

## **Self-assessment and Peer-assessment in EFL Context: An Investigation of Writing Performance and Writing Self-efficacy**

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### **Abstract**

The significance of alternative assessment in second language (L2) has been widely acknowledged in the literature. However, the implementation of alternative assessment in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context has not been much welcome by L2 educators and practitioners. The aim of the present research was set to explore the impact of implementing self-assessment and peer-assessment practices on writing performance and writing self-efficacy of EFL learners in Iran. A total number of 36 homogeneous intermediate learners were selected as the participants who were then randomly assigned to a self-assessment group (N= 17) and a peer-assessment group (N= 19). As for the treatment of the present study, the participants of the self-assessment group were taught to self-assess their writing tasks, whereas the participants of the peer-assessment group were taught to assess the writings of their peers. Two timed-writing essays and the Writing Self-Efficacy Scale (WSES) were administered to collect the data. The results obtained from performing paired-samples t-tests and ANCOVA indicated that both self- and peer-assessment activities significantly contributed to improving writing performance and writing self-efficacy of the participants. It was revealed that the participants of the peer-assessment group performed better than those in the self-assessment group in terms of both writing performance and writing self-efficacy, showing that peer-assessment activities were more effective than self-assessment activities in increasing writing competencies and self-efficacy of the participants.

### **Keywords**

EFL; Peer-assessment; Self-assessment; Writing Performance; Writing Self-efficacy; Alternative Assessment.

### **1. Introduction**

With the rise of assessment paradigm as an alternative to the long-entrenched positivist test paradigm, different learner-centered assessment types were introduced by the educators and researchers (Pope 2005). Assessment has been

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considered as an integral element of learning and is argued to positively affect the learning process by enhancing the learning quality and fostering the learners' sense of reflection and responsibility (Orsmond, Merry and Reiling 2000; Shepard 2000). In line with this new interest given to assessment, alternative assessment categories, such as self-assessment, peer-assessment, portfolio assessment, and conferencing were widely introduced and occasionally employed by L2 researchers and instructors (Brown, and Hudson 1998; Fathi, Derakhshan, and Safdari 2020; Hamp-Lyons 2009).

As one sub-category of alternative assessment, peer-assessment is viewed as a series of practices by which the students take part in assessment and evaluation of the quality of their peers' learning, make judgments about their strengths and weaknesses in the learning (Topping 1998, 2009, 2013). Peer-assessment has the potential to redirect learners' dedication of time and energy to expected learning results and to engage learners in encouraging and organizing their peers' learning and evaluating their learning quality (Baker 2016; Colby-Kelly and Turner 2007; Topping 2003, 2009). Peer-assessment is considered as a formative assessment which provides the writers with the opportunity to talk about their written tasks and uncover others' interpretations of them (Hyland 2000; Hyland and Hyland 2019). Peer-assessment is argued to foster autonomous learning by giving students more agency, fostering their higher-order thinking via the critical perusing of peers' writing, and increasing the quality of writing as a matter of receiving continuous feedback (Zhao 2010, 2014). Considered as qualitative in nature, peer-assessment is concerned with discussing good content and the areas requiring revisions and improvements, and may include the specification of the errors and drawbacks as well as feedback about how to enhance the quality of the work (Topping 2013). Although the feedback in peer-assessment that is usually given by equal ability peers to each other might be less accurate than the feedback given by the teacher, it is more conveniently accessible and more frequent than teacher feedback and could be given in a more individualized manner. The further access and frequency of peer-feedback is likely to enhance language performance, metacognitive ability, and self-regulation (Reinholz 2016). In spite of the aforementioned benefits attributed to peer-assessment, the overwhelming majority of students usually prefer teacher assessment to peer assessment (Zhang and Hyland 2018) because they consider teachers as the authority and of much greater language proficiency. According to Nelson and Murphy (1993), L2 learners are very likely to mistrust peer feedback to their writing and do not take them into account while revising their written drafts. Moreover, it is argued that L2 learners with some particular cultural backgrounds (e.g., Asian learners) may prefer more teacher-centered classes and

may not prefer group learning as they do not feel competent enough in English language proficiency (Cheng 2000). Such learners view teachers as the most reliable individual for giving corrective feedback and are unwilling to give peer-feedback or discuss their writings with their peers (Nelson and Carson 2006).

