

The Effect of Assessment Technique on EFL Learners' Writing Motivation and Self-Regulation

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Abstract

The inherent deficiencies of teacher-centered assessment have led many researchers to investigate the challenges and possibilities of alternative assessment. From among the various forms of alternative assessment, self and peer assessment have not been adequately scrutinized in the Iranian context. The present study examined the effect of three different assessment techniques, namely teacher, peer, and self-assessment, in writing tasks on a cohort of Iranian English learners' writing motivation and self-regulation. Ninety-five female intermediate EFL learners were randomly assigned to three groups of self, peer, and teacher-assessment. Before the treatment, all the participants produced an argumentative essay while thinking-aloud and recording their voice, and completed the questionnaires. After the treatment, the participants once again completed the writing motivation and self-regulation questionnaires and wrote an argumentative essay, while thinking aloud and recording their voice. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and think-aloud protocols. Having analyzed the interviews qualitatively, and analyzed the writing motivation questionnaires results through a one-way ANCOVA test, the researcher concluded that self-assessment had an advantage over the two other techniques in promoting writing motivation. Similarly, the analysis of the coded think-aloud protocols and a one-way ANCOVA yielded support for the superiority of the alternative assessment particularly self-assessment in promoting the use of self-regulatory strategies. Implications for writing classes are discussed.

Keywords: Peer-assessment, Self-assessment, Teacher-assessment, Writing Motivation, Writing Self-regulation

1. Introduction

Assessment is an indispensable requirement of teaching and learning. Without some form of assessment, it is next to impossible to verify the accomplishment of educational objectives and goals. The outcomes of assessment can have determining effects on educators' and educational planners' evaluation of the efficacy of ongoing programs and on finding efficient ways to improve the future course of action. On the other hand, the very existence of assessment, especially formative assessment, provides learners with the incentive to do their best to meet educational

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requirements and as a result look at a brighter future for them and for the society and humanity as a whole. According to Brookhart (2009), a review of literature indicates that classroom formative assessment has a constructive impact on students' degree of learning and might increase their level of achievement, their approach toward learning activities and their self-regulatory practices.

While the teacher-centered assessment is dominant in the majority of educational settings, concerns with the defects and the possible negative effects of traditional assessment have paved the way for a slow and steady emergence of alternative assessments. As Mahrooqi and Denman (2018) state, the emergence of alternative assessment was basically a reaction to the reported shortcomings of the conventional teacher-centered forms of assessment. One of the obvious examples of such deficiencies is the emphasis of traditional assessment on learners' ability to recall, especially in the long run, the taught materials at the total or limited expense of developing creativity and autonomy in diverse learning activities (Bourke, & Mentis, 2011). In other words, most traditional teacher-centered assessment techniques do not challenge the learners' cognitive abilities to go beyond the taught materials and to come up with effective solutions if faced with new problems.

Since its inception, alternative assessment has appeared in a variety of forms including the use of checklists, videotapes, audiotapes, teacher observations, journals, logs, conferences, portfolio, self-assessment, and peer-assessment (Brown & Hudson, 1998). As Brown and Hudson (1998) state almost all forms of alternative assessment enable the learner to go beyond the confines of classrooms and develop creativity to meet the requirements of real-world contexts or simulations. From among these different forms, however, self- and peer-assessment have been in the center of researchers' attention due to the fact that they contribute to the development of autonomy and higher levels of motivation among learners (Sambell, McDowell, & Sambell, 2006).

Self and peer-assessment are believed to positively affect the outcomes of instruction (Bourke, & Mentis, 2011). As these techniques involve learners in the assessment process, they most likely enhance their motivation level and willingness to take increasingly more responsibility for learning activities (Harris, 1997). As one of the less investigated areas of language education, this study made an attempt to find out how self and peer-assessment might affect language learners' motivation and self-regulation when they engage in writing activities.

Possessing a slow pace, leaving an enduring record, and offering opportunity for high degrees of precision in language use, writing plays a facilitative role in language development (Williams, 2012). Proposing the writing-to-learn perspective, Harklau (2002) and Manchon (2011) maintain that writing can be exploited as a means for acquiring a second/foreign language (L2). While generating texts, L2 learners are more likely to notice the deficiencies in their L2 and strive to find ways to overcome those shortcomings (Williams, 2012). Thus, writing can be viewed as an

indispensable skill for language learners, and a pivotal issue in L2 research should concern the development of skilled L2 writers.

A major factor that purportedly contributes to the development of writing is motivation (Deneme, 2011), the learner's aspiration to persevere in learning activities (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008). Learners' motivation is affected, among other things, by teachers' practices (Deneme, 2011). Therefore, studies targeting at shedding light on the ways pedagogical techniques can foster L2 writers' motivation are warranted.

Another significant issue enhancing the development of writing skills is self-regulation which Kanlapan and Velasco (2009) define as beliefs, activities, or feelings that aid people to manage their thinking so that they can accomplish certain objectives. On the practical plane, self-regulation is manifested in setting goals, monitoring performance, deploying strategies used to achieve goals, and the management of resources (Mortazavi, Jafarigohar, Rouhi, & Soleimani, 2017). High self-regulatory skills enable L2 writers "to be prepared for the challenges in their path to becoming proficient writers in another language" (Hemmati & Mortazavi, 2017, p. 71) and enhance learners' writing skills (Graham & Harris, 2000; Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2005; Harris, Graham, & Adkins, 2015; Kanlapan & Velasco, 2009). Self-regulatory mechanisms set the scene for the creation of a plan to achieve the writing task efficaciously and prompt adaptations in strategy adoption (Graham & Harris, 2000). Nonetheless, gaining and promoting writing self-regulatory skills are arduous, and learners require support in pedagogical contexts to enhance their ability to apply self-regulatory techniques while engaged in writing activities (Hammann, 2005). Hence, delving into the ways pedagogical practices can be manipulated and altered to boost L2 writers' self-regulatory skills is eligible. The present study set out to investigate whether assessment technique employed as pedagogical tools can differentially affect Iranian EFL learners' writing motivation and self-regulatory skills.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Writing Motivation and Assessment Practices

