EFL Learners' and Teachers' Attitudes Towards Classroom Tasks and Their Effects on Task Outcome: The Case of L2 Writing Performance

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Abstract: Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is learning by doing or active learning. Examples of TBLT instructional applications include group work, problem-solving, workshops, and constructivism. The present research sought to investigate the effects of EFL learners' and teachers' attitudes towards classroom tasks on learners' overall writing ability. In so doing, 60 Iranian EFL learners were invited from a language institute in Isfahan, Iran, through convenience sampling. An Oxford Placement Test, an attitude questionnaire, and some writing tasks were employed to collect the data. At first, the writing tasks were categorized into two groups including desirable tasks from the learners' point of view and desirable tasks from the teachers' point of view. Afterward, the topics chosen by the learners and those chosen by the teachers were given to the participants in different groups. Besides, another group of topics was given to the participants of the control group. The results of the study revealed a significant difference between EFL teachers' and learners' attitudes towards writing. Furthermore, the results of ANOVA indicated a significant difference between the group with desirable tasks from the teachers' point of view and the group with desirable tasks from the learners' point of view. The findings of the present study can develop a clearer vision for classroom teaching.

Keywords: Attitude Towards Writing, Iranian EFL Learners' Attitudes, Iranian EFL Teachers' Attitudes, Task-based Language Teaching, Writing Proficiency.

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Introduction

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) reveals learners' objectives of language use in the real world. It focuses on how language learners will solve an instant problem. Furthermore, according to Ellis (2003a), TBLT assesses learners' capability to perform a task based on specific criteria, which show their instant needs, rather than their capability to complete a discrete-point test. TBLT has been dominating language teaching in the world (Ellis, 2003a; Nunan, 2004; Samuda & Bygate 2008). Task, as proposed by Ellis (2003b), refers to a work plan with primary attention to meaning and involving linguistic resources that could engage productive or receptive skills by using language in a situation similar to real life. By paying attention to students' needs, task-based language teaching would be employed more fruitfully; therefore, the language courses could have better outcomes for language learners.

It is important for teachers to bear in mind the fact that any language learner would learn a language differently with respect to their needs. Learners' individual differences have been considered very important (Skehan, 1989). Many studies have been conducted to examine the effects of individual differences on various aspects of learning (Maftoon, 2012, Teepan 2005). Personality traits have been demonstrated to affect the outcome of language learning programs (Breen, 1987). Attitude, as one of the individual differences, has much to do with language learning in a foreign or second setting.

Ones' perception of a task as Breen (1987) notes would affect the task outcome. Skott (2009 as cited in Golpour, Ahour, and Ahangari, 2019) stated that belief can affect practice and can play an important role in teaching practice. As an important aspect of the teaching and learning process, language teachers' and learners' attitudes and cognitions would play a vital role in task outcome (Ghaedrahmat, Gholami, & Mohammadnia, 2018). Furthermore, teachers' beliefs have an essential role in their own teaching and influence their teaching (Grossman, Wilson, & Shulman, 1989). However, the outcome of a task is not particularly predetermined and hinges on its purpose (Breen, 1987). Different tasks have various outcomes as they teach or assess skills or subskills. Learning normally takes place when one has a positive attitude towards the subject (Maftoon, 2012). This might be partly true about language learning. Considering the fact that the task and its outcome are influenced by EFL learners' and teachers' attitude (Breen, 1987), task outcome and its relationship with EFL learners' and teacher's attitude seems to be of great importance.

According to Borg (2003), the term teacher cognition refers to "the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching that is what teachers know, believe, and think" (p. 81). According to Ahmed (2015), learners' attitude is considered as a group of feelings about language use and its position in the society. The feelings are positive, negative, and neutral. They can foster or hamper the learning process.

Studying teacher cognitions and attitudes has been the center of a number of studies since more than four decades ago. The origin of this subfield of English language teaching commenced in teacher education in the 1970s. (Freeman, 2002; Johnson, 2006). The underlying philosophy of studying teacher attitudes seems to turn back to the general assumption that teachers' attitudes and their pedagogical beliefs have diverse controls on their classroom practices (and vice versa) (see Borg, 2003; Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver, & Thwaite, 2003; Farrell & Lim, 2005; Hall, 2011). A number of studies in the field of language learning and teaching have shown that attitudes and cognitions about pedagogy are so complicated and intricate that teachers' instructional practices are governed by the teachers' attitudes. In addition, such cognitions and beliefs shape their decision in relation to those practices (see Borg, 2003; Breen et al., 2003; Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Farrell & Lim, 2005).