As another sub-category of alternative assessment, self-assessment is regarded as “procedures by which learners themselves evaluate their language skills and knowledge” (Bailey 227). Over the past two decades, self-assessment has received much research attention and has been considered as an effective pedagogic practice by practitioners because of some advantages. It is argued that self-assessment increases learners’ self-awareness, fosters autonomous learning and self-regulation, and provides the learners with the opportunity to assess themselves in a cooperative and low-anxiety fashion (Babaii, Taghaddomi, and Pashmforoosh 2016; Butler 2018; Rivers 2001). Self-assessment is positively correlated with learning confidence and fills the gap between learners’ perceptions and their actual performance (Andrade and Valtcheva 2009). It also expands the variety in assessment, creates a learner-centered environment, and enhances the sense of responsibility among teachers and learners (Little, 2007, 2009). However, self-assessment is usually called into question from both theoretical and practical aspects and its implementation in L2 classes has remained contentious. As Boud (1989) stated, many learners themselves and teachers may not trust their own scores and do not consider them as accurate. It is argued that high-achieving learners are likely to underestimate, and low-achieving learners usually overestimate their own performance (Boud 1989; Boud and Falchikov 2005).

Concerning the Iranian EFL context, although a significant number of empirical studies have been carried out to investigate the effectiveness of self-assessment and peer-assessment activities in improving learners’ writing ability (e.g., Babaii and Adeg 2019; Birjandi and Hadidi Tamjid 2012; Fathi and Khodabakhsh 2019; Fathi and Shirazizadeh 2019; Zarei and Usefli 2015), Iranian L2 writing courses have not widely employed self- and peer-assessment activities and are still bound to more traditional product-based approaches (Naghdipour 2016). However, the vast majority of these studies are quantitative studies whose findings need further empirical support by replication studies in order to have wider generalizability (Porte and Richards 284). Moreover, writing self-efficacy as an important affective variable has not been investigated in previous empirical studies. As a result, in order to further illuminate the role of self-assessment and peer-assessment activities in affecting L2 writing self-efficacy, the objective of the present research was to explore the impact of self-assessment and peer-

assessment as two sub-categories of alternative assessment on the writing performance and writing self-efficacy of EFL learners in Iran.

## **2. Literature Review**

With the turn of the century, foreign language assessment underwent a sort of paradigm shift where the traditional, positivist standardized tests were substituted by edumetrics and educational assessments which intend to foster learning (Gipps 1994; Rea-Dickins 2008). Parallel with this shift of orientation, L2 researchers and educators have directed their attention to self- and peer-assessment as two components of alternative assessment as alternative pedagogic practices in L2 classrooms (Sambell, McDowell and Montgomery 2012; Suzuki 2009). Within this line of inquiry, self- and peer-assessment practices have been also implemented in L2 writing instruction as workable procedures to improve L2 writing competencies (Jensen and Fischer 2005; Liu and Brantmeier 2019). For example, Zarei and Usefli (2015) examined the impacts of three types of assessment including self-, peer-, and teacher-assessment activities on EFL students' goal-orientation. To this end, ninety-four Iranian EFL students at a private language institute served as the participants of the study. To collect the data, a language proficiency test and a validated scale for goal-orientation were administered to the participants. As for the study intervention, the participants were divided into three groups of self-assessment group, peer-assessment group, and teacher-assessment group, each with its own particular treatment. The findings of the study revealed that there were significant differences among the impacts of types of assessment on goal-orientation. Furthermore, self-assessment appeared to be more effective than both peer- and teacher-assessment in affecting goal-orientation. Nevertheless, no substantial difference was observed between peer- and teacher-assessment with regard to goal-orientation.