Motivation provides learners with a driving force to face challenges and achieve success in language acquisition. When adequate levels and types of motivation are missing, individuals' abilities, proper curricula, and appropriate teaching methodology might fail to lead individuals towards achieving their academic goals (Dörnyei, 1998). Motivation has been construed as the most significant predictor of achievement in foreign/second language learning (Yuan-bing, 2011). Therefore, due attention should be paid to motivational factors when designing and deploying learning tasks (Belland, Kim, & Hannafin, 2013). An area in which the role of motivational factors is underscored in foreign/second language learning is writing as the motivation deficiency has been reported to be the chief reason language learners demonstrate reluctance to engage in writing (Deneme, 2011; Yuan-bing, 2011).

Troia, Harbaugh, Shankland, Wolbers, and Lawrence (2013) reported that narrative writing performance of students in elementary, middle, and high school could be affected by an increase in motivation. Literature indicates that motivation in writing might be a function of educational practices. Wang (2004), for instance, disclosed that learner-centered activities as opposed to teacher-centered ones promoted motivation and reported that Chinese EFL learners were highly motivated in a magazine-editing project while engaged in editing their own unique magazines. Among learner-centered classroom activities are alternative assessment procedures employed as educational tools. Defined as “any process that provides information about the thinking, achievement or progress of students” (Crooks, 2001, p. 1), assessment is one of the activities teachers need to deploy in their classes. Recent approaches towards assessment introduce it as a potential learning tool (Taras, 2008). The assessment literature has lately witnessed the emergence of a considerable number of novel and alternative approaches aimed at highlighting the role of learners in the assessment process (Sluijsmans, Brand-Gruwel, van Merriënboer, & Bastiaens, 2003). Learner-oriented alternative methods of assessment have been contrasted with traditional teacher-centered methods in which the role of the learner is undermined. Known to evaluate what learners can produce (Coombe, Folse, & Hubly, 2007), learner-centered approaches to assessment emphasize the role of learners in assessment procedures and decision making. Among such innovative learner-oriented assessment approaches are self and peer-assessment. Self-assessment is referred to as checking one’s performance and measuring one’s achievement upon completing a learning activity (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). It is a key element in language learning and assists learners in gaining autonomy (Harris, 1997). Peer-assessment is, on the other hand, “an arrangement for learners to consider and specify the level, value, or quality of a product or performance of other equal status learners” (Topping, 2009, p. 20).

Theoretical postulations endorse the effectiveness of using learner-centered approaches to assessment in motivating learners to initiate and persevere in language learning tasks. It has been proposed that peer evaluation and self-assessment can promote intrinsic motivation among students (Yuan-bing, 2011). However, these theoretical considerations have not been backed by empirical evidence particularly in EFL writing contexts and the literature is in dire need of research on the benefits of alternative assessment technique on the acquisition of L2 writing skills. The majority of studies focusing on such techniques have mostly aimed at justifying their legitimacy as assessment tools (de Saint-Léger, 2009). There are also studies reporting an advantage for self- and peer-assessment technique over teacher-led ones in promoting EFL learners’ achievement (e.g. Abolfazli Khonbi & Sadeghi, 2012). However, studies on the link between assessment methods and writing motivation scarce. Therefore, studies providing empirical support should be conducted to shed light on the effect of variation in assessment on language learners' writing motivation and to illuminate what particular assessment technique can bring about the optimum changes in learners' motivational levels.

2.2. Writing Self-regulation and Assessment Methods

Training learners who feel responsible toward their learning and have the tendency to embark on learning activities autonomously comprises one of the main goals of any educational program (Shih, Chen, Chang, & Kao, 2010). As a result, self-regulation has turned into a focal point in studies examining academic learning and achievement (Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000). Self-regulation theories have been mostly shaped and guided by Bandura's (1986) seminal work, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action* in which he highlights the derivation of knowledge from the environment. Self-regulated learners are reported to stipulate objectives for their learning activities, think of and use strategies geared to the demands of the specified aims, and screen their success in the application of those techniques and strategies (Schraw, Crippen, & Hartley, 2006), and can channel their learning activities through a myriad of motivational views and tactics (Wolters, 1999).

Zimmerman (2002) acknowledges eight processes for self-regulation. To him, self-regulation initiates with laying down objectives and devising plans for the implementation of the stratagems to achieve those goals and moves on to checking the compatibility of the applied techniques as well as that of the features of performance and making changes in the physical and social environment and developing a schedule to use time efficiently. Finally, after the task, self-regulatory processes include gauging the success of one's enactment, deciding whether adaptations should be incorporated into one's performance in similar future tasks, and attributing results to certain causes. Using these processes, learners with higher levels of self-regulatory skills achieve better results academically when compared to those who fail to regulate their learning process when other potentially influential and intertwining factors are controlled (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). Self-regulation is a multi-dimensional construct, constituting cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, behavioral, and environmental processes. Schraw et al. (2006) view self-regulated learning as consisting of three core constituents: cognition, metacognition, and motivation, and iterate that these three components are indispensable and together form the regulatory skills of individuals.

