the other learners and negotiate their ideas while the teacher offered a reasonable degree of assistance to encourage them to function at their level of ability. Accordingly, the final suggestions were written directly on the participants' papers and were returned to them at the end of the session. The students were then asked to read the review paper and incorporate the changes they assumed were the most helpful into a second draft. They were also asked to highlight and note the changes suggested by group feedback.

After the treatment, the writing posttest described earlier was administered to the learners in both groups.

Results

Participants Selection

As described earlier, the piloted PET was administered for participant selection. Table 3 below shows the descriptive statistics of this administration.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics of the PET Administration

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
PET Administration	90	22	71	46.82	11.149
Valid N (listwise)	90				

As illustrated in Table 3, the mean and the standard deviation were 46.82 and 11.15, respectively. Furthermore, the reliability of this administration stood at 0.90 (using Cronbach alpha).

Assigning the Participants into Two Groups

Among the 90 students who took the PET, the researchers selected the 60 who scored between one standard deviation above and below the mean. As the students in the language school came from intact groups and the researchers did not have the luxury of random sampling, they had to make sure that the 30 learners in each group bore no significant difference in terms of the dependent variable (writing skill) prior to the treatment. To this end, they checked whether the mean scores of the two groups on the writing section of the PET administered earlier bore no significant difference. First, the descriptive statistics of the scores obtained by these 60 learners on the PET writing section are presented (Table 4).

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics of the Writing Scores of the Two Groups on the PET Administration

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
CGW Prewriting	30	10	18	13.47	1.978	.534	.427
CGF Prewriting	30	9	16	13.03	1.956	.100	.427
Valid N (listwise)	30						

As shown in Table 4, the skewness ratios of both groups (1.25 and 0.23) fell within the acceptable range of ± 1.96 , thus, signifying that the score distributions in both groups represented normality. Therefore, running an independent samples t-test was legitimized.

As Table 5 below indicates, with the F value of 0.014 at the significance level of 0.905 being larger than 0.05, the variances between the two groups

were not significantly different. Therefore, the results of the t-test with the assumption of homogeneity of the variances were reported here.

Table 5

Independent Samples t-Test of the Mean Scores of Both Groups in Their Writing Prior to the Treatment

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.014	.905	.853	58	.397	.433	.648	-1.71	.880
Equal variances not assumed			.853	57.99	.397	.433	.648	-1.71	.880

The results in Table 5 indicate that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups at the outset, $t = 0.853$, $p = 0.397 > 0.05$. Consequently, any probable differences at the end of the treatment on the learners' writing skill could be attributed to the effect of the treatment.

Posttest

The researchers administered the writing posttest to the two experimental groups once the treatment was completed. Table 6 displays the descriptive statistics.

Table 6
Descriptive Statistics for the Posttest in Both Groups

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
CGW Posttest	30	15	20	17.60	1.673	-.399	.427	
CGF Posttest	30	11	18	15.23	2.029	-.739	.427	
Valid N (listwise)	30	15	20	17.60	1.673	-.399	.427	

The mean and the standard deviation of the cooperative group writing were 17.60 and 1.67 while those of the cooperative group feedback were 15.23 and 2.03, respectively.

Testing the Hypothesis

To verify the null hypothesis of the study, the researchers intended to conduct the independent samples *t*-test. Prior to this, the normality of the distribution of these scores within each group had to be checked. Going back to Table 6, the skewness ratios of both groups fell within the acceptable range of ± 1.96 (-0.23 and -0.002) thus signifying that the score distributions in both groups represented normality. Therefore, running a *t*-test was legitimized.

Table 7
Independent Samples *t*-Test on the Mean Scores of Both Experimental Groups

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		<i>t</i> -test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	<i>F</i>	Sig.	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.995	.323	4.929	58	.000	2.367	.480	1.406	3.328
Equal variances not assumed			4.929	55.97	.000	2.367	.480	1.405	3.329

As Table 7 above indicates, with the F value of 0.995 at the significance level of 0.323 being larger than 0.05, the variances between the two groups were not significantly different. Therefore, the results of the t-test with the assumption of homogeneity of the variances were reported here. The results ($t = 4.929$, $p = 0.0001 < 0.05$) indicate that there was indeed a significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups at the posttest. It can thus be concluded that the presupposed null hypothesis was rejected meaning that the cooperative group writing class who gained a higher mean score on the posttest outperformed the cooperative group feedback class in this study.

Following the rejection of the null hypothesis, the researchers were interested to know how much of the obtained difference could be explained by the variation in the two levels of the independent variable. To determine the strength of the findings of the research, that is, to evaluate the stability of the research findings across samples, effect size was also estimated to be 1.01. According to Cohen (1988, p. 22), a value exceeding 0.8 is generally considered a large effect size. Therefore, the findings of the study could be considered strong enough for the purpose of generalization.

