Research Article

Iranian Advanced EFL Learners' Perception of Criteria-Referenced Self- and peer- Assessment: Benefits and Challenges

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Abstract

Self-assessment, a form of alternative assessment focusing on learner-centered curricula, autonomy, and needs analysis, has gained prominence recently. Via individual and cooperative self-assessment, EFL learners notice and apply the established standards and criteria that would decide on the accuracy and fluency of their productions, particularly in challenging areas like writing that require detailed forms of assessment. Here, learners' capacity to self-assess and peer-assess their writings could contribute to their developmental functions. The objective of this study was to explore a specific number of Iranian EFL learners' perceptions of criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment in writing through a mixed-method survey. Sixty EFL learners were asked to answer a questionnaire on self- and peer- assessment. Additionally, 15 learners were requested to answer semi-structured interview questions to express their perceptions toward criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment. For the quantitative phase of the study, a self- and peer-assessment questionnaire developed by Cornelius and Kinghorn (2014) was utilized. The questionnaire's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and content validity was confirmed. For the qualitative phase of the study, the researcher developed and conducted a semi-structured interview with five open-ended questions with validated content. The data related to the quantitative and qualitative phases were analyzed through descriptive statistics including the frequency percentage and content analysis methods, respectively. The results revealed learners had positive perceptions towards criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment in language classes. The findings offer beneficial implications for EFL teachers, learners, test developers, and administrators.
Keywords: criteria-referenced self-assessment, peer-assessment, perception, writing

Introduction

Writing has long been recognized as a vital element in the English as a foreign language (EFL) syllabus, but its significance has increased further in the twenty-first century (Celce-Murcia, et al., 2014). As Cardenas (2018) stated, writing is an essential communication skill that significantly affects the progression of learning a second language (L2). Developing writing skills can lead to benefits in terms of communication, education, and career (Yusuf et al., 2019).

Writing in English entails numerous challenges for the learners who learn English as a foreign language as they have to learn new conventions of writing in English speaking countries' culture as well as English grammatical forms. These challenges mark writing as one of the most problematic skills to improve and lead EFL writing teachers to master all types of corrections in order to help EFL learners to improve their writing performance, satisfy their learning needs, and fulfill the course objectives (Hyland, 2006). Developing writing proficiency can be a laborious task for L2 writers in general pedagogy. Improving the writing skill in a second language demands a collection of basic and intricate linguistic and mechanical skills to create a coherent and accurate piece of writing (Almasi & NematTabrizi, 2016).

According to Andrade (2019), one of the best methods of teaching writing to EFL learners, which has been broadly discussed, is collaborative writing. She viewed shared writing as one of the considered methods to be implemented at any level of education. She declared that shared and collaborative writing maximizes learners' engagement and participation in language-learning practices adding that this technique has changed into a valuable, focused, and communicative aim. This way of teaching writing skill that integrates the role of peers in the learning process entails engaging learners in the assessment of their writing ability as well as their peers' writing performance.

Based on the above-mentioned points it can be stated that despite the importance of the English language worldwide and the need to learn this language for personal, academic, and professional reasons, most of the EFL learners lack the expected capability to use productive skills, especially writing skill. Accordingly, learners have to develop their writing skill to perform accurately and fluently in different domains that require writing proficiency. Hence, the major problem tackled in the present study is the tough experience that Iranian EFL learners have in learning how to use their learned knowledge and produce a well-developed script. They mostly find the task challenging and can hardly achieve the minimum proficiency in this productive skill. This problem can partly be ascribed to the complexity of the

writing skill, as a fundamental skill in any English proficiency test as well as in the fulfillment of educational or everyday needs. Additionally, writing deficiencies experienced by many learners originate from restrictions in lexical resources, incomplete knowledge of English grammar, and lack of knowledge of the organization that leads to failure in generating ideas accurately and fluently.