A burgeoning mass of research introduces self-regulation as a function of instructional techniques and classroom practices (e.g. Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). Given the nature of L2 writing, tasks requiring L2 writers to sustain effort while observing time limits in addition to performing unaided, the necessity of employing self-regulatory skills in language learning is emphasized when learners are acquiring writing skills (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). Magno (2009) holds that self-regulated writers are capable of adapting their strategies compliant with task requirements and intrapersonal states. In the same vein, Kanlapan and Velasco (2009) argue that self-regulated writers go through several stages while generating a written text. They believe self-regulation promotes writing skills through a set of sub-functions, namely: self-monitoring of one's activity, setting and employing personal standards for judging and directing the performance,

enlisting self-reactive influences to direct and incent one's effort, and employing appropriate strategies to achieve success (Kanlapan & Velasco, 2009). Thus, on the theoretical plane, writing practices fostering judging, monitoring, and self-evaluating are expected to promote writing self-regulatory skills. However, empirical data are required to back up such postulations in the field. Yet, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there have not been studies probing into the differential impact of various assessment procedures on the employment of self-regulatory strategies. A few studies have set out to delineate the impact of assessment technique on sub-components of self-regulation. Cascallar, Boekaerts, and Costigan (2006), for example, studied the relationship between assessment and the elements of the self-regulation process. Their findings led to a richer conceptualization of the self-regulatory process. Moreover, Zarei and Yousefi (2013), reported a superiority for self-assessment, when compared to peer and teacher-assessment, in fostering goal-orientation. However, self-regulation is a multi-faceted concept, and studies are required to inspect how it can be affected by assessment decisions with various orientations. As another example, Zhang, (2017) carried out mixed-methods research to investigate the effect of seven classroom assessment features on student self-regulated learning and further explored factors that influenced the effect.

Closely related to the issue at hand, some studies have looked into the perceptions and attitudes of learners and not the outcome of self and peer-assessment. For example, Fathi, Mohammad Yousefi, and Sedighraves (2017) examined the effect of the implementation of self-assessment and peer-assessment in a writing course on a group of Iranian EFL learners' perception of self-regulated learning of a sample of Iranian EFL students. They found that both self-assessment and peer-assessment practices had a positive impact on the self-regulated learning of the participants as reflected in replies to a self-report questionnaire. However, the actual use of self-regulatory techniques was not observed and measured by Fathi and colleagues. In another study, Cheng and Warren (2005) investigated language learners' attitudes toward peer-assessment, as well as the pedagogical outcomes of peer-assessment of oral and written language proficiency. The findings of this study revealed that the participants demonstrated unwillingness to assess their peers' language proficiency. The researchers also found that there were not significant differences between the scores provided by peers and those obtained through the traditional assessment. They also reported that the participants' unwillingness to assess their peers were mainly due to the learners' attitudes toward their own capability to carry out peer-assessment.

On the other hand, some researchers have studied the effect of self and peer-assessment on the writing skill and its components. For instance, Birjandi and Siyyari (2015) examined the effect of self and peer-assessment on 198 adult Iranian male and female learners' ability to write paragraphs and on their accuracy in rating themselves and their peers in paragraph development. Their findings indicated that self and peer-assessment had gradually improved the paragraph writing skill during the treatment. They also found peer-assessment to be more effective than self-

assessment in achieving this goal. Moreover, the researchers reported significant improvement in the average rating accuracy of participants as a result of self and peer-assessment with no major difference between the effects of these two techniques of assessment.

3. The Present Study

The benefits of peer and self-assessment techniques in second and foreign language acquisition have not so far been conclusively investigated, and most studies focusing on such techniques have mostly aimed at justifying their validity as assessment tools (de Saint-Léger, 2009). Harris (1997) argued for the positive effect of self-assessment on self-regulation: "one of the fundamental elements of self-directed language learning is the opportunity given to learners to assess their own progress and thus help them to focus on their own learning" (p.12), yet there is still no solid empirical endorsement of such theoretical considerations. Therefore, to add to the still scant body of research into the pedagogical implementation of assessment technique in general and alternative learner-oriented assessment procedures in particular, the present study investigated the differential effect of various assessment techniques on learners' motivation to write and writing self-regulation. In so doing, the following research questions were posed:

Research Question One: Do various assessment techniques (i.e. self, peer, and teacher-assessment) vary in terms of their impact on L2 learners' writing motivation?

Research Question Two: Do various assessment techniques (i.e. self, peer, and teacher-assessment) vary in terms of their impact on L2 learners' writing self-regulation?

4. Method

4.1. Participants

Ninety-five female Iranian learners of English studying at intermediate levels in a language institute with an age range of 18 to 36 ($M = 22.78$, $SD = 7.22$) participated in this study. The participants were chosen from among 134 intermediate learners who had taken the Preliminary English Test (PET) ($M = 69.76$, $SD = 8.52$). From among those who had scored one standard deviation from mean in the PET, 95 were randomly selected. Thirty-two learners were assigned to the self-assessment group (SA), thirty-two to the peer-assessment group (PA), and thirty-one to the teacher-assessment group (TA).

4.2. Instruments

The argumentative essay rubric proposed by Elson (2011) (Min=5, Max=20) (see Appendix A) was employed to measure the participants' writing ability. The rubric focuses on various aspects of text generation, namely: quality of the argument, the reasonableness of presentation of perspective, style, conclusion, and mechanics, on a scale of 1 to 4.