Discussion

The result of the data analyses revealed that the cooperative group writing class's writing improved significantly compared to the cooperative group feedback class. The present finding is in line with that of a good number of previous studies (discussed below) focusing on the effects of cooperative group writing and cooperative group feedback on L2 writing among EFL learners.

To begin with, Kirk (2001) demonstrated that cooperative group writing was highly effective in L2 writing development among EFL learners. Stevens's (2003) study proved that student team reading and writing which was presented as a cooperative learning approach was significantly effective in middle school literacy instruction. In addition, the results of the study conducted by Chien (2004, as cited in Wang, 2009) on applying CL in Taiwanese EFL classrooms came up with similar results.

Li and Lam (2013) found that through cooperative writing which is a student-centered and instructor-facilitated pedagogy, a small group of students learned how to share ideas and how to be responsible for their own learning and, at the same time, the learning of every group member in the development of their writing. The same result was also achieved by Leki (2006).

Another study was conducted by Syafini and Tenku nor Rizan (2005) indicating the significant effect of cooperative learning in enhancing writing performance. The same idea was supported by Ismail and Maasum (2009, as cited in Khabiri & Firooz, 2012), Marashi and Baygzadeh (2010), and Keshavarz et al. (2014).

The fact that cooperative group writing proved to be a more powerful strategy in this study compared to cooperative group feedback does not mean that the latter has not been successful at all. Quite the contrary, Yu and Lee (2016) found that cooperative group feedback could be highly successful in developing L2 writing while serving as a socially mediated activity through which learners employ techniques to encourage and facilitate interaction within and between groups. In a similar study, Alamis (2010) evaluated cooperative group writing with teachers' written feedback and found that students' reactions and responses to the former were conducive to far better results.

Furthermore, Storch (2017) concluded that peer corrective feedback in computer-mediated collaborative writing could encourage cooperation rather than competition and thus help the development of cooperative group writing. Likewise, Porto (2016) found that cooperative writing response groups can employ feedback to find out the existing problems in one's writing and then go through the process of modification through cooperation.

In the process of instruction throughout the present study, the researchers observed that the learners' interest in the cooperative group writing program could serve as a facilitator and, accordingly, be considered a more inclusive procedure in which the learners rejected competitions and tried to present a fine piece of work.

Another reason for the success of cooperative group writing might be sought through its novelty for the learners in the writing class. In the Iranian

ELT context, the focus has probably been more on writing through cognitive development or metacognitive awareness, each of which is individually signified (Azizi, Nemati, & Estahbanati, 2017). In the present study, the researchers felt that through cooperative writing, the learners acquired that cooperation energizes their writing ability as it a convergent activity through which they shared their ideas to develop a piece of writing.

A very significant issue which is worth mentioning was the issue of attention in each of the two experimental groups: in the cooperative writing feedback group, the learners' attention was directed towards recognition of errors, mistakes, and weak-points while in the cooperative group writing program, the learners' attention was on production rather than recognition. This subtle difference is perhaps another reason why those in the cooperative group writing program outperformed those in the cooperative writing feedback group despite the fact that the learners in both groups seemed sufficiently motivated to take part in classroom activities in both of the study groups.

In sum, the positive impact of cooperative group writing on EFL learners' writing in EFL classrooms facilitates the grounds for providing a pretext in which learners improve their L2 skills with alacrity in a cooperative mode (Amo & Jareno, 2011). Employing user-friendly tasks, such as topic development which are in line with cooperative group writing, aiming at facilitating the development of successful writing have also been recorded as being effective (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013).

Cooperative group writing could be employed by English teachers to enhance learners' awareness concerning what they are dealing with. The basic assumed tenet is that cooperative group activities and their related tasks can facilitate learning (Porto, 2016; Yu & Lee, 2016) and that "learners enjoy a cooperative mode in the language classroom and pay attention to their peers' development. In this way, cooperation and collaboration will be encouraged while competition discouraged" (Dobao, 2012, p. 55).

Inspired by the findings of the present study, English teachers and learners could employ various techniques to help learners improve their writing

management. Accordingly, classroom interactions could be enriched which could help learners' subsequent L2 writing development.

Syllabus designers and materials developers may also benefit from the findings of the present study through presenting tasks that consolidate learners' awareness toward L2 writing, through cooperative group writing. Such tasks may facilitate learners' transition towards cooperative and collaborative learning, cognitive learning, cultural literacy, and meaningful learning.

This study was of course conducted under certain limitations, thus, prompting the following recommendations for further research. First of all, the present study compared the impacts of cooperative group writing and cooperative group feedback in the L2 writing classroom through an immediate posttest. The residual effects of the two procedures on the development of second language writing among learners could be examined in another study. In addition, the present study investigated the effects of the two variables on L2 writing development. Future studies can be conducted on other language components or skills. Thirdly, another study could be conducted with a three-group comparison design: cooperative group writing, cooperative group feedback, and a combination of cooperative group writing and cooperative group feedback in one. Finally, the gender and age of the participants in the present study were not controlled; other studies may be conducted through controlling the aforesaid variables.

Declaration of interest: none

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