One way to resolve such problems can be using rubric-based self/peer assessment. Learners can apply rubrics in their writing while they grow into more experienced learners by examining the quality of their work. Reviewing the related literature discovered that numerous studies have inspected the role of self-assessment in developing writing skill such as Heidarian (2016), Comert and Kutlu (2018), Fathi et al., (2021), Bommanaboina and Guduru (2022), and Zhang and Zhang (2022). Specifically, regarding the originality of self and peer-assessment of writing skill in contrary to out-dated methods, some studies (e.g., Abolfazli-Khonbi & Sadeghi, 2013; Crusan, 2011; Suzuki, 2009) have concentrated on perceptions of learners towards this assessment approach. In this regard, Bloemert et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of learner opinion and attitude and asserted that the attitudinal constituent in the assessment investigations aids estimate the efficiency of assessment, particularly as it offers a stand through which EFL learners' outlooks are unswervingly looked upon.

However, there is a lack of research on investigating the perceptions of EFL learners about a criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment process through mixed-method research. Thus, the drive of the present study was to examine the ideas of the learners toward criteria-referenced self- and peer-assessment of writing skill. By using rubrics and noticing linguistic and communicative criteria learners can influence their learning since they understand what is expected in their work and subsequently reflect on their writing and simplify assigning learning objectives in a specific performance assessment. Through self-assessment or peer-assessment, learners could apply a rubric in assessing completed works and administer it to guide their planning in learning.

Assessment is the act of using different tools, methods, and techniques to collect and analyze data about students' skills and potential, including demoded quantitative methods, testing, and other evaluation methods (Mihai, 2010). In 2015, Harmer emphasized the importance of assessment as a crucial component of teaching, requiring focused attention from educators. Farhady (2006) and Simonson et al. (2003) mentioned that traditional assessment practices have often involved various testing formats, including true/false questions, multiple-choice tests, as well as essay-type questions.

Assessment techniques, as stated by Esfandiari and Myford (2013), are not restricted to traditional ones and can be enriched by some other methods that emphasize students' daily activities. In contrast to traditional assessment, as Richards and Renandya (2002) stated, alternative assessment has several distinctive features, such as not demanding students to follow specific classroom activities, reflecting the curriculum taught in the classroom, identifying each student's strengths and weaknesses, and being culturally sensitive as well as avoiding biases and norms (e.g., cultural or linguistic forms, which were challenging in traditional language testing.

Alternative assessments in EFL learning can take various forms, including protocol analysis, dialogue journals, portfolio assessment, dialogue entries, peer assessment, and self-assessment. Peer and particularly, self-assessment, provide learners with both independent and structured evaluation methods. Self-assessment as a crucial aspect of formative assessment, empowers learners to take charge of their learning journey, from setting goals to evaluating their progress and making decisions on their learning. By assessing the quality of their work, learners can identify areas for progress and boost their motivation (McNamara & Deane, 1995). Through this process, according to Gregory et al. (2011), learners can evaluate their progress, identify areas for improvement, and enhance their motivation on the basis of their judgments.

Falchikov (2012) asserted that peer assessment is another type of alternative evaluation that is rooted in the theories of social constructivism (e.g., Vigotsky) and active learning (e.g., Piaget) She added that this method involves students giving feedback to their peers according to conventional criteria. As Strijbos and Sluijsmans (2010) stated, a student in this educational setting evaluates a partner's work either qualitatively or quantitatively, which prompts a discussion where students can express their opinions, such as agreement or disagreement, in a collaborative environment.

Several studies have delved into the realms of self and peer assessment from various perspectives. Some scholars in the field of assessment have examined the effects of self-assessment on teacher training, oral communication proficiency, and the writing skills of EFL students (Chen, 2008; Mok et al., 2006). Other studies including Kaufman and Shunn, (2011) and Vickerman (2009) have concentrated on understanding learners' views as well as their exposure to formative peer assessment. Concurrently, another area of research has focused on the efficacy of peer and self-assessment in fostering learners' autonomy and consciousness (Birjandi & Hadidi-Tamjid, 2012). According to Rahmani, Zoghi, and Davatgari Asl (2022), self- and

peer assessment support cooperative and active learning that possibly will bring about motivation in learners and improve their learning outcomes.

