Exploring EFL students' use of writing strategies and their attitudes towards reading-to-write and writing-only tasks

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore EFL students' use of writing strategies and their attitudes towards reading-to-write and writing-only tasks. The primary purpose of this study was to see whether there was any significant difference between the writing performance of reading-to-write and writing-only task groups of Iranian EFL learners. Also, this study explored whether there was any significant difference in the writing strategies used by Iranian EFL students in reading-to-write and writing-only groups. In addition, Iranian EFL students' beliefs and attitudes about reading-to-write were inspected. In so doing, 34 EFL students from the Sobhe Sadegh Institute of Higher Education in Isfahan, Iran, took part in the present study. The data were collected by the students' writing, academic writing strategies questionnaire which is developed by Abdul-Rahman (2011) and students' interviews in reading-to-write class. The data analysis via independent-samples t-test for comparing students' performance revealed that students in reading-to-write group performed better than students in writing-only group. Additionally, the results using MANOVA showed no significant difference in the writing strategies used by Iranian EFL students in reading-to-write and writing-only groups. Finally, qualitative analysis of data in reading-to-write class indicated that the students had a positive attitudes towards reading-to-write class because they believed that reading has exerted a positive effect on their writings.

1. Introduction

The reading-writing connection has been given significant attention from theorists, practitioners, and researchers (Meyer, 1982; Tierney & Pearson, 1983; Shanahan, 1990). The connection between writing and reading has often been described in uncomplicated terms: those who read well write well (Al-Ghonaim, 2005). Moreover, Al-Ghonaim stated the idea of combining writing and reading has been set up early in L1. According to him, many researchers (e.g. Krashen, 1984; Carson, 1993;

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Eisterhold, 1990) asserted that writing competence stems from sustained reading. This belief was expanded by Krashen (1982) to L2 in his "reading input hypothesis," which is straightly connected to his "comprehensible input" hypothesis. Krashen's "reading input hypothesis" suggests that comprehensive self-directed reading for pleasure in the target language will affect writing proficiency and improve the writing style (Flahive & Bailey, 1993). This hypothesis suggests that good readers have a powerful skill that can assist them in becoming good writers.

1.1. Literature review

Biber and Gray (2010) asserted that academic writing is stated to be decontextualized, explicit or autonomous, with all suppositions and logical relations being clearly encoded in the text while speech is dependent on a shared situational context. This insight that academic writing is intricate and explicit continues to the present time.

At a recent time, the significance of reading in progressing writing ability has been admitted (e.g. Carson and Leki, 1993; Hirvela, 2004). As reported by Ferrris and Hedgcock (2005), because the information obtained through reading includes print-encoded messages and clues about how the messages' grammatical, lexical, semantic, pragmatic, and rhetorical comprises integrate to make the message meaningful, reading becomes the basis of writing. Hirvela (2004) maintains that through "meaningful input" writing is supported by reading.

1.1.1. Studies comparing writing-only and reading-to-write tasks

Researchers have attempted to find the differences between reading-to-write tasks and writing-only tasks, with the increased interest in and utilizing reading-to-write tasks. These two tasks have been explored in two recent studies (Watanabe, 2001; 2009, 2006). They both inspected the correlation between scores on the two task types and the reliability of the reading-to-write tasks.

Although much of his study looked for characterizing the reading-to-write task responses, Watanabe (2001) made some comparisons of the two task types. For an English language program in Hawaii, he used three compositions, two reading-to-write and one writing-only. To diagnose if rater reliability was the same for both kinds of prompts, Watanabe (2001) utilized the writing-only prompts. His results indicate that reading-to-write tasks can be evaluated as reliably as writing-only tasks and without confounding reading skill with writing ability. He found that the correlation between the two reading-to-write tasks (0.69) was approximately the same as the correlation between writing-only tasks and reading-to-write tasks (0.62). Further study of different topics in prompts and investigating beyond content and organization in the responses were recommended by him.