In a similar study, Birjandi and Hadidi Tamjid (2012) investigated the effect of self- and peer-assessment practices on writing ability of Iranian English students. To this end, a sample of EFL learners were divided into five groups: four groups were exposed to particular treatments and one group received the traditional instruction. Group one was taught based on journal writing as a self-assessment technique. Group two were required to self-assess their essays, group three carried out peer-assessment activities, and group four were required to do self-assessment as well as peer-assessment practices in their writings. Moreover, all the groups were exposed to teacher assessment except for group four. The control group of the study received just teacher assessment. The results of the study showed that the self-assessment group and group the peer-assessment group had the highest positive effect on the writing improvement of the

participants. Similarly, Fathi and Khodabakhsh (2019) examined the effectiveness of self-assessment and peer-assessment on the writing performance of Iranian EFL learners. In so doing, a number of forty-six students of English majors that were the learners of two intact classes were recruited as the participants of this research. Then the two groups were randomly divided to a self-assessment group that were trained to self-assess their written tasks and a peer-assessment group that were taught to assess the written tasks of their peers. The data were gathered by timed-writing tasks administered as the pre-test and post-test of the research. The results of this research demonstrated that implementing self- and peer-assessment activities positively influenced the writing competencies of the EFL students.

Cao, Yu, and Huang (2019) conducted a qualitative case study to explore the peer-feedback experiences and actions of five groups of Chinese EFL university learners and uncovered their perspectives of how they learned from feedback and the variables which affected their learning. The qualitative data were gathered via various sources, such as drafts of compositions, peer feedback, semi-structured interviews, video-recordings of peer feedback practices and stimulated recalls. The results revealed that the learners felt various degrees of learning from giving and receiving peer feedback and showed four particular patterns of value placement including benefit from both providing and getting feedback, benefit from getting feedback only, benefit from neither providing nor getting feedback and benefit from providing feedback only. Moreover, the students' learning was affected by four variables such as involvement in assessment criteria, interest in peer feedback, within-group differences in writing skill and group dynamics. Moreover, as an attempt to investigate the role of an online peer-assessment approach to improving mind-mapping flipped instruction, Lin (2019) carried out an experiment to examine the merits and demerits of the introduced approach on learners' English learning variables including time involvement and learning reflections. The findings of the study revealed that online peer-assessment was generally effective in enhancing learning analytics of the participants. As the main implication of the study, the researcher concluded that practitioners can take it as an imperative to construct the online peer assessment learning atmosphere for students in order to aid them in becoming more critical, responsible, and autonomous in learning the language.

In another study, Babaii and Adeg (2019) investigated the effect of paired peer-assessment, teacher feedback, and group peer-assessment on EFL learners' writing ability. In so doing, sixty-nine university students of the English major were assigned to three experimental classes. Class one received regular teacher



feedback, class two were taught to work in pairs and assess each other's writing tasks, and participants of class three were divided into groups of four members and a group leader was assigned to each group by the instructor. Group leaders' responsibility was evaluating and giving feedback on their group members' writing tasks. The findings revealed a progress in the writing performance of the participants in paired peer-assessment group compared with the other two groups. Moreover, it was found that the in group peer-assessment class, the leaders of the groups outperformed their peers. However, the general performance of the class was lower than paired peer-assessment class. Similarly, Ahmed and Troudi (2018) investigated the assessment activities employed in an Egyptian EFL writing classroom at university and uncovered instructors' and learners' perceptions of these assessment activities. The purpose was to investigate the assessment activities to uncover and introduce appropriate implications. Grounded in social constructivism, eight learners and eight EFL writing practitioners were interviewed, and three EFL writing classes were observed. The results indicated that writing assessment is significant to both instructors and learners. It was also revealed that diagnosing learners' writing was rarely and superficially carried out, employing a non-standardized assessment. Reported formative assessment activities included attendance, homework, samples of students' writing, class participation, assignments, and oral presentation. Stereotypical final exams turned out to be the only summative assessment activity. Ultimately, the assessment criteria and the analytical scoring procedure were not shared with students.