The integrated application of peer and self-assessment has been highlighted by many researchers such as Black et al. (2003) as a crucial element in the learning process. They mainly focused on the significance of peer assessment as a vital addition to self-assessment, while Maiz-Arevalo (2008) noted that students who have experienced peer assessment are more likely to assess their work independently in the future, demonstrating the benefits of peer assessment in enhancing self-assessment skills. Ashraf and Mahdinezhad (2015) stressed the role of self- and peer assessment in promoting learning and encouraging students to participate in a community to evaluate their peers' work. Moreover, Hariri Asl and Marandi (2017) found that peer assessment carries more weight than teacher- and self-assessment in raising social presence and interactivity.

The authors Hariri Asl and Marandi (2017) also highlighted another vital mission of the self- and peer assessment, which is the additional feedback from peers that can aid learners in developing their language abilities independently and consequently can promote learners' autonomy in mastering language skills. They also highlighted that providing shared learning opportunities for partners to learn from each other, other than solely relying on teacher comments, is a key concern for educators and researchers. Furthermore, they suggested that peer assessment can improve social and interpersonal skills, as well as generate strong bonds between feedback providers and receivers.

The existing literature on language proficiency, writing in particular, has conventionally utilized pre-established qualitative or quantitative frameworks to assess learners' writing abilities. However, integrated self- and peer assessment techniques, in spite of their proven profits, have not been widely used. Studies have shown that self- and peer assessment can significantly lead to improve the process of language assessment for EFL students, addressing various issues such as the influence of attitude and motivation on second language ability (Gardner & Lambert, 1972), learners' viewpoints on ESL writing (Ismail, 2010), students' visions on peer, self-, and teacher assessment concerning course achievement (Abolfazli-Khonbi & Sadeghi, 2013), attitude and friendship bias towards peer assessment in EFL contexts (Azarnoosh, 2013), and students' feelings towards the way peer and self-assessment expands their learning experience (Siow, 2015). These records clearly emphasized the prominence of examining self-and peer in case of descriptive writing.

Writing allows a controlled, deliberate, and consequently powerful type of communication, and equipping the learners with the possible criteria for assessing and scoring leads them to gain the required knowledge to create a piece of writing. Primarily, the present study attempted to investigate the effectiveness of criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment as a practical device in promoting EFL learners' writing. This can open up a world of possibilities for learners. The findings can help to solve the problems that many advanced EFL learners face in their writing performance.

To serve the purpose of the study, the following research question was formulated:

RQ: How do advanced Iranian EFL learners find criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment intervention?

Method
Participants
The original population of the current study included the male and female EFL learners at advanced proficiency level in *Goldis Language Institute* whose proficiency level was determined based on the institute's criteria and ensured by the Oxford Placement Test (OPT). From among them 60 learners were selected through convenience sampling and were asked to answer a questionnaire on self- and peer- assessment. Additionally, 15 learners of them were selected randomly to answer a semi-structured interview questions to express their perceptions towards criteria-referenced self- and peer-assessment. The choice of advanced proficiency level was for making the purpose of the study achievable as well as gaining more authentic data. They were both male and female learners aged 18-40.

Instruments
For the quantitative phase of the study a self- and peer- assessment questionnaire was utilized, which investigated the learners' perceptions towards the employment of criterion-referenced self-assessment and peer-assessment processes in the learning process of writing skill. The questionnaire was developed by Cornelius and Kinghorn (2014), and it was given to all 60 participants. It consisted of ten questions in which the items 5, 6, 9, and 10 were designed based on Likert Scale and the items 1, 3, 4, 7, and 8 were yes/no questions. The reliability of the questionnaire was estimated through Cronbach's alpha and its validity was ensured by content validity.

Additionally, for the qualitative phase of the study, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview with 15 students selected out of the participants in the quantitative stage. The interview included five open-ended

questions regarding the learners' perceptions towards criteria-referenced self- and peer assessment, which were developed by the researcher inspired by some related articles such as Andrade (2008) and Dolosic (2018). The validity of the interview was ensured through content validity. The interviews were carried out for three days and the duration of the interview for each student was 10-15 minutes. A video-recording of the interviews were made.