The 39-item questionnaire devised by Birjandi and Hadidi Tamjid (2010) to assess intrinsic motivation in EFL writing classes was the second instrument employed in this study. Four factors loadings namely, interest/enjoyment, perceived competence, value/importance, and effort were reported for this questionnaire. These factors reportedly enjoyed high internal-consistency indices ranging from .78 to .83 (Birjandi & Hadidi Tamjid, 2010). The calculated reliability of the questionnaire in the present study in the pre and posttests were $\alpha = 0.77$ and $\alpha = 0.82$ respectively. Birjandi and Hadidi Tamjid (2010, pp. 214-215) provide a detailed description on the process of developing the questionnaire and establishing its validity on the basis of pilot testing, expert opinion and through factor analysis of the original 50-item questionnaire. The data for factor analysis were collected from 140 respondents other than those taking part in the main study.

To collect qualitative data on participants' writing motivation, the researcher devised a two-question semi-structured interview to find out whether or not the ten randomly selected participants from each group were willing to exert more perseverance in their writing tasks. The questions were intended to disclose whether participants were adequately motivated to embark on L2 writing tasks in the future. To assess participants' writing self-regulation, the researcher employed a self-regulation scale tailored for the context of writing developed by Kanlapan and Velasco (2009) (see Appendix B). The scale includes 115 items with subscales attuned with self-regulation processes postulated by Zimmerman (2002). In the present study, the reliability of the pre-test was estimated as $\alpha=0.83$, and the estimated reliability in the posttest was $\alpha=0.88$.

To garner qualitative evidence on the use of self-regulatory behaviors before and after the treatment, the researcher made use of think-aloud protocols. The think-aloud protocols were generated as participants were involved in writing the argumentative essay both prior and after the treatment. All participants were asked to use think aloud protocols. However, the ones generated by the ten randomly selected participants from each group were analyzed to assess the use of self-regulatory skills as they carried out the writing task.

4.3. Procedure

Before the treatment, learners in all groups attended a 40-minute session to get familiar with generating think-aloud protocols. Initially, the researcher modeled the thinking aloud while writing an argumentative essay. Next, all participants were given a writing test requiring them to write an argumentative essay of about 150 words while thinking-aloud and recording their voice in 45 minutes. The test was administered within two days in two time periods of morning and evening. In each administration of the test, between 20 to 25 participants were given the test, and every five students were placed in a separate room to minimize distracting noises. This was done both to ensure the homogeneity of the participants with regard to their writing proficiency before the treatment and to gather evidence on the actual use of self-regulatory techniques while writing at the onset of the study. The results of a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) yielded no

significant difference among the performance of the SA ($M = 12.53$, $SD = 4.10$), PA ($M = 12.31$, $SD = 4.55$), and TA ($M = 11.03$, $SD = 3.87$) learners, $F(2, 92) = 1.20$, $p > .05$; $\eta^2 = .00$), indicating that all participants were homogeneous in terms of the writing ability. Next, as the pretest, they were given the writing motivation and writing self-regulation questionnaires. After the treatment, the participants once again completed the writing motivation and self-regulation questionnaires and wrote an argumentative essay at home, while thinking aloud and recording their voice. Afterwards, the researcher interviewed 10 randomly selected participants from each group to qualitatively gauge their writing motivation. Each semi-structured interview which included three questions devised by the researcher lasted about 15 minutes and was recorded for analysis.

4.4. Treatment

The learners in the SA group were provided with the Elson's (2011) rubric and were trained to use it to evaluate their own essays. The instruction included teachers' modeling and explanations. Throughout the treatment, which lasted for 45 days and included twenty 90-minute sessions, learners in the SA group were assigned to write 6 argumentative essays and assess themselves using the rubric designed by Elson (Elson, 2011). The teacher informed participants that they would receive the teacher's evaluation of their papers at the end of the term. The PA learners were similarly trained to use the aforementioned rubric to assess argumentative essays. They, however, were asked to rate a peer's essay. Similar to their counterparts in SA, they received their teacher's assessment at the end of the treatment when they had answered the questionnaires in the posttest.

Unlike the learners in SA and PA, the ones in the TA group were not involved in the assessment and merely received scores obtained from the assessment of their 6 essays carried out by their teacher. The treatment was followed by a second administration of the writing motivation and self-regulation questionnaires, which was viewed as the only posttest of the study.

4.5. Data Analysis

As discussed in more details below in the results section, the study deployed a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to examine the data obtained through the questionnaire by taking pretest scores as the covariate. Moreover, the researcher deployed triangulation to compare the quantitative and qualitative data extracted from the interviews. As for processing the think-aloud results, the researcher transcribed the think-aloud data collected from the ten randomly selected participants of each group before coding and scoring.

5. Results

5.1. Writing Motivation Self-Report

To answer the first research question and to delineate the impact of various techniques of assessment on learners' writing motivation, the researcher analyzed data collected from the

questionnaire as well as the data gleaned from the interviews. Writing motivation questionnaire results were examined using a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). The learners' pretest scores were taken as the covariate to control for the possible discrepancies in the pretest.

As Table 1 demonstrates, the SA and PA groups gained scores higher than those obtained by the TA group, with the SA gaining the highest writing motivation scores in both posttests. Table 2 shows the results of the one-way ANCOVA run to compare posttest scores controlling for the differences in the pretest.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Writing Motivation.

| Groups | N | Pretest | | Posttest | |
|--------|----|---------|-------|----------|-------|
| | | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| SA | 32 | 59.81 | 11.78 | 121.28 | 33.95 |
| PA | 32 | 53.43 | 9.94 | 104.87 | 21.30 |
| TA | 31 | 54.25 | 9.21 | 63.93 | 15.02 |

Table 2: One-way ANCOVA Tests of between-subjects Effects, Writing Motivation

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
|---------|-------------------------|----|-------------|-------|------|---------------------|
| Pretest | 141.77 | 1 | 141.77 | .22 | .63 | .00 |
| Groups | 52266.87 | 2 | 26133.43 | 42.13 | .00 | .48 |
| Total | 1005959.00 | 94 | | | | |