Gebril (2006) also investigated reliability and correlation along with comparing scores on the two test-task types. He examined writing-only and reading-to-write which were based on TOEFL writing prompts. Majoring in English as a Foreign Language, one hundred and fifteen Egyptian university students (EFL) wrote essays for four tasks: two writing-only and two reading-to-write tasks. Gebril found that the scores on independent tasks were as reliable as those on reading-to-write tasks. It seems that reading-to-write tasks are promising in terms of their reliability. Yet, contrary to Watanabe (2001), Gebril (2006) found a much higher correlation (1.0) between independent (writing-only) tasks and his integrated (reading-to-write) tasks. Because of the small number (4) of test tasks in his study, Gebril asserts caution in this strong positive correlation. Because of these conflicting results, it is difficult to make inferences about the correlation between the two tasks and whether they are evaluating the same ability or construct. Returning to the topic of comparing scores on the two test tasks, Gebril (2006) found that students had lower scores on the independent tasks than the integrated tasks.

1.1.2. Writing strategies

To examine the significance of writing strategy, a line of research was initiated recently. For instance, a meta-analysis of 20 group-comparison studies were conducted by Graham (2006), with both typically-developing and learning disabled students, and came to the conclusion that great positive effects on writing quality was shown by strategy instruction. Findings also showed evidence that influences on text quality can be continued for 4–10 weeks after the interference. Based on the findings, some strategies for comprehensive writing is used by a successful writer, such as summarizing the information, relating the text to one's own experience, asking questions about the text and, concluding and so on. One's writing achievement most probably will be affected by an effective writing process.

Drawing upon Hsiao and Oxford's (2002) call for more research on the categorization of writing strategies, Abdul-Rahman (2011) built a classification (which is used in the present study) for both NNSE (none native speakers of English) and NSE (native speakers of English) writing strategies to donate to both the practical and theoretical study of ESL writing. In his study, the strategy questionnaire was developed based on Flower and Hayes' (1981), Patric and Czarl's (2003) and Soames' (2006) cognitive model of the L1 writing process which stresses the idea of recursion in writing and divides the writing process into three main components: reviewing, translating ideas into text, and planning. This is shown in the division of the questionnaire into three parts, approximately corresponding to the three components, with the addition of some items specially addressing second language issues as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Writing Strategy Classification Proposed for NSE and NNSE

Writing strategies	Sub-strategies	Assumption
Before writing	Organization strategies	Structure, guidance for readers
	Content strategies	
		Thinking, generating, analyzing ideas in L1/L2
	Feedback strategies	
		Sentences, wording, voice
When writing	Content strategies	Thinking, generating, mastering ideas in L1/L2
	Language strategies	Sentences, wording, voice
	Organization strategies	
		Structure, guidance for readers
	Feedback strategies	
		Questioning, getting support from others
	Mechanics strategies	
		Spelling, grammar, citations, typing,

		handwriting
Revising and editing	Content strategies	Thinking, generating, mastering ideas in L1/L2
	Mechanics strategies	Spelling, grammar, citations, typing, handwriting
	Language strategies	Sentences, wording, voice
	Feedback strategies	Questioning, getting support from others
	Organization strategies	Structure, guidance for readers

Abdul-Rahman (2011) hoped to resolve some ambiguities existed in previous taxonomies by developing the above taxonomy. He also tried to make a taxonomy which is available to NNSE learners and researchers. The terminology is reduced and simplified and clarified the options. In this Table, the writer has placed revising and editing in the same category and has treated them as similar; this is because of the fact that they are utilized interchangeably by many students, mainly those who are NNSE. Furthermore, this again shows the recursive nature of writing.

1.1.3. Writing assessment
Weigle (2002) in her book, assessing writing, says that nature of rating scale is one of the important elements in writing assessment. She simply notes that most of the rating scales can be classified as either analytic (to different aspects of writing, such as organization, content, language use, and so on, are given separate scores) or holistic (to each writing sample a simple score is given).