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Learners' individual differences have been considered very important (Skehan, 1989). Many studies have been conducted to examine the effect of different individual differences on various aspects of learning (Maftoon, 2012, Teepan 2005). Learners' personality traits have been demonstrated to affect the outcome of language learning programs (Breen, 1987). The attitude towards learning, as one of the individual differences, has much to do with language learning in a foreign or second language setting. Ones' attitude of a task, as Breen (1987) notes, would affect the task outcome. However, the outcome of a task is not particularly predetermined and hinges on its purpose (Breen, 1987). Writing is a complicated task requiring linguistic as well as pragmatic and world knowledge. Regarding the importance of writing in learning a foreign language, this study aimed to investigate learners' and teachers' attitudes towards the task and its possible effects on task outcomes manifested in L2 writing performance.

As writing by itself is considered to be a complicated task, most language learners do not display positive attitudes towards writing (Nunan, 2004); therefore, finding a technique to assess learners' attitudes and selecting the tasks based on them can lead to better outcomes. Thus, the findings may improve EFL learners' writing performance. Attitudes would play a role in a learners' success or failure in learning something. As a result, studying attitude would become immensely important when learning another language. The disparity between what teachers aim for as the task outcome and what learners actually perform on it (Lioret, 2003) might originate in their different attitudes towards the task. This puts more emphasis on the importance of measuring attitudes.

Literature Review

In general, TBLT is 'learning by doing' or 'active learning'. Examples of TBLT instructional applications include group work, problem-solving, workshops, and constructivism. According to Wallace (1991), such applications can be considered to be task-based; however, there are no distinctions between TBLT and the above terms. According to Cohen (1996), active learning is task-based and in active learning, the teacher considers the role of proficiency. Yet, in task-centered learning, there is no hierarchical structure. In task-based learning, the teacher has the role of an experienced member of the group.

According to Willis (1996), from teachers' point of view, task-based learning is an adventure in which learners come up with different kinds of things. She believes that TBLT includes some elements of risk which can make classroom conditions quite risky for teachers. Although a large number of theories have been proposed about second language acquisition (SLA), the area is still problematic (Wang & Wen, 2002). However, the type and amount of interaction are determining factors in SLA (Lioret, 2003). TBLT causes the effective interaction desirable for acquisition through structured tasks and collaborative output. According to Ellis (2001), both the process and product are important for student-student and teacher-student interactions, which are important aspects of language acquisition.

The studies conducted on the issue of teacher attitude among Iranian teachers and language learners of English are included in, but not limited to, the following ones: Khabbazi Bab Anari, Bagheri, and Sadighi (2020) examined Iranian EFL learners' attitudes about the Task-Based Language Assessment (TBLA) and the traditional assessment concerning their General English achievement. The participants were one hundred EFL students from Islamic Azad University. An attitude questionnaire was used to gather the data. It was found that EFL

learners had positive attitudes towards the TBLA utilization in improving their General English achievement and most of the students were satisfied with learning English through the TBLA. The distinction between the present study and the study by Khabbazi Bab, et,.al. (2020) is that in the present study, the effect of both teachers and learners on writing task outcome was investigated.

Another study in which only the teachers' attitudes about tasks were investigated was the study by Golpour, et., al. (2019) who investigated the relationship among EFL university teachers' code-based and meaning-based beliefs in writing instruction and classroom writing activities. The participants were 120 university teachers, who were teaching writing to EFL learners at different universities in Iran. The researchers used a questionnaire on writing. The results revealed a significant correlation between both teachers' meaning-based and code-based beliefs in writing and writing activities.

In addition, Yunus, Salehi, and Amini (2016) showed that a group of Iranian EFL teachers have cognitions about their language learners in respect to language learners' self-confidence, desire for feedback, and instruction. They investigated cognitions of five English teachers in oral communication classrooms. A questionnaire was employed in order to obtain their cognitions about language learners. It was revealed that there was a complex relationship between language teachers' experience and their cognitions about techniques employed in classrooms.

Jamalzadeh and Shahsavar (2015) also investigated the effects of contextual factors on teachers' attitudes and practices. Thirty teachers were investigated using a self-developed questionnaire. The teachers were also investigated in-class observations. Their study showed that contextual factors of teaching do not largely affect teachers' beliefs on language teaching. In addition, it was shown that teacher performance is different for adult and young learners' departments in terms of applying syllabus and methodology.