Procedure

The procedure whereby the data was elicited from the participants featured two phases, quantitative and qualitative successively. To meet the purpose of this study, the researcher chose the sample of the study via convenience sampling method at Goldis language institute. The concepts and techniques of self- and peer assessment were introduced and taught by the researcher through teaching the learners how to self-assess and peer-assess their essays in practice and the learners assessed their essays individually and cooperatively during the instructional phase. That is to say, during the instructional phase, the learners were assigned to two experimental groups of self-assessing and peer-assessing learners. The learners of the self-assessing group were asked to write an essay and assess it, individually. While, the learners of the peer-assessing group were required to assess their essays, which had been written cooperatively. For the quantitative stage, 60 learners were asked to answer the questionnaire. Later, 15 of them were requested to take part in the qualitative stage. As mentioned earlier, the interview included five open-ended questions regarding the learners' perceptions towards criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment. The interviews were carried out for three days and the duration of the interview for each student was 10-15 minutes. When the interviews were brought to an end, they were recorded and transcribed, then assessed and coded by the researcher. The interviews were carried out within the scope of this study involved 15 students at advanced proficiency level. The interviews were conducted by the researcher herself. In Rubin and Rubin's study from 1995, they considered the existing personal rapport between the interviewer and interviewees, a main aspect in qualitative research, in light of the risk of data bias due to social desirability. They found that the potential impact of social desirability on responses was reduced since the students were not currently in a class taught by the interviewer and were aware they would not have the same teacher in the future. Krueger and Casey (2000) argued that when having interviews and focus groups, it is crucial to have superb interpersonal skills, such as making participants feel relaxed and actively listening for deeper meaning. The interviewer or group facilitator, who speaks the most, must also try to remain

neutral to prevent unintentionally influencing the participants' responses, a phenomenon which is known as researcher bias.

Data Analysis

The data related to the questionnaire was analyzed based on descriptive statistics including the frequency and percentage of the answers. The responses in the interview phase of the study were analyzed and grouped by developing domains or topic areas; coding the data; constructing core ideas; and charting the results based on the content of the participants' comments.

Results

The following section deals with the results obtained from the quantitative phase of the study along with the analysis of the responses related to the qualitative phase. Table 1 reveals the results related to the learners' responses to questions 1, 3, 4, 7, 8 in the questionnaire.

Table 1
Frequency Distribution of the Learners' Responses to Questions 1, 3, 4, 7, 8

Questions		Frequency	Percent
Q1. Do you find the concepts of self and peer review and assessment new since starting this course?	No	2	6.5
	Yes	29	93.5
Total		31	100
Q3. Do you think you can judge your own English language ability well?	No	7	22.6
	Yes	24	77.4
Total		31	100
Q4. Do you think you are a good judge of your peer`s English language performance?	No	20	64.5
	Yes	11	35.5
Total		31	100
Q7. Do you find peer feedback on class work as valid as teacher feedback?	No	27	87.1
	Yes	4	12.9
Total		31	100
Q8. De you employ self and peer assessment activities in class?	No	1	3.2
	Yes	30	96.8
Total		31	100

Table 1 reveals that 29 learners (93.5%) asserted that self- and peer-assessment is new to them since the starting of the course. Twenty-four (77.4%) learners believed that they could judge their language knowledge well. In addition, 11 (35.5%) learners mentioned that they could accurately judge the language ability of their peers. Four (12.9%) of the learners found peer feedback on class work as valid and effective as their teacher's feedback.

Finally, 30 (96.8%) of the learners employ self and peer assessment activities in their class. Table 2 reveals the results related to the learners' responses to question 2 in the questionnaire.

Table 2
Frequency Distribution of the Learners' Responses to Questions 2

Questions		Frequency	Percent
Q2. Do you find yourself a good judge of your own English language ability?	Very Uncomfortable	-	-
	Uncomfortable	1	3.2
	Indifferent	2	6.5
	Comfortable	11	35.5
	Very Comfortable	17	54.8
Total		31	100

Table 2 demonstrated that one (3.2%) of the learners felt uncomfortable when judged and corrected by her peers. Two (6.5%) learners were indifferent, 11 (35.5%) learners were comfortable, and 17 (54.8%) learners were very comfortable when their classmates judge their language ability. Table 3 reveals the results related to the learners' responses to questions 5 and 6.