As it can be seen in Table 2, significant differences were detected among the performance of the learners in the SA ($M = 121.28$, $SD = 33.95$), PA ($M = 104.84$, $SD = 21.30$), and TA groups ($M = 63.93$, $SD = 15.02$), in the writing motivation posttest, $F(2, 92) = 42.13$, $p < .05$; $\eta^2 = .48$. An ensuing post-hoc Scheffe's test was run to determine points of the difference. The results of the post-hoc Scheffe's test are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Scheffe's test: Writing Motivation Posttest

| Group | PA | TA |
|-------|--------|--------|
| SA | 15.64* | 56.68* |
| PA | | 41.03* |

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

As depicted in Table 3, post hoc test results proved that the scores obtained by SA ($M = 121.28$, $SD = 33.95$) and PA ($M = 104.84$, $SD = 21.30$) in the writing motivation test were significantly higher than those gained by the TA ($M = 63.93$, $SD = 15.02$). Moreover, significant differences could be detected between the performance of the learners in SA and PA in this test, with the learners in the SA outperforming those in the PA.

5.2. Writing Motivation Interview

To obtain a comprehensive picture of the effect of involving learners in assessment decisions and procedures on motivating them to initiate and persist in L2 writing tasks, the researcher triangulated the quantitative data with qualitative data accumulated from interviews. From each group, 10 participants were randomly selected to be included in the semi-structured interviews

which were then transcribed and qualitatively analyzed to throw lights on the role of the assessment technique in motivating L2 writers. The first question addressed whether participants had enjoyed the intervention and found it a helpful experience. The second question was intended to unravel the reasons for the answer to the first question.

5.2.1. Writing Motivation Interview Results for SA

From among the ten participants chosen from the SA group to take part in the interview, nine explicitly iterated that the intervention and having the opportunity to gauge their own written performance was a pleasant experience and brought about a surge in their inclination to embark on writing tasks. When asked to elucidate the reasons why the intervention encouraged them to initiate and persist in future writing tasks, seven contended that they had gained more profound knowledge of how written performance should be evaluated. They also stated that getting familiar with the evaluation process assisted them, to a great extent, to find out how they were expected to approach writing tasks making L2 writing much more effortless. Participant number 9, for example, stated: "I think now I like writing more than before and my willing[ness] to write in English [has]increase[d] because I know more about the correct way of writing...I have learned about the organization and I edit better. I think I can write better because I can edit my own writing better". Arguing that the intervention had improved her editing skills, participant number 1 similarly stated that: "Now I can edit better and find my mistakes better. So, I think my writing skills have become better. So, I am willing to write more than before." Another participant believed that the feeling of "being important enough" and "knowledgeable enough" to evaluate her own papers was the reason she felt better motivated to get involved in L2 writing tasks. She also stated that she felt more confident as a result of being given the responsibility of and to be trusted with scoring and assessing her own essay. A couple of participants, though, could not specifically provide reasons for their increased motivation.

5.2.2. Writing Motivation Interview Results for PA

From among the 10 learners interviewed from the PA group, eight unwaveringly reported a growth in their motivation to write in L2 as a result of the treatment. Most of them also stated that they had found L2 writing tasks less demanding towards the end of the study. Upon being asked to express the reasons behind the boost in their motivation, five participants indicated that being assigned to evaluate their fellow group mates' essays helped them increase their confidence and aroused a positive feeling towards writing tasks in them. Participants number 9, as an example, stated that she felt "more [cap]able", arguing that this sense of competence enabled her to feel she would produce texts of higher quality in future writing activities, and thus, she could feel a lower level of apprehension in L2 writing tasks. This in turn encouraged her to get engaged in L2 writing tasks more frequently. Furthermore, two participants introduced the development in their editing skills as the main impetus behind the rise in their L2 writing motivation. They contended

that they had learned from their friends' mistakes and had advanced their writing editing skills which they deemed as helpful in their performance in future writing assignments.

5.2.3. Writing Motivation Interview Results for TA

Only two out of the 10 interviewed participants in the TA group reported that their desire to take part in L2 writing tasks had positively changed after the treatment. One of them was not clear and straight about the reason and the other one mentioned that having practiced writing and completing 6 essays throughout the term, she was feeling more prepared for similar writing tasks in the future. The other eight participants selected for the interview, on the other hand, did not mention an increase in their interest in L2 writing tasks, arguing that the treatment they had received did not result in any change in their beliefs about their capabilities to handle L2 writing tasks.

5.3. Writing self-regulation self-report

Question two was aimed at finding out whether the ability to regulate the process of L2 writing could be a function of being exposed to various techniques. To gauge the effect of learner involvement in assessment procedures on their self-regulatory skills in writing, the researcher examined both think-aloud protocols and questionnaire responses. Participants' questionnaire scores were analyzed using a one-way ANCOVA run to compare the perception of writing self-regulation controlling for the effect of the pretest. Displayed in Table 4 are the pretest and posttest means and standard deviations of the groups' writing self-regulation.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Writing Motivation.

| Groups | N | Pretest | | Posttest | |
|--------|----|---------|--------|----------|-------|
| | | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| SA | 32 | 283.25 | 55.00 | 332.16 | 57.69 |
| PA | 32 | 285.09 | 56.950 | 315.34 | 55.33 |
| TA | 31 | 283.53 | 54.20 | 289.62 | 52.57 |

As shown in Table 4, in the posttest the SA and PA groups outscored the participants in the TA group. Table 5 illustrates the results of the one-way ANCOVA run to compare self-regulation posttest scores controlling for the discrepancies in the pretest.