In a similar study, Sadeghi and Bidel Nikou (2012) investigated attitudes of Iranian EFL high school teachers and students about teaching and learning reading tasks using questionnaires. It was shown that both groups agreed that reading cognition should be given more attention. Alijanian (2012) investigated how variables like work environment, teachers' experience, and gender influenced attitudes about grammar and its teaching. A questionnaire was used to gather data. Findings revealed that variables can significantly influence teachers' beliefs and cognitions about teaching grammar.

In a study concerning EFL teachers' attitudes on teaching English language grammar,

Moini (2009) concentrated on the issue of differences in Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes about grammar and its teaching. The study showed that differences concerned the issues of the work environment (private school vs. state schools), degree, gender, and teaching experience. The data gained from a grammar belief questionnaire revealed significant differences between school teachers and private language institute teachers in their cognition and practice. Findings revealed that teachers' characteristics have an influence upon some aspects of their cognition and teaching practice as related to grammar.

In different parts of the world, other studies have been conducted. One of the studies closely relevant to the topic under question is presented in this section. Calzada, del Pilar, and Mayo (2020) investigated the attitudes of child EFL learners towards a collaborative dictogloss task. The participants were thirty-two Spanish EFL children (ages 11–12) who completed the task in pairs and small groups at their school and completed an attitude questionnaire one week after. It was revealed that learners had a positive attitude towards L1 and L2 writing, collaboration in the classroom, and the task itself, regardless of their grouping condition.

Chuan Lin (2010) investigated teacher's attitudes regarding the instruction of grammar tasks in ESL classrooms. Chuan Lin's (2010) research had three objectives: first to study the relationship between the teachers' perceived beliefs and classroom practices; second, to compare the interaction between the teacher and the classes of students; and three, to investigate the level of satisfaction from students' learning. It was shown that three possible factors result in successful grammar learning, including the constant relationship between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices as well as the consistency of teachers' and learners' beliefs.

Wang (2006) studied teachers' attitudes about teaching and learning the English language and their real performance. The results revealed that teachers' attitudes and practices were in line with activities and methods of teaching practices. In another related study, Basturkmen, Loewn, and Ellis (2004) investigated the relationship between teachers' stated beliefs and real performance during their communicative teaching lessons. Some inconsistencies in teachers' stated beliefs were observed. Findings revealed a weak relationship between what teachers think and what they do to focus on teaching.

Faour (2003) investigated the relationship between attitudes and practices of Lebanese teachers. The results showed that factors like schools' socioeconomic status, class size, grade level, education, training, age, salary, and principal's support can influence teachers' beliefs

and practices.

Given the importance of learners' differences, this study was an attempt to investigate learners as well as teachers' attitudes towards writing tasks in a classroom setting. The focus of the study was on surveying if teachers' and learners' attitudes about a task have any effects on task outcome. Because of the importance of writing skills, the effect of learners' and teachers' cognition towards writing tasks was put under scrutiny. Task outcome means the results of the learners' performance in writing tasks in terms of their overall writing ability. This study was going to answer the following questions:

RQ1.What are the EFL teachers' and learners' attitudes towards classroom writing tasks in general?

RQ2. How does EFL learners' and teachers' attitudes towards classroom writing tasks affect learners' overall writing ability?

Methodology

The present study used a mixed-methods design. The independent variables were writing tasks from teachers' and learners' point of view, and the dependent variable was the participants' writing scores.

Participants and Sampling

The population from which participants were selected were adult intermediate English learners who had enrolled for the summer term of 2018 English classes in Ferasat Language Institute, Isfahan, Iran. First, a sample of 60 Iranian EFL learners between 18 and 20 was chosen from the language institute through convenience sampling. An Oxford Placement Test was administered to make sure about the students' homogeneity. The purpose of this test was to make sure that the participants' previous knowledge does not affect their performance in the writing tests. They were divided into three groups of twenty students. The classification of the learners in three groups was due to the fact that each group was given a specific task, with each task chosen by learners and teachers. They had passed one course on paragraph writing. In addition to EFL learners, 10 language teachers were chosen through convenient sampling from among the teachers teaching at the institute, so as to investigate their attitude towards writing tasks.

Instruments

AREL

- *Writing Attitude Survey*

In the present research two attitude questionnaires were employed, one for investigating the participants' general attitudes towards writing, and the other for assessing participants' attitudes towards the specific writing tasks. To discover the participants' attitudes towards writing, the participants were supposed to complete the Writing Attitude Survey (Podsen, 1997) by circling the responses which correspond to their attitude. Various aspects of the participants' attitudes towards writing like fear of writing and eagerness to writing, eagerness to be evaluated, etc. were investigated.