Concerning the potential effect of peer feedback on L2 writing self-efficacy, Fathi, Ahmadnejad, and Yousofi (2019) explored the effects of a blog-supported writing classroom on the learners' writing motivation, self-efficacy, and self-regulation. To this end, a sample of 46 Iranian EFL students from two intact university classes were considered as the participants and were randomly divided into a control group and an experimental group. Over a period of one university semester, the control Group was instructed traditionally whereas the experimental group was instructed by the use of blogs. The data were gathered via administering the three scales assessing L2 writing motivation, self-efficacy, and self-regulation. Moreover, to gain a more in-depth understanding of the blog-supported writing instruction, a series of semi-structured interviews were carried out with a number of students in the experimental group. The results indicated that integrating blogs into EFL writing instruction fostered writing motivation and self-regulation of the experimental group more than the control group students who only received regular in-class instruction. Nevertheless, the

blog-supported writing instruction reduced the writing self-efficacy of the participants.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Participants**

The initial number of the participants of this research was 53 intermediate Iranian EFL students from a private English language institute in Tehran, Iran. Then to ensure the homogeneity of selected participants, a version of Preliminary English Test (PET) was given to all the participants. According to the obtained results of PET, 36 students whose scores lay between +1SD and -1SD from the mean were selected as the final homogeneous sample of the participants of this research. The participants were then randomly divided to a self-assessment group (N= 17) and a peer-assessment group (N= 19). Both groups included both male and female students whose age ranged from 21 to 24, with the average age of 21.09. The participants were all of the intermediate level in terms of English language proficiency as measured by PET. They were all university students coming from various disciplines or fields of study. They attended this writing course whose purpose was to develop the basic writing ability of the participants mainly including sentence writing and paragraph development.

#### **3.2. Instruments**

##### ***Preliminary English Test (PET)***

In order to check the homogeneity of the participants in terms of their global English proficiency, a sample of Preliminary English Test (PET) published by Cambridge English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL, 2009) was administered to the participants of this study. This sample of PET consisted of three sections: Reading (5 parts, 35 points), Listening (4 Parts, 25 points), Speaking (4 parts, 15 points). The total score of this sample was 75. The internal consistency of the reading and listening sections turned out to be 0.81, as measured by Cronbach's Alpha formula. The inter-rater reliability index for the speaking section was estimated to be 0.78, which is considered to be an acceptable reliability index.

##### ***Writing Self-Efficacy Scale (WSES)***

Self-efficacy, as an educational construct and grounded in socio-cognitive theory, refers to "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). Self-efficacy is considered as one of the key variables in influencing an individual's choices, effort, and perseverance. The writing self-efficacy scale (WSES) including 9 items (see Appendix) developed by Cheng (2004) was employed to assess the learners' degree of writing self-efficacy before and after

the intervention. WSES was designed to measure whether L2 learners have enough confidence in their English writing, particularly in terms of the facets of content, organization, sentence structure, vocabulary, grammar and format. The internal consistency of this questionnaire, as computed by Cronbach's Alpha formula, turned out to be 0.80 in this research.

### ***Timed-writing Essays***

In order to evaluate the writing performance of the EFL learners, two 50-minute writing essays were administered to the participants before and after the intervention as the pre-test and post-test, respectively. In so doing, the participants were required to write about two topics that did not need any specific background knowledge.

**Topic A:** Has technology made the world a better place to live?

**Topic B:** What is an important discovery in the last 100 years?

### **3.3. The Writing Scoring Scale**

To rate the essays of the participants, Jacobs et al.'s (1981) writing scale that is considered as an analytical scoring rubric was used. This scale is an effective scale Brown and Baily (1984) which includes a set of five criteria for scoring written tasks. This scale includes a 100-point rubric in which 30 points are assigned to content, 25 points to language use (form of language), 20 points to organization, 20 points to vocabulary use, and 5 points to mechanics. To guarantee the inter-rater reliability of scoring procedure, one third of the timed-writing essays were scored by a trained independent rater. The reason for rating just one third of the essays was the fact that it was too time-consuming for the independent rater to rate all the essays. Therefore, one third of the whole number of essays from both pre-test and post-test were randomly selected and rated by the independent rater who was a PhD holder in applied linguistics and had previously used this rubric frequently. The reliability coefficient as estimated by Cohen's Kappa's inter-rater reliability test was reported to be 0.83.

