



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EFL LEARNERS' ATTITUDE, SELF-EFFICACY AND THEIR WRITING ACHIEVEMENT

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Abstract

Writing ability as one of the most important aspect of language learning plays an important role in pedagogical settings. The present study attempted to investigate the relationships between writing skill and students' personal attributes namely self-efficacy and attitude. To this purpose, 70 students were selected and participated in this study. The results of data analysis showed that both self-efficacy and attitude have positive correlations with writing ability and there were significant differences between those who have high self-efficacy and those who have low self-efficacy. Finally, the pedagogical implications of findings have been discussed.

Keywords: self-efficacy, attitude, writing achievement, EFL learners

1. Introduction

Teachers must know the attitudes of their students about the kinds of comments they give, because learners' preferences determine usefulness of the provided comments (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010) and may increase their engagement and motivation (Hamouda, 2011).

Not only teachers must know the most helpful and the most preferred types of comments by learners, but also they try to match two factors in order to improve learners' motivation, learning and behavior in class (Feriss, 2003).

As Pajares (2000) asserted there are some relations between second language achievement and self-efficacy. He believes self-efficacy is a marvelous predictor of individual behavior and functioning. In the area of foreign language learning, there is a considerable body of research on individual differences. Individual differences consist of a wide scope of domain including, personality trait, learning styles, learners' age,

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motivation, aptitude, strategies and beliefs. Research studies showed that individual differences predict success in language learning. Foreign language learners have a lot of differences in their rate of learning and the ways they follow to develop their skills (Dornyei, 2005; Dornyei & Skehan, 2003; Sawyer & Ranta, 2007). Writing is considered as a complex task so the amount of feelings level will be heightened in students who perform writing task.

Self-efficacy has been defend by different scholars but the most comprehensive definition was composed by Bandura (1977) "*people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance*" (p.11).

The aims of education are not limited to transferring a body of knowledge to students but it covers a range of activities including students' motivation to learn and providing positive attitudes towards learning. Research studies have been conducted have shown that people's goals can powerfully influence their reactions to tasks (Lamb, 2004). "*Attitude is determined by the individual's beliefs about outcomes or attributes of performing the behavior. Thus, a person who holds strong beliefs that positively valued outcomes will result from performing the behavior will have a positive attitude toward the behavior.*" (Soleimani&Hanafi, 2013, p. 3816).

According to Celce-Murica (1991), expressing one's feeling in a written form especially in a second or foreign language and doing it with acceptable coherence and cohesion is a great success. Writing ability is considered as a complex process so the amount of anxiety level will be heightened in students who perform writing task. Sometimes this anxiety demotivates learners and caused the Negative attitude about writing and their confidence (Gere, 1987; Sharples, 1993). This study is going to investigate the relationship between self-efficacy, attitudes, and apprehension of learners in writing. Mainly studies have been conducted in this area have examined the relationship between external factors and writing achievement like corrective feedback and or peers effect while just a limited number of studies have investigated students personality traits on students achievement. In this study performance of students as foreign language learners (EFL) with regard to self -efficacy in writing and attitudes of students about the importance of writing task will be investigated. Research studies showed that students must be exposed to writing to learn activities that designed to facilitate or enhance learning in various courses, including note taking, free writing, brainstorming, and short papers.

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Do students with low self-efficacy perform better on a test of writing skill or those with high self- efficacy?
2. Do students with positive attitudes toward writing act better in writing task than those with negative attitudes?

1.1 Research Hypotheses

H01. There is no significant difference between students with low self-efficacy and students with high self-efficacy on writing tests.

H02. There is no significant difference between students with positive attitudes and students with negative attitudes on writing tasks.

2. Literature Review

In fact the relationship between attitude, self-efficacy and writing achievement is important from different aspect and numerous studies have investigated its magnificent aspects and some the scholars have paid a special attention to its theoretical approaches. For instance, in the 1970s, scholars such as Britton and, Emig called into question the use of writing solely as a means of evaluating students' learning in school. They believe that writing could play an important role in student's individual development as learners if educators viewed and applied writing as more than a tool for assessing what students have learned. They advocate the incorporation of more informal writing that allows students to explore their own thoughts about the class material in their own words as opposed to regurgitating what teachers and texts presented.

Emig (1977) in "Writing as a Mode of Learning" (p. 57), argued that the very act of writing promotes learning because the very act and pace of writing helps develop and reinforce in-depth thinking. A lot of studies have advocated the effectiveness of writing ability as a good predictor of academic success and college readiness (Graham, Harris, Fink, & MacArthur, 2001; Norman & Spencer, 2005).

McCarthy, Meir, and Rinderer (1985), and Pajares and Janson (1996) have found that there was a relationship between low level of self-efficacy and poor writing. Daly and Miller, (1975) found that these students' anxiety is reflected in the behaviors of apprehensive writers as they write attitudes, they express about their writing, and their written products. Low apprehensive writers on the other hand, tend not to avoid situations which demand writing.