This questionnaire was a Likert-type one with 5 options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. A reverse scoring procedure was employed to calculate participants' scores from this questionnaire for some items. This was due to item contents. The possible scores for this Writing Attitude Survey range from 20 to 100, with higher scores indicating a more positive, more confident writing attitude. In fact, the questionnaire included 20 items. The validity of the questionnaire was established by a board of university professors teaching at the University of Isfahan consisting of four members. In order to establish its reliability, it was piloted on 50 non-participants with the same characteristics of the main participants. The Cronbach-alpha showed a reliability index of .89.

- *Writing Tasks*

To assess participants' performance in writing, an IELTS practice test was employed. IELTS writing tasks were administered among the participants of the three groups. The tasks provided students with topics that they were asked to write paragraphs about. In order to investigate the participants' attitudes towards the specific tasks, 5 writing tasks were given to the same participants including 60 EFL learners and 10 EFL teachers, so that they could have options to choose from, and they were asked to answer the questionnaire about each task, separately. After classifying the writing tasks based on the participants' attitudes, tasks were classified into desirable tasks from students' point of view and desirable tasks based on teachers' opinions. One group was given a task that was considered as a desirable task by the teachers and the other group was given a task that was chosen by the learners.

- *Writing-task Attitude Questionnaire*

In order to classify the writing tasks based on the participants' attitudes, a questionnaire was developed from two writing attitude surveys which had earlier been employed to assess the

learners' attitude about writing tasks (Graham, Berninger & Fan, 2007; Hall, Toland, & Guo, 2016; Setyowati & Qibtiyah, 2015). This questionnaire (see appendix) included 33 items with a Likert-type scale ranging from 1-Strongly disagree to 5- Strongly agree. Within this questionnaire, the participants were supposed to describe their attitudes on some writing tasks in a range from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The participants were questioned about their attitude on writing tasks. The questionnaire was proofread by a professor teaching at Isfahan university as well as two Ph.D. holders in English language teaching so as to check its validity. In addition, to establish the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study (n=50) was conducted and, the consistency index was found to be .84 using Cronbach's alpha.

Data Collection Procedure

In order to classify the writing tasks, five topics for writing were given to the whole participants including teachers and learners while they were in classes. Then, it was needed to investigate the participants' attitudes about the writing tasks. In so doing, the writing-task attitude questionnaire was administered to assess learners' attitudes towards the writing tasks. Based on the teachers' and learners' attitudes, two tasks out of five were chosen. In order to examine the effects of learners' and teachers' attitudes towards the learners' performance in writing tasks, the participants were randomly classified into three groups. The reason for such classification was to be able to administer each topic in one group. Then, task 4 which was identified to be the most desirable task by the teachers was given to the participants in group 1, task 2 which was the most suitable task from the learners' point of view was administered among participants in group 2. Group 3 was given another task which had been chosen to be an average task by the two groups of the participants. After that, two Ph.D. holders of TEFL scored writing tests based on the IELTS scoring scheme.

Data Analysis

The gathered data were exposed to descriptive and inferential statistics including mean, standard deviation, One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Post-hoc test, and a Mann-Whitney U test. Five writing tasks were given to the participants. Then, based on their attitudes two tasks were chosen. The writing tasks were scored based on the scoring rubric of IELTS. The tasks were scored by two raters, and the interrater reliability was found to be 0.94.

Results

EFL Teachers and Learners' Attitudes Towards Classroom Writing Task

The participants' attitudes towards tasks were investigated using the writing-task attitude questionnaire. Based on their attitudes, the tasks were divided into three classes including those suitable tasks from students' points of view and from teachers' perspectives. In this section, participants' attitudes towards writing tasks are presented.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' and Learners' Writing Attitude Survey*

Writing scores	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Learners	60	28	94	60.95	15.82
Teachers	10	75	97	85.70	7.24

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the data gathered from the Writing Attitude Survey like the mean and standard deviation of the scores. As shown, the mean score for learners was found to be 60.95 and for teachers was 85.70. In order to be more objective, a Mann-Whitney U test was run among the mean scores gained from the participants of the two groups.

Table 2. *Results of Mann-Whitney U test of Attitude Scores*

	Scores
Mann-Whitney U	48.000
Wilcoxon W	1.878E3
Z	-4.235
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.080
a. Grouping Variable: groups	

The results showed that the observed level of significance is lower than the identified level of significance ($p > .05$); therefore, it could be claimed that there was a significant difference between EFL teachers and learners' attitudes towards writing. In order to present a clearer picture of the issue under study, participants' responses to each item of the survey were analyzed separately. Table 3 presents the results.