Table 3
Frequency Distribution of the Learners' Responses to Questions 5,6

Questions		Frequency	Percent
Q5. Do you accept that students should take part in their own self-assessment and/ or assessment of peer's class work?	Strongly Disagree	-	-
	Disagree	-	-
	Indifferent	3	9.7
	Agree	11	35.5
	Strongly Agree	17	54.8
Total		31	100
Q6. Do you accept that only the teacher should be responsible for assessing your classwork?	Strongly Disagree	16	51.6
	Disagree	11	35.5
	Indifferent	4	12.9
	Agree	-	-
	Strongly Agree	-	-
Total		31	100

As indicated in Table 3, (9.7%) learners were indifferent, 11 (35.5%) learners agreed, and 17 (54.8%) learners strongly agreed regarding the participation of the learners themselves and their peers in self-assessment and peer-assessment. Moreover, 16 (51.6%) learners strongly disagreed, 11 (35.5%) learners disagreed, and four (12.9%) learners were indifferent about

teacher's being in charge of assessing classwork, exclusively. Table 4 reveals the results related to the learners' responses to question 9.

Table 4
Frequency Distribution of the Learners' Responses to Questions 9

Questions		Frequency	Percent
Q9. Do you think more or less peer and self-assessment should be utilized as a classroom activity?	A lot loss	-	-
	Less	-	-
	Satisfied with the current amount	3	9.7
	More	13	41.9
	Much more	15	48.4
Total		31	100

Regarding the learners' ideas about self-assessment and peer-assessment, Table 4 shows that three (9.7%) learners were satisfied with the amount of self-assessment and peer-assessment in their class, 13 (41.9%) learners believed that they need more self-assessment and peer-assessment, and 15 (48.4%) learners claimed that they need much more self-assessment and peer-assessment in their classes. Table 5 reveals the results related to the learners' responses to question 10.

Table 5
Frequency Distribution of the Learners' Responses to Questions 10

Questions		Frequency	Percent
Q10. Do you find self and peer assessment a valuable language- learning tool?	Not value at all	-	-
	I don't know (not so valuable)	1	3.2
	Valuable	9	29
	Very valuable	21	67.7
Total		31	100

Regarding the value of self-assessment and peer-assessment, as illustrated in Table 5, one (3.2%) learner had no idea and did not consider self-assessment and peer-assessment as valuable methods. For nine (29%) learners, self-assessment and peer-assessment are valuable and for 21 (67.7%) learners they are very valuable.

Generally, based on the results revealed in Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, it can be argued that Iranian EFL learners examined in this study have positive perceptions toward criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment intervention in improving their language knowledge and ability.

In the following part, the results obtained from the qualitative phase are presented. The findings are related to the interview conducted among 15 EFL learners at advanced proficiency level about the effect of criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment in improving writing proficiency in terms of grammatical accuracy, lexical resources, and coherence. Table 6 illustrates the responses to question 1.

Table 6
Responses to Q 1: Reasons for Using Criteria-Referenced Self-and-Assessment in Teaching

Items	Frequency	Percent
- It increases our awareness about the scoring criteria.	14	93
- We notice the scoring criteria in our own composition.	14	93
- We get better scores.	13	87
- We criticize our own writing and we try to improve our scores.	2	13

Table 6 shows that 14 (93%) learners believed that criteria-referenced self-and- assessment method can be effective in increasing their awareness about the scoring criteria. Fourteen (93%) believed it can help them to notice the scoring criteria in their composition, 13 (87%) learners thought it can help them to get better scores, and for two (13%) learners it is effective to criticize their writing and improve their scores. Table 7 shows the responses to question 2.