### **3.4. Procedure**

This research was carried out in a private language center in Tehran, Iran. The participants were of intermediate language proficiency and had enrolled in a writing program whose purpose was to develop the writing ability of the students at the sentence or paragraph level. Before the start of the program, a piloted sample of PET was given to guarantee the homogeneity of participants. According to the obtained scores of PET, 36 learners whose scores fell between +1SD and -1SD from the mean were chosen as the final sample of the participants of this research. Then the participants were then randomly divided to a self-assessment group and a peer-assessment group. Before beginning the



experimental treatments (i.e., self-assessment and peer-assessment), the timed-writing essay (Topic A) and Writing Self-Efficacy Scale (WSES) were administered to the participants of both groups as the pre-test of the study in order to identify their initial level of L2 writing performance and self-efficacy.

Then the writing program which was mainly focused on the basics of paragraph writing was initiated. In order to accomplish the aims of this research, self-assessment and peer-assessment activities were carried out in each of the experimental groups. The two classes were taught by the same instructor who used the same materials. During this writing program, the very basic and rudimentary principles of sentence writing and paragraph composition were explained to the participants. These basic principles consisted of thorough discussion of writing such as the knowledge about how to do brainstorming about a topic, how to write a thesis statement, how to support the main idea, how to conclude statements and to connect sentences with each other using connectors, and how to maintain cohesion and coherence of the paragraphs. Then the participants of both groups were trained on how to assess a piece of writing using a particular scoring rubric. To fulfill the specific aims of this research, the participants of the self-assessment group were taught to assess their own written essays and the paragraphs each session on a regular basis, while the participants of the peer-assessment group were instructed to assess the written essays and paragraphs of their peers. The course lasted for about 15 sessions. At the end of the writing course, the participants of both self- and peer-assessment groups were invited to fill out the Writing Self-Efficacy Scale which was re-administered as the post- test of the study. Also, the other timed writing essay (Topic B) was given to the participants to assess their writing performance as the post-test of the research.

### **3.5. Data Analysis**

In order to analyse the collected quantitative data, both descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (paired-samples t-tests and ANCOVA) were used. As for the descriptive statistics, first mean and standard deviations for the writing self-efficacy scores were taken into account to compare the scores and then concerning the inferential statistics, matched t-test and ANCOVA were used in order to evaluate the effects of self- and peer-assessment practices on the writing performance and writing self-efficacy of the participants.

#### 4. Results

As explained above, to ensure the homogeneity of selected participants of this research, a sample of PET was given to all the participants. According to the results of PET, thirty-six EFL learners whose scores fell between +1SD and -1SD from the mean were chosen as the ultimate homogeneous sample of the participants of this study. Then the selected participants were randomly divided into a peer-assessment group and a self-assessment group. Although the groups were considered to be homogeneous, an independent-samples t-test was carried out to compare the EPT mean scores of the two groups. The results of the independent-samples t-test (see Table 1) showed that no statistically significant difference was observed between the mean scores of the peer-assessment group ( $M = 62.48$ ,  $SD = 15.74$ ) and the self-assessment group ( $M = 64.13$ ,  $SD = 15.42$ );  $t(34) = -.645$ ,  $p > 0.00$ , indicating that the self- and peer-assessment groups were of the same level of ability with regard to overall English competence before starting the treatment.

Groups	M (SD)	T	Sig.
Peer-assessment	62.84 (15.74)	-.645	.474
Self-assessment	64.13 (15.42)		

In order to explore the impacts of implementing peer- and self-assessment activities on the writing performance, paired-samples *t*-tests were conducted to measure the change in the mean scores of self- and peer-assessment groups from the pretest to posttest. As Table 2 indicates, a statistically significant increase was observed from the pretest to posttest of writing performance for both the peer-assessment group ( $t(18) = -7.99$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ) and the self-assessment group ( $t(16) = -6.68$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ). As seen in Table 2, the mean score for writing performance of the peer-assessment group increased from 12.52 ( $SD = 4.12$ ) on the pretest to 15.73 ( $SD = 3.99$ ) on the posttest. Likewise, the mean score of writing performance for the self-assessment group increased from 11.58 ( $SD = 3.95$ ) on the pretest to 13.52 ( $SD = 3.04$ ) on the posttest, suggesting that self- and peer-assessment activities significantly contributed to enhancing writing performance of the participants.