1.1.4. Students' Beliefs and Attitudes
Recently, increasing attention from teachers and researchers is given to the students' voices through hearing their beliefs and attitudes. Al-Ghonaim (2005) assumes that because of exposure to different experiences, attitudes and beliefs are subject to change. Consequently, Al-Ghonaim's study concentrates on the participants' attitudes and beliefs toward the reading-writing relationship before and after the course. It tries to investigate what kind of ideas students have about this issue and whether these ideas change throughout the course. Thus, in his study, attitudes and beliefs are referred to as, "preconceived ideas about the nature of the language learning task" (p.54). Moreover, it aims to investigate what happens to these ideas after students are involved in reading-writing activities. Research on students' attitudes and beliefs has appeared to obtain substantial attention. Studies on students' beliefs and attitudes entail listening to students' experiences on whatsoever concern is under study. On one hand, these beliefs and attitudes are significant for students and on the other, for textbook designers, teachers, and educators.

A qualitative study was conducted by Alshamrani (2003) about ESL beliefs and attitudes regarding extensive reading of authentic texts, considering vocabulary advancement, strategies of dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary items, benefits and difficulties that they experienced when reading extensively and how these students understood extensive reading were examined. The results showed that the subjects' cognitive aspect of attitude has been improved by the extensive reading; though, behavioral and affective aspects of attitudes showed negative results.

1.1.5. Research on Attitudes and the Reading-Writing Relationship

A qualitative study was conducted by Alshamrani (2003), in which he explained 9 ESL students' attitudes and beliefs about extensive reading of authentic texts. The participants in this study, in a three-month ESL program taking an extensive course, called Reading Club, were labeled as "advanced" and "low advanced". Consequently, these students were classified into two groups. The students' beliefs and experiences of extensive reading focusing mostly on their attitudes about extensive reading difficulties and gains, authentic materials, vocabulary development, attitudes and motivation towards future extensive reading, reading strategies, and overall language proficiency were described by Alshamrani (2003). Even though this study is valuable in that it explains the students' experiences in the areas of extensive reading and writing, it did not include students' perceptions. Though, little has been stated about the students' attitudes toward writing, Alshamrani (2003) found that students observed some improvement in their writing. Alshamrani also indicated that students thought that they were familiar with stylistic forms, new vocabulary, and grammatical rules. Therefore, they thought that this familiarity affected their writing.

Seemingly, these findings show that students' attitudes and beliefs about the influence of extensive reading on their writing were just generally defined. In Alshamrani's (2003) study, the focus on writing is similar to Tudor and Hafiz's (1989) study in which the focus was on the influences of extensive reading on general language development. In Alshamrani's study, for example, the students would describe how they generally and concisely felt about a writing issue but they were not requested to provide detailed information on how in their actual writing they worked and manipulated this issue. That is to say, this study does not describe how students utilized the reading for writing purposes and what strategies they employed in their reading for writing activities. In addition, this study, though perceptive, in terms of using rhetorical structures and textual organizations does not detail about the students' writing competence about their beliefs. Moreover, regarding the effects of group discussion of reading activities on the students' writing, a very short description has been stated about their attitudes. Little has been stated about this area, though this issue is important. Therefore, the present study addresses the following research questions.

1.2. Research questions

1. Is there any significant difference in the writing performance of reading-to-write and writing-only groups of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

2. Is there any significant difference in the writing strategies used by Iranian intermediate EFL students in reading-to-write and writing-only groups?

3. What are the Iranian EFL students' beliefs and attitudes about reading-to-write task?

2. Method

2.1. Sample / Participants

This study was conducted in two writing classes of BA second language learners of English Translation and Teaching at Sobhe Sadegh Institute of Higher Education, Isfahan, Iran. The participants consisted of 34 EFL students. At first there were 25 students in reading-to-write class and 31 students in writing-only class; but, to homogenize students, at the first session, each class was given a writing test and 17 learners whose scores were above the mean were selected. These writing classes were compulsory for their majors. The reading-to-write group and writing-only group

constituted native speakers of Farsi, both males and females (dominantly female), aged between 20 and 30.