Table 3. *Respondents' Positive and Negative Behavioral Attitudes towards Writing (%)*

Questionnaire item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't know	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I avoid doing writing exercises of my English book whenever possible.	19	23	14	26	18
2. I'd like to read out my writing paper in class.	7	57	17	16	3
3. I post personal anecdotes on social media.	15	36	10	28	21
4. I am afraid of writing when I know it might be evaluated.	14	56	0	21	9
5. My mind seems to go blank when I start writing.	16	43	6	25	11
6. Expressing ideas through writing is a waste of time.	19	34	13	12	22
7. I would enjoy submitting my writing to magazines for publication.	8	13	17	42	20
8. I like to keep personal diaries.	7	11	14	41	27
9. I do writing booster part at the end of my book for my own interest.	5	14	9	32	40
10. I like to have my family read what I have written.	12	27	15	41	5
11. I get nervous while doing my writing exercises.	14	27	7	32	20
12. People seem to enjoy reading what I write.	6	18	36	29	11
13. I enjoy writing.	7	30	5	41	17
14. I never seem to be able to write down my ideas clearly.	14	28	31	16	11
15. I'm not a good writer.	21	34	9	23	13
16. I like seeing my thoughts on paper.	18	31	13	24	14
17. It is easy for me to write good letters.	13	23	13	31	20
18. I don't think I write as well as my classmates.	21	34	19	14	12
19. Writing is a lot of fun.	26	19	14	33	8
20. I am used to taking notes frequently.	12	24	11	32	21

Table 3 presents the results of the writing attitude questionnaires. For the sake of simplicity, the results of the first two options, that is strongly disagree and disagree and the last two items, namely strongly agree and agree are presented along with each other. According to the results presented in Table 4.3, 42% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they avoid doing their writing exercises whenever possible. 44% of them agreed or strongly agreed with this item. The rest 14% had no idea about this statement. As far as the second statement is concerned, 64% of the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea that they have no fear for their writing to be evaluated. Nineteen percent of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and seventeen percent didn't have any idea. As with the third statement, which dealt with looking forward to writing down ideas, 51% of the participants stated that they look forward to writing their ideas, while 49% agreed or strongly disagreed with this item, and the rest had no idea about this item. Being afraid of their writing to be evaluated was the next item of the questionnaire with which, the majority of the participants (70%) disagreed or strongly disagreed while 30% agreed or strongly agreed. Fifty-nine percent of respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed that their minds seem to go blank when they start writing, and 36% of the participants agreed or strongly disagreed with this item. Considering the next statement claiming that expressing ideas through writing is a waste of time, 53% of the participants disagree or strongly disagreed with this item, while 34% of them agreed with this statement, the rest 13% had no idea about this item. As far as enjoying submitting their writing to magazines for evaluation and publication is concerned, 21% of the participants disagreed and 62% of them agreed with this item. Out of the participants, 18% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they like to write their ideas, while 68% of them agreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Nineteen percent of the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement claiming that they feel confident in their ability to express their ideas in writing, 68% of them claimed that they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

Around one-third of the participants (29%), disagreed that they like to have personal diaries, around half of them (46%) agreed with this item, the rest of the participants had no idea about this item. Getting nervous while doing my writing exercise was the next item of the questionnaire, with which 41% of the participants disagreed and 52% of them agreed. Twenty percent of the participants disagreed with the idea that other people enjoy reading what they write, and 40% agreed with this item. About 37% of the participants disagreed with this statement and 58% of them agreed with this item.

Forty-two percent of the participants disagreed that they never seem to be able to write down their ideas clearly, while 27% agreed with this statement, the rest 31% had no idea about this statement. Among the participants, more than half of the participants (55%) disagreed that they are not good writers, while 36% believed that they are not good writers.

Forty-nine percent of the participants disagreed that they don't like seeing their thoughts on paper, while 38% claimed that they don't like to see their ideas on paper. Twenty-six percent disagreed that it is easy for them to write good letters, while 51% of them agreed with this item. Twenty-six percent of the participants claimed that they don't think they write as well as most people, while 55% of them claimed that they write as well as other people. Around half of the participants (41%) claimed that writing is a lot of fun, while 45% of them disagreed with this statement. Considering the last statement of the questionnaire, which dealt with the idea that they take notes frequently as an enjoyable experience, 26% disagreed and 53% agreed with this statement. Having identified participants' general attitudes towards writing, it was needed to investigate participants' attitudes towards the tasks as the next step. In fact, Table 4 presents language teaches' and learners' attitudes about 5 writing tasks. The results are reported below.