Table 5: One-way ANCOVA Tests of Between-Subjects Effects, Writing Self-regulation

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
|---------|-------------------------|----|-------------|---------|------|---------------------|
| Pretest | 265812.22 | 1 | 265812.22 | 1662.23 | .00 | .94 |
| Groups | 737.92 | 2 | 368.96 | 2.30 | .10 | .04 |
| Total | 9567104.00 | 95 | | | | |

As it can be seen in Table 5, no significant differences were detected among the performances of the learners in the SA ($M = 332.16$, $SD = 57.69$), PA ($M = 315.34$, $SD = 55.33$), and TA groups ($M = 289.62$, $SD = 52.57$), in the writing self-regulation posttest, $F(2, 92) = 2.30$, $p > .05$; $\eta^2 =$

.04. This indicated that although the groups differed with regard to their scores in the posttest, with the SA and PA gaining higher scores, this difference was not statistically significant.

5.4. Think-aloud protocols

From each group, ten participants were randomly selected for the think-aloud protocol analysis. The researcher transcribed protocols, made copies of the transcriptions, removed the identifying information, and assigned numbers to learners before scoring in an attempt to reduce bias. To prepare the writing self-regulation scale writing self-regulatory strategies postulated by Kanlapan and Velasco (2009) were considered in the coding process. In other words, segments reflecting any of the previously mentioned eight strategies were identified and a total number was calculated for each participant.

In the pretest, the researcher and another rater independently coded 25% of the congregated data, and agreement between coders was estimated (Cohen's Kappa = 0.78). The rest of the data in the pretest were analyzed by the researcher. In a similar vein, in the post-test, the coders coded 25% of the data independently and the inter-coders' agreement was estimated (Cohen's Kappa = 0.83), and the rest of the data were coded by the researcher. The pre and posttest differences, the gains, in all groups were compared using the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test given the small number of analyzed protocols and scores for each group. The results are demonstrated in Table 6.

Table 6: Kruskal-Wallis Test on Writing Self-Regulation Measured by Think-aloud Protocols

| Ranks | |
|----------------------|-----------|
| Groups | Mean Rank |
| SA | 36.82 |
| PA | 29.25 |
| TA | 19.93 |
| Test Statistics(a,b) | |
| Chi-Square | 50.72 |
| df | 2 |
| Asymp sig. | .00 |

a Kruskal Wallis Test b Grouping Variable: Groups

As Table 6 suggests, there were statistically significant differences among the groups in the number of instances of writing self-regulatory strategies use ($H=50.72$, $p<.05$), with a mean of 36.82, for the SA, 29.25 for the PA, and 19.93 for the TA. To find out whether the difference between SA and PA as well as the one between PA and TA were significant, two Mann-Whitney U tests were run. Mann-Whitney U test results indicated that the gain in the number of self-regulatory strategies from pretest to posttest was statistically significantly higher in the PA, when compared to that of CG, $U= .00$, $p <.05$, $r = .83$. Moreover, self-regulatory strategies use gain was statistically significantly higher in the SA, in comparison with that of CG, $U= .00$, $p <.05$, $r = .88$. Therefore, although the results gained from the analysis of the self-report questionnaire reflecting

participants' perception of their self-regulatory strategy deployment did not reveal significant differences among groups, the results of the analysis of think-aloud protocols mirroring actual use of writing self-regulatory strategies indicated that alternative assessment technique with learners involved in assessment procedures could enhance the participants' use of self-regulatory strategies. The findings showed that being involved in one's writing evaluation led to the exploitation of the highest number of self-regulatory strategies.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The study at hand is among a few studies in a relatively new line of research studying the pedagogical expediency of assessment tools and probing into their impact on various aspects of language acquisition. The present study was aimed at examining the impact of two learner-centered assessment methods namely, self-assessment and peer-assessment as well as a traditional assessment method (i.e. teacher-assessment) on two vital factors in writing acquisition (i.e. writing motivation and writing self-regulation). The results of the ANCOVA run on writing motivation self-report scores revealed that the both innovative learner-centered assessment techniques (i.e. self and peer-assessment) were more effective in terms of motivating learners to write and persist in writing tasks. A more in-depth examination of the effect of the assessment technique on L2 writing motivation was made possible through the inspection of writing interview question results which revealed that being assigned to assess one's own written performance increased participants' motivation as it increased their awareness of the evaluation process and promoted editing skills. Similarly, evaluating a peer's writing performance motivated participants to take part in future L2 writing tasks as it provided them with the feeling of being competent enough to be included in decision making and evaluation processes. This finding is contrary to the report by Cheng and Warren (2005) who found that lack of a positive attitude toward their capability for peer-assessment resulted in participants' unwillingness to engage in this activity. The present study also found that self-assessment had an advantage over peer-assessment. This finding, however, does not corroborate the results by Birjandi and Siyyari (2015) who found peer-assessment to be more effective than self-assessment in writing improvement.

The results of the quantitative self-report data indicated that the SA learners had outperformed those in the PA. This was in keeping with the interview results which revealed that more learners in SA reported an increase in their L2 writing motivation after the treatment. Hence, according to the findings of the study at hand, being offered the opportunity to assess one's own writing has a significant role in promoting L2 learners' motivational level as it enables them to gain more insights into the way the writing task should be approached and is to be evaluated and also, as reported by participants, improves editing skills, which in turn makes learners believe in the likelihood of success in future writing tasks.

The impact of assessment technique on writing self-regulation was examined through the scrutiny of data collected from self-report questionnaires and the examination of think-aloud protocols generated while participants were engaged in writing tasks both before and after the treatment. Although the analysis of the writing self-regulation posttest did not display significant differences among groups, both learner-centered assessment techniques were found to have an advantage over the teacher-centered one when the actual employment of self-regulatory strategies was gauged using think-aloud protocol analysis, with self-assessment leading to best results.