Groups	Pre-test		Post-test		T	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD		
Peer-assessment	12.52	4.12	15.73	3.99	-7.99	0.00
Self-assessment	11.58	3.95	13.52	3.04	-6.68	0.00

Additionally, a One-Way Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was carried out on the scores of writing performance to investigate the impacts of the two types of interventions on the EFL writing performance. In this analysis, the independent variable was the kind of treatment (i.e. self-assessment or peer-assessment), and the dependent variable was students' scores on the post-test of writing performance. The pre-test scores on the timed-writing essays were considered as the covariate in the ANCOVA analysis. The examination of the assumption showed that the assumptions of homogeneity of variance, normality, linearity and homogeneity of regression slopes were not violated.

The results of the ANCOVA analysis (see Table 3) employing the General Linear Modeling technique in SPSS revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the peer-assessment group and self-assessment group in the mean scores on the posttest of writing performance;  $F(1, 33) = 8.516$ ,  $p = 0.000$ , partial eta squared = 0.205), suggesting that implementing peer-assessment activities was more effective than conducting self-assessment activities in improving writing performance of the EFL learners.

**Table 3. ANCOVA results for writing performance scores**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Covariate (pre-test)	241.083	1	241.083	115.574	.000	.778
Between-subjects	17.764	1	17.764	8.516	.006	.205
Within-subjects	68.837	33	2.086			

Furthermore, in order to explore the impacts of self- and peer-assessment practices conducted in each group on the writing self-efficacy of the EFL learners, paired-samples *t*-test were conducted to trace the significance of the changes in the mean scores of the two groups from the pre-test to post-test. As it can be seen in Table 4, a statistically significant increase existed from the pre-test to post-test of writing self-efficacy for the peer-assessment group ( $t(18) = -8.88$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ) and the self-assessment group ( $t(16) = -6.68$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ). More specifically, Table 2 demonstrates that the writing self-efficacy mean score for the peer-assessment group was raised from 5.75 (SD=1.54) on the pre-test to 7.55 (SD=1.21) on the post-test. Similarly, the writing self-efficacy mean score of the self-assessment group increased from 5.29 (SD=1.47) on the pre-test to 6.21 (SD=1.36) on the post-test. These obtained results revealed that writing self-efficacy of both self- and peer-assessment groups was enhanced significantly after implementation of self- and peer-assessment activities.

Table 4. Paired samples t-test for writing self-efficacy scores

Groups	Pre-test		Post-test		T	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD		
Peer-assessment	5.75	1.54	7.55	1.21	-8.88	0.00
Self-assessment	5.29	1.47	6.21	1.36	-6.68	0.00

In the follow-up analysis, ANCOVA was conducted on the writing self-efficacy scores to compare the impacts of the two kinds of experimental conditions utilized in the present research on the writing self-efficacy of the participants. Again, the independent variable was the type of experimental conditions (i.e. self-assessment or peer-assessment), and the dependent variable was learners' scores on the post-test of the writing self-efficacy questionnaire. The pre-test scores of writing self-efficacy were taken as the covariate in the ANCOVA analysis. The results of the ANCOVA analysis (see Table 5) revealed that a statistically significant difference was observed between the peer-assessment group and self-assessment group in the mean scores on the post-test of writing self-efficacy;  $F(1, 33) = 8.580, p = 0.000$ , partial eta squared = 0.321), suggesting that the implementing peer-assessment activities was more helpful than the implementation of self-assessment practices in enhancing writing self-efficacy of the participants.