2.2. Instrument(s)

The following instruments were used to conduct the study:

2.2.1. Academic Writing Strategies Questionnaire

This questionnaire was used to determine writing strategies that learners use in their writing. The original questionnaire was not changed and not translated; it had three parts. Part one, *planning and preparation* had 21 items; part two, the *writing process*, had 25 items and part three, *revision*, had 27 items. For each item, students had five options to choose which showed how often they used each of these items. At the end of each part, students were asked to mention any strategies that they use in their writing which was not brought in the questionnaire. Students had to fill in the questionnaire in 30 minutes. This questionnaire is developed by Abdul-Rahman (2011). The reliability of the questionnaire, estimated by Chronbach's alpha was .65.

2.2.2. Interview

Since one of the questions of this study is to investigate the students' beliefs and attitudes about reading-to-write, interviewing could be one of the best ways to be acquainted with the participant's feelings and thoughts. An interview was adapted and modified from Al-Ghonaim'(2005) study. The interview was conducted at two times. The first interview, which had five questions, was carried out at the beginning of the term and its purpose was getting the background information about writing experiences of students in writing classes and how they thought the reading-to-write classes would be. The second interview, including seven questions, was run at the end of the term to know about students' feelings and attitudes about participating in a reading-to-write class. It should be mentioned that just students in reading-to-write class were interviewed.

2.2.3. Reading passages

The reading passages used in reading-to-write class. The topics of readings were selected with the instructors' opinion and level of the class, intermediate, from the internet website of, www.composition topics- unrestricted area.com. The selected topics were tried to be up to date, tangible and interesting for students. The lengths of reading passages were 350 to 450 words. The purpose of giving reading to the students was to provide background to them and, indirectly teach them the format of a good passage.

2.3. Data collection procedures and analysis

This study was conducted in fall 2015 at Sobhe Sadegh Institute of Higher Education, in Isfahan, Iran. Each class meets one session a week which lasts 90 minutes. The first class, writing-only class, was on Tuesdays and the second class, reading-to-write class was on Thursdays. During the course of the semester, in reading-to-write class, students were provided with reading texts with different topics. Then they are assigned to write according to those topics. In writing-only class, students did not have any reading texts but they were given the same topics for their assignments. Writings of two classes were scored analytically using Jacobs et al. (1981) scale. Then, at the end of the semester, Academic Writing strategies Questionnaire was administered in both classes to compare their strategies and performances. To answer the third question, four students in reading-to-write class were interviewed twice; as mentioned above, the first interview was carried out before the starting of the semester and the second at the end of the semester, to get their opinions about reading-to-write class. Afterwards, their attitudes and beliefs were analyzed qualitatively. For answering the first two research questions

data management and analysis were performed using SPSS. T-tests were used to analyse the difference between the writing performance of reading-to-write and writing-only groups. To compare the scores of reading-to-write and writing-only groups in their total writing strategy score and the scores of the four sub-components of the strategies, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was run.

3. Results

After collecting the data, they were put into SPSS and a number of results emerged that will be explained below:

3.1. The first research question

The first research question of this study seeks to find if there is any significant difference in the writing performance of reading-to-write and writing-only groups of Iranian EFL learners. The results of the statistical technique of independent-samples t-test are shown in Table 2 which compares the mean scores of reading-to-write and writing-only classes. Of the 34 students participated in the study and filled in the questionnaire, 17 students were in the reading-to-write class and 17 students were in the writing-only class. The information about the groups is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of writing-only and reading–to-write

	class	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
writing score	writing only	17	11.7353	2.62867	.63755
	reading to write	17	14.2647	1.44825	.35125

Table 3. Independent T-Tests for Writing-Only and Reading–to-Write

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	5.840	.022	-3.475	32	.001	-2.5294
Equal variances not assumed			-3.475	24.894	.002	-2.5294

The results of independent-samples t-test in Table 3 shows a significant difference in mean scores for writing-only [(M=11.7353, SD=2.62867)] and reading-to-write [(M=14.2647, SD=1.44825; t (-3.475) = 24.894]. As observed, the value in the Sig. (2-tailed) was calculated to be .002 which is significant at $p < .05$. Therefore, there is significant differences in the writing performance and

achievement of reading-to-write and writing-only groups. The mean scores indicate that the reading-to-write group outperformed the writing-only group.