Table 7
Responses to Q2: Important Resources of Feedback in Criteria-Referenced Self-and Peer-Assessment

Items	Frequency	Percent
- Writing the correct form of grammatical errors or mistakes and notice them via self-assessment and peer-assessment	11	73
- Shown samples during the teaching and trying to compare our own compositions with them	12	80
- Speaking and discussing about the criteria which are considered in assessment and getting useful hints and clues	10	67

According to Table 7, 11 (73%) learners believed that the most important feedback resources in criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment is writing the correct form of grammatical errors or mistakes and noticing them via self-and-assessment. For 12 (80%) learners the most important feedback resources in criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment are the shown samples during the teaching and trying to compare the compositions with them. Finally, 10

(67%) learners asserted that speaking and discussing the criteria considered in assessment and getting useful hints and clues is the most important feedback resources in criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment. Table 7 indicates the responses to question 3.

Table 8
Responses to Q3: Effect of Criteria-Referenced Self- and peer- assessment on Improving Grammatical Accuracy

Items	Frequency	Percent
- It causes the learners notice their mistakes.	12	80
- It makes them to think and reflect on different grammatical tenses and structures.	1	7
- They can review the grammatical points and concepts.	14	93
- It makes us to think critically about our own writing.	4	27
- It increases our awareness about important criteria in assessment.	14	93

Considering the effect of criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment on accuracy development, Table 8 illustrates that, for 12 (80%) learners, criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment causes the learners notice their mistakes. For one (7%) learner, it makes them to think about different grammatical tenses and structures. Fourteen (93%) learners believed that it helps them to review the grammatical points and concepts since grammar is an important criterion in scoring. As stated by four (27%) learners, criteria-referenced self- and peer-assessment makes them to think critically about their writing. Finally, 14 (93%) learners regarded the significance of criteria-referenced self- and peer-assessment in increasing awareness about important criteria in assessment. Table 9 illustrates the responses to question 4.

Table 9
Responses to Q4: Effect of Criteria-Referenced Self- and peer- assessment on Improving Lexical Resources

Items	Frequency	Percent
- It helps them figure out the importance of using uncommon and advanced vocabularies in increasing their scores.	14	93
- They review the scoring criteria and the will study more vocabulary book.	10	67
- It makes them to use more expressions, idioms and proverbs in their composition.	8	53

Considering the effect of criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment on lexical resources development, Table 9 illustrates that 14 (93%) learners believed it can help them realize the importance of using uncommon and advanced vocabularies. As claimed by 10 (67%) learners they can search the vocabulary books due to reviewing scoring criteria. Finally, 8 (53%) learners stated that criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment makes them to use more expressions, idioms and proverbs. Table 10 shows the responses to question 10.

Table 10

Responses to Q5: Effect of Criteria-Referenced Self-and Peer- assessment on Improving Coherence

Items	Frequency	Percent
- It makes them to read their compositions several times and try to correct and relate the paragraphs to each other	10	67
- It causes them to compare their composition with samples	15	100
- They will use connectors, conjunctions and other advanced grammatical structures by reviewing the samples shown to them before writing	3	20

Considering the effect of criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment on coherence development, Table 10 illustrates that 10 (67%) learners believed it makes them to read their compositions several times and try to correct and relate the paragraphs and ideas to each other. For 15 (100%) learners, criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment causes them to compare their composition with samples during teaching. Finally, 3 (20%) learners mentioned the use connectors, conjunctions and other advanced grammatical structures by reviewing the samples shown to them.

Generally, based on the results revealed in Tables 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10, it can be argued that Iranian EFL learners examined in this study have positive perceptions toward criteria-referenced self- and peer-assessment in improving their writing performance in terms of grammatical accuracy, lexical resources, and coherence.

Discussion

The current study investigated the opinion of advanced Iranian EFL learners about criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment through quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (semi-structured interview) methods. The obtained results revealed that the majority of the learners have positive perceptions toward the use of criteria-referenced self- and peer-

assessment techniques in scoring and correcting their writing performance, individually and cooperatively. They asserted that self- and peer- assessment are effective tools to make them aware of the lexical and grammatical features of an accurate writing performance. In this regard, the study of Kangaslampi et al., (2022) supported the findings of the current study that the students felt they were competent to assess their performance and that self-assessment exercises helped them to learn.