Table 5. ANCOVA results for writing self-efficacy scores

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Covariate (pre-test)	187.567	1	187.567	36.027	.000	.744
Between-subjects	30.432	1	30.432	8.580	.000	.321
Within-subjects	308.122	33	14.012			

## 5. Discussion

The purpose of the present research was to investigate the role of the implementation of self-assessment and peer-assessment practices in influencing the writing performance and writing self-efficacy of intermediate Iranian EFL learners. The participants of the study were enrolled in a writing program whose purpose was to develop the basic writing competencies of the EFL learners. The two groups of the participants experienced self- and peer-assessment activities during the writing course. The results of this research indicated that self- and peer-assessment activities were significantly effective in improving the writing performance of the participants. This finding is in agreement with the findings of numerous previous studies (e.g., Birjandi and Hadidi Tamjid 2012; Fathi and Khodabakhsh 2019; Iraj, Enayat, and Momeni 2016; Lee 2016; Liu and

Brantmeier 2019; Sullivan and Lindgren 2002; Yu and Lee 2016), which found the positive impacts of self- and peer-assessment in enhancing L2 writing outcomes. In addition, this finding verified the claim that students' engagement in assessment process as well as giving and receiving feedback positively affects the quality of L2 writing (e.g., Hyland and Hyland 2019; Topping 2017; Zhao 2014; Zhang and Hyland 2018). From this perspective, it can be argued that participants' engagement in the assessment practices made them become more aware of the standards and criteria for producing better quality drafts, the awareness which encouraged them to exert more attention and effort to write better. Also, their participation in the assessment is likely to have given them a sense of responsibility and agency which fostered their motivation to improve their writing.

Furthermore, the data analysis demonstrated that the peer-assessment group performed better than the self-assessment group in writing performance, verifying the fact that peer-assessment was more effective than self-assessment in improving writing abilities. This finding is consistent with the findings of numerous previous studies (e.g., Birjandi and Hadidi Tamjid 2012; Fathi and Khodabakhsh 2019; Hughes and Large 1993). The better writing performance of the peer-assessment group may be explained by the fact that since EFL learners knew that their writing would be evaluated and judged by their peers, they tried harder to produce better quality drafts (Gao, Schunn, and Yu 2019). Also, it is likely that some errors and writing deviations might go unnoticed in self-assessment. However, peer-assessment raised the participants' consciousness of their own writing strengths and weakness in a more effective way. In addition, the participants' engagement in peer-assessing the writing of others might have encouraged them to learn the writing competencies of their peers, thereby transferring what they learned from others to their own written drafts.

In addition, the results of the research indicated that self-assessment and peer-assessment activities experienced by the participants in each group were effective in enhancing the writing self-efficacy of the Iranian EFL learners. This result verifies the results of the majority of previous studies (e.g., Ahmed and Troudi 2018; Babaii and Akeh 2019; Birjandi and Hadidi Tamjid, 2012; Cao, Yu, and Huang, 2019; Fathi and Khodabakhsh 2019; Liu and Brantmeier 2019; Zarei and Usefli 2015) which reported the effectiveness of self- and peer-assessment in improving L2 writing outcomes. Additionally, this finding is partially at variance with the findings of Fathi, Ahmadnejad, and Yousofi (2019) who found that continuous peer-feedback through blogs significantly contributed to reducing the writing self-efficacy of their participants. This inconsistency might be due to the fact that peer-feedback in Fathi et al's (2019) study was provided with blogs



which were publicly visible. Therefore, the public visibility of the writings and the threatening nature of blogging as well as the fear of being evaluated by the public might have made their participants feel anxiety and less self-confident in doing writing tasks.

The most justifiable reason for the increased writing self-efficacy of both groups might be the fact that since the participants of both groups were involved in assessing their own writings, they got familiar with the characteristics of a better quality essay. Therefore, they learned how to write better in order to get better scores and to be considered as better writers. This situation has probably increased their confidence and sense of comfort in writing essays or doing writing activities. The improved confidence and comfort in writing in L2 made them feel more responsible and self-efficacious in EFL writing.