3.2. The second research question

The second research question was to find if there is any significant difference between reading-to-write and writing-only groups in their total writing strategy score and the scores of the four sub-components of the strategies, that is, before writing, while writing, when editing, proof-reading and revising. The results obtained from MANOVA are presented in the following tables (Tables 4, 5 and 6).

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Class and Writing Strategies

	class	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
total score	writing only	207.3529	46.49858	17
	reading-to-write	232.5882	17.00389	17
	Total	219.9706	36.77654	34
while writing	writing only	73.7059	14.00788	17
	reading-to-write	79.1176	7.37294	17
	Total	76.4118	11.35946	34
before writing	writing only	63.2941	12.88296	17
	reading-to-write	68.5882	6.55800	17
	Total	65.9412	10.41834	34
When editing, proof-reading	writing only	71.9412	21.17330	17
and revising	reading-to-write	85.4706	12.65463	17
	Total	78.7059	18.49739	34

Table 5. Multivariate Test of Class and Writing Strategies

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
class	Pillai's Trace	.152	1.301[a]	4.000	29.000	.293	.152
	Wilks' Lambda	**.848**	**1.301[a]**	**4.000**	**29.000**	**.293**	**.152**
	Hotelling's Trace	.179	1.301[a]	4.000	29.000	.293	.152
	Roy's Largest Root	.179	1.301[a]	4.000	29.000	.293	.152

Table 6. Test of Between-Subjects Effects of Class and Writing Strategies

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
class	total score	5412.971	1	5412.971	4.416	.044	.121
	while writing	248.941	1	248.941	1.987	.168	.058
	before writing	238.235	1	238.235	2.280	.141	.067
	When editing, proof-reading and revising	1555.882	1	1555.882	5.114	.031	.138

As the tables suggest, there is no significant difference between writing-only class (M=207.35, SD=46.49) and reading-to-write class (M=232.58, SD=17.00) on their total strategy score (Table 4). Furthermore, there was no significant difference between the two classes in the sub-components of the writing strategies, namely, before writing strategies (writing- only class: M=63.29, SD=12.88 and reading-to-write class: M=68.58, SD=6.55), while writing strategies (writing-only class: M=73.70, SD=14.00 and reading-to-write class: M=79.11, SD=7.37) and finally when editing, proof-reading and revising (writing-only class: M=71.94, SD=21.17 and reading-to-write class: M=85.47, SD=12.65) which is confirmed by the Wilk's Lambda=.848 , F (29.29)=1.30, p= .15 (Table 5); therefore, the Sig. values (Table 6) did not indicate any statistically significant difference between reading-to-write and writing-only class at the level .05.

3.3. The third research question

The third research question was to seek the beliefs and attitudes of students about reading-to-write task. As it was mentioned before, the interview was run two times, at the outset of the course and at the end of the course.

3.3.1. Results of the first interview question

The followings are the questions and the ideas of students at the first interview; the main points stated by the participants will be summarized, respectively. In the first question, the participants were asked to talk about their experience of learning English and describe the previous English writing course they took. The results are as follows:

- one of the participants had studied English for two years in Guoyesh institute and the first writing course in which she had took part was in this institute, paragraph writing, and the second one was in Sobhe-Sadegh Institute of Higher Education, again paragraph writing, as one of her courses in the previous semester.

- The other one have been studying English since two years ago at in-service classes of Zobe-Ahan Company, but he had not taken any writing course until now.

- The third one did not participate in any English class prior to university; however, she had passed writing course, paragraph writing, in the previous semester.

- And the fourth participant had taken English classes seven years ago and her first writing class, paragraph writing, was last semester.

The second interview question was concerned with the participants' feelings about writing in English.

- The first participant loved writing because she was a writer in Persian, but she believed that writing in English is very difficult because of the differences between the two languages in terms of culture, structure, etc. and for these reasons, sometimes you have difficulty in transferring your thought effectively.

- The second participant also enjoyed writing because he believed that writing helps you progress in English, in general.

- The third participant thought that writing is a very important skill because when you master other skills in English, you can be a good writer as well.

- And also the last participant also asserted that writing skill is very important in all languages and it is more important than other skills.

The third question was inquiring how the participants write in English. In other words, what they do when they want to write in English.