Based on the results, it can be argued that being aware of the grammatical and linguistic criteria implemented in writing assessment can help EFL learners to create more accurate and coherent texts. Moreover, working cooperatively in producing and assessing a text can expand the lexical capacity of the learners. However, it is an undeniable fact that learners need a perfect role model in their learning process to receive corrective feedback for their language use; besides, despite being able and knowledgeable in self- and peer- assessment, in most of the occasions, receiving effective comments from the teacher can flourish learners' progression and ensure their learning. Conversely, as the findings revealed learners' preference of self-assessing and peer-assessing of their essays. That is to say, when a learner is left responsible for evaluating their own as well as their peer's products, they will pay more attention to the linguistic and grammatical aspects and working with their peers augment their consciousness in assisting their peers and receiving information from them to create and assess the essays. This point affirms the ideas of Andrade (2008), which claimed that self-assessment enables students to think and identify the quality of their work founded on clear and specified criteria.

Based on the above-mentioned points, the findings confirmed the effectiveness of criteria-referenced self- and peer- assessment on developing learners' writing skill. Self-assessment and peer-assessment as two authentic assessment techniques have been presently executed in EFL teaching pedagogy as to give further vision to the learners to contemplate on their own learning and improvement and work together to assess their writings. Furthermore, the self- and peer- assessment processes develop the sense of responsibility among EFL learners. Through self-evaluation as well as peer-evaluation, they will be able to judge their own or their peer's works based on the task requirements considering the criteria provided for them. Thus, they can understand the standards of performance expected from them, monitor their own performance and search the ways to improve their linguistic and communicative skills. When learners are responsible for their performance and have the required criteria to assess their work, they will instinctively try to expand the quality of their work and recognize the ways to achieve high performance with less supervision specified by the teacher or

peers. Subsequently they will find it stress-free to undertake their tasks promptly. This result is in line with Wang and Wang's finding (as cited in Ratminingsih et al., 2018), showing that the learners had a positive reaction on the way to the use of self-assessment during the entire process of writing, and it was significantly supportive in self-editing and revising. The results of this current study support the previous research by Farooq et al., (2020) and Fathi et al., (2021), in terms of proving the effect of self-assessment on the learners' writing performance. When they were given the opportunity to self-assess their work, good writing was produced since the learners attend the criteria provided for them.

It can be concluded that self- and peer assessment are prevailing and advantageous to give influence on the road to the apprentices' independence and ability in writing skill. The learners who have recognized the importance and applicability of self-assessment and peer-assessment can perform better on writing competence since they are aware of the linguistic and grammatical components that are being observed in scoring procedure. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers can maximize the use of self- and peer assessment and criteria-referenced practice as alternative teaching and learning strategies to be implemented in writing classes, especially by encouraging the learners to work with their peers and learning from each other. Moreover, practicing self- and peer assessment methods can help the learners to cultivate their metacognitive skills in reflecting on their own learning and mistakes, being accountable for their learning, and being encouraged to acquire new skills, as they can control their learning process through realizing the features and elements that are compulsory for writing skill. With the support of the learners' favorable reactions and their positive perceptions toward criteria-referenced self- and peer assessment, this study concluded that criteria-referenced self-assessment and peer-assessment are practical alternatives to include learners in the evaluation procedure and serves as a way to expand the assessment culture in Iran.

Considering the pedagogical implication of the study, it can be argued that EFL teachers have to know to what extent learners can assess their own work and performance in different skills and subskills. Additionally, EFL stakeholders, curriculum developers, teacher education courses, and methodologists give thoughtful consideration to alternate assessment forms and their sub-categories comprising peer- and self-assessment in EFL educational contexts. Informing learners about the required criteria in assessment and empowering them to employ self- and peer- assessment procedures in their writing performance can expressively contribute to writing development.

Further empirical studies can simply explore and compare criteria-referenced peer- and self-assessment among EFL learners at different proficiency levels. In this regard, certain variables like gender can be inspected. Moreover, the role of particular individual differences and personality traits can be added in future studies. Such studies can provide us with an inclusive understanding of EFL learners' feelings, thoughts, and perceptions in approaching self-assessment.

Like any other study, the current study suffered from several limitations, the most noteworthy of which included the limited size of the participant sample and the impracticality of selecting a random sample.

Declaration of interest: none

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