While the writing was mainly instructed based on the sociocultural theories, the coincidence of presenting theories like motivation made the base for a more capable revised sorts of cognitive theories (Hayes, 1996). About the effect of different factor involved in writing ability could be stated that independent constructs like feelings, attitudes and beliefs are of high importance (Piazza & Siebert, 2008). Usually the relationship existing between the personal traits such as self-efficacy, motivation, anxiety and attitude are considered highly important for both teachers and educational systems. Needless to say that research has shown that students with higher levels of attitude have higher self-efficacy and are more persistence in their learning process (McKenna, & Ambrosio, 2000; Zumbunn, 2010). For instance, a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and students writing ability was observed (Hayes, 2010). Besides, the students' attitude towards the writing ability could affect their beliefs and achievements (Kear et al., 2000).

In a study Hashemnejad, Zoghi, Amini (2014) examined the relationship between the learners' self-efficacy and their writing performance across genders of 120 Makoo and Marand EFL students majoring in Teaching English as a Foreign Language and investigated that there was no significant relationship between male and female EFL students' self-efficacy and writing performance. It was also found that there was a significant positive relationship in self-efficacy between female and male EFL students. In another study, Rahemi (2007) examined English self-efficacy and EFL achievements among students those who were low proficient majoring in humanities. They used a questionnaire of EFL achievements and a following interview. The findings of the analysis showed that students of humanities had no tendency toward English and did not enjoy positive English self-efficacy. Moreover, EFL achievements were highly affected by English self-efficacy.

Al-Shourafa (2012) aimed to investigate the effect of motivation on English writing skills among 10th grade students. The participants were 198 male and female students, which was stratified randomly. The researcher used a researcher developed a questionnaire where reliability and validity of the instrument were ensured. The results of the study showed that there were significant differences between external and internal motivation due to gender variable and there were significant differences in the level of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation among 10th grade students due to the level of motivation gender variable. Moreover, there were significant differences in the level of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation among 10th grade students due to the level of motivation.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between EFL learners' attitude and self-efficacy and their writing achievement. For this purpose, more than 70 Iranian (EFL) students in private foreign language institute participated in this study. All the students are native speakers of Persian. They are intermediate students and between 20 to 35 years old. The majority of the participants were female students and just a limited number of participants were male student of language institutes.

3.2 Instruments

Firstly, students sat for a writing test and the instructor of the class scored the obtained writing samples. The topics on which students write their writing composition were extracted from TOFEL tests. They showed their beliefs, attitudes, and expectations concerning the educational setting and the process of language learning. By answering the questionnaire, they also provide information about the relationship between their self-efficacy, attitudes and academic achievements

In order to assess students' self-efficacy in writing was used Yuvuz –Erkan (2004) self-efficacy scale in writing. Yuvuz- Erkan develops a 21-item writing self-efficacy

scales to grade the strength of students' belief in their writing ability. Rose's (1984) attitudes towards writing questionnaire (WAQ) will be the third measurement that used in this study. This questionnaire tries to examine the link between attitudes towards writing and the students' actual writing performances. It consists of 24 items.

3.3 Design

The design of this study was quantitative and this study implemented in two phases of data collection. For the first phase, students wrote an essay during 10 minutes on predefined TOFEL writing topic and the second phase implemented by distributing the two questionnaires among the participants. After sating for the questionnaires, the answers scored using the 5-point Likert scales. The reliability of all the three questionnaires in this study checked using Cronbach Alpha.

3.4 Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedures

Our data has two phases, on the one hand it consists of, the result of the questionnaire writing test, self-efficacy in writing, and attitudes towards writing and on the other hand, the score of the essay writing. The data will gather from the questionnaire and essay writing was enter to the computer item by item according to own values, using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) to get descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, and Independent T-tests. To determine the relationship among attitudes towards- writing, self-efficacy, and writing performance without considering proficiency level or gender were measured using Pearson product moment correlation.

4. Results

This study investigated the differences between students with low and high self-efficacy and then the differences between students with positive and negative attitudes towards writing ability using T-test.

Following table shows the descriptive statistics of the participants. The number of participants was 70 and their attitudes, self-efficacies and writing abilities were examined. The maximum amount of attitude, writing ability and self-efficacy were 23, 20, and 21 respectively. The minimum amount of attitude was 10, the minimum amount of writing ability was 9 and the minimum amount of self- efficacy was 10.

Table 4.1. *Descriptive Statistics*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Attitude	70	10.00	23.00	17.4429	3.04381
Writing ability	70	9.00	20.00	16.6714	2.47727
Self-efficacy	70	10.00	21.00	16.4429	2.62450
Valid N (listwise)	70				

In Table 1 the major information of the collected data such as maximums, minimums along with standard deviations have been shown and this descriptive statistics enables the reader to see the existing differences between the participants and the distribution of the data in order to investigate the possible differences between students with high and low self-efficacy.