Table 4. *Mean Scores of Results Gained from Writing-task Attitude Questionnaire*

Writing tasks	Writing task 1	Writing task 2	Writing task 3	Writing task 4	Writing task 5
Teachers	75.23	109.71	69.48	125.72	84.37
learners	112.4	52.13	75.17	94.61	102.59

As shown in Table 4, the most desirable writing task from teachers' point of view was task 4 with a mean score of 125.72, and the most suitable writing task based on learners' opinions was writing task 1 with a mean score of 112.4.

Effects of Learners' and Teachers' Attitudes towards Classroom Tasks on Writing Ability

As the number of participants in each group was 20, it was needed to find out if the scores were normally distributed. In so doing, at first, a *One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test* was run on writing scores from each group. As it was revealed that the distribution of the writing scores of the three groups was normal, the assumptions for running the parametric test of One-way Analysis of Variance were met.

Table 5. *Descriptive Statistics of Performance of the Three Groups in the Writing Test*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Desirable task by teachers	20	67.6000	14.05778
Desirable task by learners	20	52.6000	17.74498
Average task by two groups	20	60.5000	21.31839
Total	60	60.2333	18.69684

As shown in Table 5, the mean score of the participants in the group which was given the task selected by the language teachers was 67.60, which was higher than the other groups including participants given the task selected to be desirable by learners (X=52.60) and the group which was given another task (X=60.23). In order to ascertain that the mean difference between the writing scores of the three groups, was significant, One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was run on the writing scores. According to the results of ANOVA, the identified level of significance was smaller than the observed level of significance which was .037 (p < .05); therefore, a significant difference was observed in the performance of the three groups which were given different writing tasks. However, it was not still clear where the difference existed; therefore, a post-hoc test was run.

Table 6. *Results of Post-hoc Test on The Scores of Writing Tests*

(I) groups	(J) groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
desirable task by teachers	desirable task by learners	15.00*	5.67	.011	3.63	26.36
	common task by two groups	7.100	5.67	.216	-4.26	18.46
desirable task by learners	desirable task by teachers	-15.00*	5.67	.011	-26.36	-3.63
	common task by two groups	-7.900	5.67	.169	-19.26	3.46
common task by two groups	desirable task by teachers	-7.100	5.67	.216	-18.46	4.26
	desirable task by learners	7.900	5.67	.169	-3.46	19.26

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

As it is seen, it was found that the tasks about which language teachers have more positive attitudes can lead to a better performance of learners in terms of learners' overall writing ability.

Discussion

The first question of the present study intended to investigate EFL teachers' and learners' attitudes towards classroom writing tasks. The results showed that there was a significant difference between EFL teachers' and learners' attitudes towards writing. In addition, the results revealed that around half of the respondents avoid writing whenever possible, which may be due to the complexity of writing skills for language learners. Furthermore, most participants claimed that they have fear about their writing being evaluated. Such findings can be considered as an instance of a face-threatening act, and this may jeopardize the writers' status; accordingly, they were afraid of being evaluated. Similarly, half of the participants claimed that they do not look forward to writing down their ideas. Around two-thirds of all respondents disagreed that their minds seem to go blank when they start writing, which can be attributed to the fact that the participants were language teachers and learners and they had experience in writing. Considering the item which stated that it is enjoyable to submit their writing to journals for evaluation and publication, most participants agreed with this item, which can be explained in terms of the participants' tendency to express themselves in academic contexts. In addition, most of the participants claimed that they don't like to write their ideas, and they feel nervous about writing. Around half of the participants claimed that writing is a lot of fun. Considering the last statement of the questionnaire, more than half of the respondents agreed that discussing writing with others is an enjoyable experience. The findings more or less show negative attitudes towards writing skills. Findings can be explained through some justifications.

The findings of the study can be compared with the study by Faour (2003) who investigated the relationship between the attitudes and practices of Lebanese teachers. Some relationships between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices were observed. He claimed that factors like schools' socioeconomic status, class size, grade level, education, training, age, salary, and principal's support can affect teachers' beliefs and practices significantly.

The second hypothesis of the present research suggested that EFL learners' and teachers' attitudes towards classroom tasks do not have any effects on their overall writing

ability as well as the organization and content of their writing. In order to examine this hypothesis, the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was run on the writing scores. The results confirmed that there was a significant difference in the performance of the three groups which were given different writing tasks in their overall writing scores. The reason for this finding can be justified in the light of the importance of expertise in designing and presenting topics for writing. In fact, it can be said that the topics chosen by language teachers seem to be more suitable to write about due to teachers' experience and knowledge. In fact, it is teachers' attitudes about tasks that can affect learners' performance.