The results, thus, are in line with previous studies reporting the superiority of alternative assessment techniques over traditional ones in language learning (e.g. Bourke, & Mentis, 2011; Bryant, & Carless, 2009; Harris, 1997; Liang, 2006). The findings should serve as an incentive for L2 writing instructors to employ alternative assessment techniques not merely for their internal validity but also their desired effects on learners' motivation. The results indicated that engaging learners in assessment decisions can positively impact their motivation to write in L2. Therefore, given the importance of motivational factors in writing (Deneme, 2011), writing instructors are encouraged to shift from traditional teacher-centered assessment techniques and provide opportunities for learners to accept responsibilities and take part in the process of assessment. Moreover, between the two learner-oriented approaches to assessment employed in this study, self-assessment proved to be more effective in promoting learners' desire to embark on the demanding task of writing in another language. This hints to the significant role of critical evaluation in promoting the willingness to accomplish writing tasks. The results corroborate those of Birjandi and Hadidi Tamjid (2010) who reported a positive role for self-assessment in promoting Iranian EFL learners' motivation. The results also chime with the ideas of Liang (2006) who believes self-assessment can foster motivation through the provision of more insight into learning objectives and needs. As Zarei and Yousefi (2015) have argued, "learners feel more comfortable if they receive feedback from their classmates, and even more comfortable if they are supposed to assess themselves" (p. 117). This builds a positive attitude toward self-assessment and lower levels of debilitating anxiety in learners while assessing themselves which increases their willingness to engage in the process of task completion.

The findings also endorse the role of learner-centered assessment techniques in increasing participants' ability to regulate their writing process. Zimmerman and Risemberg (1997) viewed possession of vocabulary and grammar knowledge insufficient for becoming a skillful writer. Writers, in fact, need to have high levels of personal regulation "because writing activities are usually self-planned, self-initiated, and self-sustained" (p. 73). They presented a social cognitive model of writing composed of three basic forms of self-regulation: environmental, behavioral, and individual. Each of these self-regulation forms, as Zimmerman and Risemberg argue, interact reciprocally via a cyclic feedback loop of self-monitoring. The authors have listed ten major self-regulatory techniques used by well-known writers. These techniques are environmental

structuring, self-selected models/tutors/books, self-monitoring, self-consequences, self-verbalization, time management, goal setting, self-evaluation, and application of cognitive strategies and mental imagery. As suggested by the model, self-evaluation is an indispensable element of regulatory strategies. This helps to justify the gained results about the superiority of self-assessment in promoting self-regulatory skills of L2 writers. In the SA group, learners were asked to assess their own writing which triggered reflection and directly resulted in self-evaluation. The obtained results are in line with the ideas proposed by Harris (1997) who deemed the chance to assess one's progress as one of the central constituents of self-directed language learning. The results hence hint to the effectiveness of explicit teaching or implicit elicitation of self-assessment for learners to become more self-directed and autonomous and capable of taking over the responsibility of their learning process as well as product.

The results also echo those obtained by Fathi et al (2017) who reported that self-assessment and peer-assessment in writing could promote EFL learners' perception of self-regulated learning as reflected in their responses to a self-report questionnaire. The present study showed that having been given the opportunity to assess their own and their peers' writing, learners could actually use self-regulatory skills such as planning and monitoring in practice while writing.

Peer-assessment was also found to assist participants in promoting their writing self-regulatory skills. Evaluating, and in other words, attempting to regulate, a peer's performance, led to gaining more self-regulation. This is commensurate with theoretical considerations stating that other-regulation is transferred to self-regulation and corroborates the previous studies endorsing the progression of other-regulation to self-regulation (Manning, 1991).

The findings are hoped to contribute to the still scarce research into the pedagogical usefulness of alternative assessment techniques as it included a qualitative examination of the impact of such techniques as well, thus enabling researchers to make firmer claims about their efficacy. The findings suggest that when regarded as an indispensable learning tool, alternative assessment can aid writing instructors to motivate learners to engage in writing tasks and be more self-directed while pursuing the achievement of L2 writing goals. The results of the current study are expected to motivate writing instructors to encourage self-evaluation and self-assessment technique as means for developing positive beliefs toward and gaining the required impetus for the engagement in the arduous task of generating and transferring ideas in the written form in another language. Engaging learners in the process of evaluation and assigning them as agents to evaluate their own as well as a peer's writing can also result in improvement in self-regulatory skills.

As stated explicitly and implicitly above and in order to reiterate the pedagogical implications of this study, we should provide language learners with materials that promote the culture of self and peer-assessment. Materials developers need to include sections on alternative

assessment in order to urge the teachers and learners to engage in such activities. This, of course, requires a reform and a redesign in teacher education programs to inculcate the necessity of such practices in student-teachers.

Each study, undoubtedly, has its own limitations which are intimately related to the future course of research in that area of inquiry. In other words, acquiring the ability to remove or even mitigate the current limitations can pave the way for more innovative and effective studies. As for the limitations of this study, the lack of random sampling on the original intermediate level sample partly constrains the generalizability of the findings. A study with true random sampling from various proficiency levels can place us on a more solid ground with regard to the issue at hand. Moreover, the treatment of this study was carried out in 20 sessions mainly due to the restrictions of a private institute. A further study carried out over a semester or even a whole academic year will definitely offer more reliable results. And finally this study did not include a delayed post-test, a gap which future studies will hopefully address in order to examine the effect of self and peer- assessment in the long run.