Table 4.2. *Group Statistics*

	Attitude (Binned)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Attitude	negative	48	16.1458	2.68161	.38706
	positive	22	20.2727	1.45346	.30988

As Table 2 shows the mean for students with negative attitude was 16.14 (Sd= 2.68) while the mean for students with positive attitude was 20.27 (Sd= 1.45). Table 2 by showing the means, standard deviations and standard errors of measurements showed that the higher mean was for the group of participants with negative attitudes. The participants with positive attitude were more homogeneous (not statistically) because the domain of distribution was smaller than the other group (Sd= 1.45). Moreover, the error of measurement in positive attitude group was less than the negative attitude group.

Table 4.3. *T-test Attitude*

Attitude	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	8.21	.004	-6.86	68	.000	-4.12	.610	-5.340	-2.900
			-8.32	65.93	.000	-4.12	.495	-5.11	-3.130

Firstly the assumption of the homogeneity of variances between two groups of the participants was checked and satisfied via Levene's Test for Equality of Variances $F(68) = 8.21, p = -6.86$.

Based on the numerical difference between means (Mean difference= 4.12) and the results of the independent samples t-test conducted on the students with positive and negative attitudes towards writing ability, a statistically significant difference between students and teachers was investigated $t(218) = -6.86, p = .000$. Thus, it is suggestible that there is a significant difference between students with positive attitude and negative attitude towards writing ability. Additionally, Cohen's *d* was estimated at .65, which is medium effect size (as proposed by Cohen, 1988).

Table 4.4. *Group Statistics*

	Self-efficacy (Binned)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Attitude	low	50	16.900	3.05227	.43166
	high	20	18.800	2.62779	.58759

As Table 4 shows the mean for students with low self-efficacy was 16.90 (Sd= 3.05) while the mean for students with positive attitude was 18.80 (Sd= 2.62). The standard deviation for those students in high attitude group was less than the low self-efficacy group showing that the distance lower bound of group and higher bound is less than the other group.

Table 4.5. *T-test Self-efficacy*

Self - efficacy	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.750	.047	-2.44	68	.01	-1.90	.770	-3.45	-3.47
Equal variances not assumed			-2.60	40.47	.01	-1.90	.720	-3.35	-4.26

Firstly the assumption of the homogeneity of variances between two groups of the participants was checked and satisfied via Levene's Test for Equality of Variances $F(68) = .75, p = .39$.

Based on the numerical difference between means (Mean difference = 1.90) and the results of the independent samples t-test conducted on the students with high and low self-efficacy towards writing ability, a statistically significant difference between students and teachers was investigated $t(68) = -2.44, p = .01$. Thus, it is suggestible that there is a significant difference between students with high and low self-efficacy about writing ability. Additionally, Cohen's *d* was estimated at .63, which is medium effect size (as proposed by Cohen, 1988).

4. Discussion

The main objectives of the present study were to whether these hypotheses are correct or wrong and due to the findings, the results are discussed at following sections.

H01. There is no significant difference between students with low self-efficacy and students with high self-efficacy on writing tests.

Based on the results of the T-test conducted for this part, it became clear that there were significant differences among students with low self-efficacy and high self-efficacy in terms of their writing abilities. Emig (1977) stated that that the very act of writing promotes learning because the very act and pace of writing helps develop and reinforce in-depth thinking and thinking ability is considered as of the most personal and internal process students and even ordinary people face it in their lives.

Moreover, as it was found by Hashemnejad, Zoghi, Amini (2014) the relationship between the learners' self-efficacy and students' writing performances across genders

there was no significant relationship between male and female EFL students' self-efficacy and writing performance but It was also found that there was a significant positive relationship in self-efficacy between female and male EFL students; therefore the finding of this study could also confirm our findings in the present study that students with high level of self-efficacy can outperform students' with low levels of self-efficacy.

H02. There is no significant difference between students with positive attitudes and students with negative attitudes on writing tasks

Due to significant differences investigated in this study attitude is considered as an effective not only on language learning but also in writing instruction in particular. The reason for such effectiveness could be attribute to the mental process used in writing ability. The more a skill is mental and cognitive the more it is affected by the personal attributes of learners.

The fact that writing process is cognitive has been mentioned in different studies. For instance, there were two main approaches to writing theories such as socio-cultural and cognitive approaches. It was suggested by Shaughnessy (1977), Teale and Sulzby (1986) that the first focused mainstream was cognitive theories, which was followed, by the sociocultural theories in 1970s.

These finding are in accordance with those in underlying theories which affect writing. It is stated that a decline in positive attitudes towards writing and perceptions of writing ability (Shell, Colvin, & Bruning, 1995).

5. Conclusion

With regard to the analysis and interpretations, have been done so far in this present study, significant differences between those who have positive attitude and those who have negative attitude were found in terms of their writing ability and writing achievements. Likewise, significant differences between students with high self-efficacy and low self-efficacy were investigated. Generally it could be asserted the degree of writing achievement are directly associated with the amount of both attitude and self-efficacy because significant differences investigated among binned groups. Finally, it could be concluded that students with positive attitudes and high level of self-efficacy can gain better writing achievements. To the extent that the level of self-efficacy is low or they have negative attitudes their achievements will be decreased. The reason of such investigation may be due to the effect of personal attributes on language learners' achievements which was state by Bachman (1990).

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