Teachers' and learners' attitudes and motivation are interlinked. In fact, their perceptions of, the type of learning activity they encounter are likely to affect their motivation, and therefore, their performance. In addition to this, teachers' and learners' attitudes are important because they guide their thinking and behavior. It is clear that students with a positive attitude will show better results in their language education. Accordingly, Karavas-Doukas (2014), stated that a positive attitude will result in positive behavior; therefore, better learning is the outcome of their enthusiasm in solving problems through acquired skills. In addition, the better performance of the participants in the tasks which were found to be more desirable by language teachers can be justified according to Larsen-Freeman (2001). According to Larsen-Freeman (2001), the attitudes of other stakeholders are also related within language learning and L2 classrooms. Thus, language teachers are likely to hold attitudes about, for instance, the task type. Furthermore, according to Hall (2011) in a language class learners hold different and attitudes and beliefs about classroom life, and this leads to further complexity of the L2 classroom. In this complexity, it is useful for teachers to understand what learners accept as proper tasks, although the beliefs that learners and teachers have, may change over time. In the present research, teachers' and learners' attitudes towards tasks affected their performance in writing tasks. This reveals the complex nature of language classes and can be justified in the light of coral garden theory by Breen, et al (2003).

Breen presented this theory to talk about the complex and diverse nature of language classes. Breen, et al. (2003) have suggested that individual language classrooms develop their own specific character and culture. According to Breen, et al (2003), this theory shows "the social reality of language learning as it is experienced and created by teachers and learners' (p. 127). In other words, according to Lima (2010), "coral garden identifies the complexity of the classroom setting itself, the complexity of interactions occurring within the classroom,

and the connections between the classroom and its wider social context" (p. 6). Thus, the 'coral garden theory' which supports the findings of the present article, suggests that teachers and learners both shape and are shaped by their classroom context (Wright, 2006). Breen (1987) noted that a language class:

". . . is an arena of subjective and intersubjective realities which are worked out, changed and maintained. These realities are not trivial backgrounds to the tasks of teaching and learning a language. They locate and define the new language itself as if it never existed before, and they continually specify and mold the activities of teaching and learning" (Breen, 1987, p. 128).

According to the results, it can be claimed that learning does not entail only the learning materials but also learning includes interactions, attitudes, feelings, the learning context as well as language teachers' and learners' cognition. As stated, language teachers' attitudes towards classroom tasks affect their performance in writing tasks. The reason for such findings can be discussed in terms of what Crookes (2003) believes. According to Crookes (2003) "it is impossible to act, as a teacher, without having theories (including values) that inform teaching actions, at least to some extent" (p. 82). Furthermore, teachers' attitudes are resulting from and affected by various sources like the perceptions of others (e.g., colleagues, teacher-trainers and educators, and students' parents) and the teachers' experience of what is and is not successful. Accordingly, there is a two-way relationship between attitudes and practice, with teachers' attitudes informing classroom practices and, vice versa, teachers' practices informing what an individual may believe.

The findings can also be attributed to the ecological perspective of language classroom by Van Lier (1997). According to this perspective, what happens in the ELT classroom is not straightforward and predictable; instead, what happens in learning environments, and how teachers teach, in practice depends on:

". . . who you are, what you know and believe, and what you want your students to be able to know and do. It depends on what you are expected to teach, how you teach it, and what your students are expected to do with what you have taught them . . . it depends on how your students are viewed within the school where you teach and within the community where your school is located. . . The list goes on and on" (Van Lier, 1997, p. 1).

The findings of the present study can be discussed considering the fact that English language classrooms are complicated places. Classrooms are places where the teacher and learners, come together for a pedagogical purpose. However, in addition to their physical (or

virtual) location and pedagogic function, classrooms are also social environments, that is, language lessons can be understood as social events based upon social relationships and social interactions.

As noted earlier, teachers' attitudes affected the content and organization of writing texts written by EFL learners in language classes in Isfahan, Iran. In discussing the findings, it can be stated that as Hall (2011) believes, *diversity* and *complexity* are basic elements of language classrooms and language teaching and learning. Each classroom is distinctive, and human and contextual complexity makes classroom language teaching chaotic. What happens in a classroom is certainly much more than the logical application of theories and principles; it is localized, situation-specific, and, therefore, diverse.