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Appendix A: The Argumentative Essay Rubric Proposed by Elson (2011)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Argument | Misunderstood | Fair attempt made | Good argument | Excellent - clear |
| Logical Presentation of view point | Poor though progression-no evidence of planning | Evidence of planning but lacks clear though progression | Good. Logical essay. View point makes sense. | Excellent. Cohesive logic that exceeds expectation |
| Style and handling of topic | Lacks understanding of topic-poorly presented | Lacks depth. Biased, narrow perspective presented | A mature essay. Topic understood and attitude fair. Examples are used to illustrate viewpoint | Excellent. A mature mind at work. Clearly understands both sides but is clear on own view. Argument well substantiated. |
| Conclusion | No obvious conclusion or clichéd | Attempted conclusion, but no real effect | Good conclusion. Evidence of thoughtful effort. | Excellent. Powerful. Thought provoking. Recognizable by shock or delight. |
| Grammar and Spelling | Largely unintelligible | Poor. Numerous careless errors | Errors are few and of minor consequence. | Almost flawless. |

Appendix B: Kanlapan and Velasco's (2009) Self-regulation Scale Contextualized in Writing

A. *Setting specific proximal goals for oneself – this segment of self-regulation deals with the formulation of objectives that will be achieved for a specific task.*

1. Before I write, I set my mind that I would finish my written output.
2. I set standards for my writing.
3. I create certain goals for every writing task I need to accomplish.
4. I plan the contents of the things that I would write.
5. I make my own guidelines for my written output.
6. I take note of my purpose in a specific writing task.
7. I think of my target audience and reason for writing a certain piece.

8. I drive myself to be resourceful in my writing.
9. I set a specific time in which I would write.
10. I always intend to make my written outputs of high quality.
11. I visualize my written output first before engaging in it.
12. I have a certain length in mind for the paper that I will work on.
13. I aim to create a paper with no grammatical errors.
14. I aspire to create a paper that will satisfy the readers.
15. I seek to compose a paper that uses comprehensible vocabulary.

B. Adopting powerful strategies for attaining the goals- This phase of self-regulation entails that the individual utilizes appropriate strategies for a task in which the objectives will be achieved.

1. I brainstorm for ideas before I write.
2. I use graphic organizers to manage my ideas.
3. I use the free-writing strategy to garner several thoughts.
4. I create an outline before I write.
5. I create a draft before writing the final paper.
6. I modify my paper if I'm not contented with it.
7. I use certain writing strategies such as annotating, outlining, etc. whenever doing a writing task.
8. I proofread my work.
9. I ask my peers to edit my writing.
10. I ask professionals to evaluate my writing and give suggested revision
11. I use word processing software to check errors in my writing.
12. I reread my work several times to find some errors in my writing.
13. I check my work on the general level then to the sentence level.
14. I know and use the writing approach of planning, organizing, writing, editing and revising.
15. I take into consideration the comments of other people about my writing.

C. Monitoring one's performance selectively for signs of progress- self-monitoring is one of the phases in the self-regulation cycle. It refers to the ability of the students to keep track of their progress in the task they are doing.

1. Before I write, I set my mind that I would finish my written output.
2. I set standards for my writing.
3. I create certain goals for every writing task I need to accomplish.
4. I plan the contents of the things that I would write.
5. I make my own guidelines for my written output.
6. I take note of my purpose in a specific writing task.
7. I think of my target audience and reason for writing a certain piece.
8. I drive myself to be resourceful in my writing.
9. I set a specific time in which I would write.
10. I always intend to make my written outputs of high quality.
11. I visualize my written output first before engaging in it.
12. I have a certain length in mind for the paper that I will work on.

13. I aim to create a paper with no grammatical errors.
14. I aspire to create a paper that will satisfy the readers.
15. I seek to compose a paper that uses comprehensible vocabulary.

D. Restructuring one's physical and social context to make it compatible to one's goal- Among the key types of self-control methods that have been studied to date are the use of imagery, self-instruction, attention focusing, and task strategies

1. I avoid watching television when I am finishing a writing task.
2. I avoid using my cell phone whenever I am writing a composition.
3. I usually finish my writing tasks late at night.
4. I isolate myself in quiet places whenever I do my writing tasks.
5. I can write efficiently when I am working in a clean and quiet environment
6. I am able to finish a writing task when I am listening to music.
7. I like talking with my friends while doing a writing task.
8. I prefer having people or friends around when I write so that I can gather more ideas from them.
9. I don't let others disturb me when I am writing.
10. I like finishing my compositions early in the morning.
11. I accomplish all my writing tasks at my own pace.
12. I see to it that my things are fixed before I begin with writing.
13. I usually do my writing tasks in a quiet place where there isn't much noise.
14. I like to multi-task whenever I write.
15. I don't like writing in a crowded place.

E. Managing one's time efficiently- self-regulated learners usually use several strategies so that they fit all their pending tasks to their availability.

1. I create a time table of the writing outputs I need to accomplish.
2. I keep a separate planner for all my writing tasks.
3. I use post-its to keep track of the writing tasks I need to accomplish.
4. I immediately accomplish the writing tasks I need to accomplish during my free time.
5. I finish all my compositions weeks before its deadline.
6. I keep a calendar where all the deadlines of my writing outputs are written.
7. I create a checklist of all the writing tasks I need to finish.
8. I see to it that I finish my writing tasks before their deadline.
9. I keep a notebook where I list a schedule of my daily writing activities.
10. I gradually finish my writing tasks whenever I have nothing to do.
11. I immediately start with the writing task as soon as the teacher gives it.
12. I accomplish all my writing tasks before doing unnecessary things.
13. I set an alarm for every writing task I have scheduled.
14. I allot a specific time for every writing task.
15. I use daily logs to track the writing tasks I have already accomplished.