Furthermore, the findings of the ANCOVA analysis revealed that the participants of peer-assessment group were better than the participants of the self-assessment group in terms of writing self-efficacy as measured by post-test of the study. In other words, it was found that peer-assessment activities were more effective than self-assessment activities in increasing writing self-efficacy of the participants. This result is in agreement with the results of previous research which indicated that peer-assessment was significantly better than self-assessment in improving L2 writing outcomes. (e.g., Birjandi and Hadidi Tamjid 2012; Fathi and Khodabakhsh 2019). The outperformance of the peer-assessment group can be justified in light of the effectiveness of peer-feedback in L2 writing classrooms. As a kind of effective pedagogic activity, peer-feedback in writing classes as a key element of assessment activities has gained much appeal by numerous researchers and educators (Gao, Schunn, and Yu 2019; Zhao 2010). Through peer-feedback, L2 writers receive and give comments on the writing quality of their peers, as well as their strengths and weaknesses (Topping 20). In such a writing classroom, each learner is assigned the role of a reviewer, who assesses the other group members' drafts of writings and provides them with corrective comments, and the role of a receiver who receives feedback and comments and discusses them with the reviewer (Lundstrom and Baker 2009). The findings of the present study are in line with those of Yu and Lee (2016) who found that peer-assessment is effective in improving language learning, metacognitive abilities, and self-confidence of L2 learners. Peer-assessment activities employed by the participants of the present study are likely to have created a sense of audience among the participants, which has made them to further revise and refine the content and structure of their drafts. These further revisions and perceived improvement in writing ability might have enhanced their writing self-efficacy. The findings of this research are also consistent with

those of Ruegg (2014, 2015) who found that peer-assessment increased learners' interaction, confidence and critical thinking competencies.

## **6. Conclusions**

The findings of the current study revealed that implementing self-assessment and peer-assessment practices significantly contributed to enhancing the writing performance and writing self-efficacy of intermediate Iranian EFL learners. With regard to the study implications, the findings of this study might offer theoretical and pedagogical implications. From the theoretical perspective, the improved writing performance and writing self-efficacy of the students can be justified in the light of the socio-cultural theory which underscores the beneficial role of other-regulation (i.e., feedback and support from peers) in learning, the process which is affected by the frequency and quality of that peer-support (Lantolf and Aljaafreh 2000). Therefore, as far as L2 writing instruction is concerned, the socio-cultural theory of mind and the role of peer support should take precedence. Additionally, with regard to pedagogical implications of the research, it is suggested that EFL stake holders, teacher education programs, curriculum developers, and methodologists pay more serious attention to alternative assessment and its sub-categories including self- and peer-assessment in EFL educational system. Since self-efficacy plays a key role in educational success, employing self-assessment and peer-assessment activities in EFL writing classrooms might significantly contribute to improving writing self-efficacy of the participants.

The present study employed just a quantitative research design. Future researchers should carry out qualitative or mixed-methods research methods to shed more light on the effectiveness of peer- and self-assessment. More specifically, further empirical studies should explore how peer- and self-assessment are carried out among L2 writers. Such studies will provide us with more comprehensive understanding into how L2 writers approach peer- and self-assessment, illuminate why some learners are more likely to benefit from such assessment practices. The conduction of qualitative research methods seems to be very justified as the dynamics of peer-assessment and peer-interaction as well as the strategies affecting writers' understanding of peer-assessment are still less-researched (Yu and Lee 2016).

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Appendix: Second Language Writing self-efficacy scale (WSES)					
Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1 I believe that I can write an English composition with no spelling mistakes without looking up words in the dictionary.					
2 I believe that I can use correct punctuations in my English composition. 1					
3 I believe that I can write an English composition without any grammatical mistakes.					
4 I believe that I can use appropriate rhetoric to write an English composition.					
5 I believe that I can use appropriate vocabulary to write an English composition.					
6 I believe that I can use various conjunctions (such as therefore, however, etc.) to make my English composition cohesive and coherent.					
7 I believe that I can alternate between different sentence structures (simple, complex, compound, and complex-and-compound) to write an English composition.					
8 I believe that I can write a well-organized English composition.					
9 I believe that I can write an English composition with a clear topic.					