Teachers' attitudes raise a number of issues in language classes. They mediate how learners experience the L2 classroom and can lead to mismatches between learners' and teachers' perspectives of what is desirable in L2 classrooms (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). For example, if a teacher emphasizes a learner-centered communicative group work with learners who believe that a teacher-led focus on forms is a more effective way, classroom difficulties may arise. Language teachers and learners have various attitudes about themselves and about language learning. Additionally, 'virtually many learners, particularly older ones, have strong beliefs and opinions about how their instruction should be delivered' (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 66).

Conclusions and Implications

According to the findings of the study, it can be concluded that presenting more appropriate tasks for EFL learners to write about can affect EFL learners' performance in writing tasks in both overall scores and scores in content and organization. To conclude, it should be noted that writing tasks that engage EFL learners can lead to better outcomes. Such tasks are those which are proved by language teachers. Depending on task types, learners' task engagement can change, and in this study, it was shown that the tasks which are chosen by language teachers can engage EFL learners more actively, and this can lead to better outcomes. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to employ classroom tasks after considering who the students are and what would interest them. For example, teachers can find out what EFL learners like and dislike at the beginning of the course and include topics related to their interests in the tasks.

The findings of the present research can have several implications. First of all,

investigating teachers' and learners' attitudes may help teachers understand why learners behave the way they do and leads to a better understanding of classroom life. Many applied linguists also suggest that provoking teachers' and learners' attitudes let the presentation of alternative views which can help learners expand their knowledge about language learning, thereby developing a more flexible and reflective approach to their learning (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). The findings may suggest that trying to use more appropriate writing tasks may be fruitful for both the teacher and the learner.

Curriculum and materials developers can also take advantage of the findings of such studies in that they can consult language teachers before presenting writing materials. They could use the information presented in the article in order to design proper activities while teaching in language classes. In addition, this study revealed that when the topics are chosen precisely, better outcomes may be gained in terms of various subskills in writing. This can be fruitful for language teachers so that they can improve EFL learners' ability to improve their knowledge in writing subskills like mechanics of writing, knowledge of cohesion and coherence, organization of the text and content. Finally, those language institutes which follow the task of holding pre-IELTS courses may experience a boom in improving the candidates' writing performance if they can work on the topics which are more suitable for learners.

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Appendix: Writing-task Attitude Questionnaire

Imagine you are asked to write about some writing tasks. Beside each statement write the number of the description that best describes you.

1. Strongly disagree   2. Disagree   3. Don't know   4. Agree   5. Strongly agree

1. I like to use lots of description and new words in my writing about this task. _____

2. I like to write narrative, imaginative stories about this task. _____

3. When I write, I try to spell all the words correctly the first time. _____

4. I avoid writing about this task. 5 4321

5. I have no fear of my writing on this task being evaluated. 1 2345

6. I look forward to writing down my ideas on this task. 1 2345

7. I am afraid of writing about this task because I know it might be evaluated. 5 4321

8. My mind seems to go blank if I start writing on this task. 5 4321

9. Expressing my ideas through writing on this task is a waste of time. 5 4321

10. I would enjoy submitting my writing on this task to magazines for evaluation and publication. 1 2345

11. I like to write my ideas down on this task. 1 2345

12. I feel confident in my ability to express my ideas in writing on this task 1 2345

13. I like to have my friends read what I have written on this task. 1 2345

14. I'm nervous about my writing on this task. 5 4321

15. People seem to enjoy what I write on this task. 1 2345

16. I enjoy writing on this task. 1 2345

17. I never seem to be able to write down my ideas clearly on this task. 5 4321

18. Considering this task, I'm not a good writer. 5 4321

19. I like seeing my thoughts on paper on this task. 1 2345

20. Discussing my writing on this task with others is an enjoyable experience. 1 2345

21. I don't think I write as well as most people on this task. 5 4321

22. Writing on this task is a lot of fun. 1 2345

23. I gather information I need before I begin writing on this task. 1 2 3 4 5

24. I use prewriting techniques to generate ideas in dealing with this task (for example, outlining, mind mapping, free writing). 1 2 3 4 5

25. I develop a working draft while writing this task. 1 2 3 4 5

26. I review my draft on this task for style, purpose, and audience. 1 2 3 4 5

27. I develop a second draft in dealing with this task. 1 2 3 4 5

28. I proofread to check for common writing problems in dealing with this task. 1 2 3 4 5

29. My writing on this task presents a professional image. 1 2 3 4 5

30. I seek feedback on my document from this writing task. 1 2 3 4 5

31. Writing on this task is boring.1 2 3 4 5

32. I like to write this task in my spare time.1 2 3 4 5

33. I have trouble thinking about what to write on this task.1 2 3 4 5