- The first participant stated that it depends on the topic, if she has background knowledge about the topic, she write a free writing, then she starts to revise her writing; but if she does not have any background knowledge about the topic, she searches in the internet to get some information about that topic and afterwards, she will write and then revise.

- The second participant asserted that when he wants to write about a topic, first he writes whatever comes to his mind and then revised it.

- The third participant searches in the internet before writing; when she gets some information about the topic, she starts to write and use dictionary, whenever needed, to check her writing in terms of mechanics and vocabulary. Afterwards, she reads her writing several times to ensure the unity of her text.

- And the last participant uses brainstorming strategy, which she had learned from last paragraph writing course, then she starts to write and revise it.

The forth interview question was designed to know how the participants in the reading to write class think about the inclusion of reading to a writing course.

- The first participant supposed that this idea is excellent and readings should be provoking and should inspire you to write about a subject, especially subjects about which you do not have any background knowledge.

- The second one thought that reading in writing course is so effective because it helps you to prepare your mind and provide you with the background knowledge about the given topic and then you can write easily.

- The third participant believed that reading can play an important role in writing. For a quality writing, especially about unfamiliar subjects, you might benefit from reading some texts.

- And the last participant also believed that reading can be very useful because it gives you the background knowledge about a given topic.

The fifth interview question was to know if the participants think that reading might help them and how it might be helpful.

- The first participant stated that reading absolutely helps her since reading leads her in writing. It teaches her how to develop an idea or a paragraph, how to compare and contrast or to provide an example.

- The second participant assumed that reading can help him to be familiarized with different texts and topics and also different kinds of writings and therefore prepare him to write better. Also it helps to know how to use different structures in different contexts and how to develop a subject to maintain unity in our writings.

- The third participant thought that reading is necessary for different types of writings because different texts propose different ideas and some new information that provide background knowledge.

- And the last one stated that by reading, in addition to gaining background knowledge, you learn new words and structures.

3.3.2. Results of the second interview question

The followings are the questions and the ideas of the same students at the second interview; the main points stated by them will be summarized, respectively.

The first question of the second interview was concerned with the participants' feelings about the course.

- All of the four interviewees believed that the course was a new experience for them and they had great feelings about the course and their stress had been reduced to some extent during this course.

For the second question, the participants were asked to describe if their writing has changed during this course.

- The first participant mentioned that her writing has been improved a little but it is not very much.

- The second participant believed that his writing has been improved because as he mentioned before, reading passages included in this course have increased his background knowledge about different topics; furthermore, he has learned new vocabularies and grammatical structures.

- The third participant also felt that her writing has been improved a little because she believed that progress is a gradual process and one semester is not enough for a substantial progress.

- And the last participant also believed that her writing has changed a little and she has learned some new vocabularies during this course.

The third question was inquiring if reading passages were useful for the course and how they think so.

- The first participant thought that reading passages were helpful for her but not very much as she expected because she expected more various topics.

- The second participant stated reading passages provided him with more information about different topics; he could get familiar with different styles of writing and how to write introduction and conclusion, etc.

- The third participant stated that reading passages indirectly taught students something about grammatical rules, new vocabularies, sentence patterns, mechanics, etc.

- And the last one stated that the reading passages helped students by providing them with background knowledge, new vocabulary and well-structured sentences.

The fourth question concerned whether they read outside the course; what they read; if they think they should read more to help their writing.

- The first participant mentioned that she reads a lot. She usually searches the internet for different subjects but mostly for scientific articles because they are helpful and are written by native speakers and she enjoys reading them. She explained that generally all four skills are related to each other but to write well, you should read more.

- The second participant did not have any pleasure reading because of being busy. But he knew and mentioned that when you read more, you can write better.

- The third participant mentioned that she has pleasure reading mostly on the internet and she enjoyed them because she commonly reads her favorite topics. She believed that more reading helps her think deeply and broadens her mind.

- The last one stated that she reads outside the course and because she reads about her favorite subjects, she enjoyed them. Her reading sources are mostly internet and magazines.

The fifth question was designed to know if they use words, sentence patterns or other strategies that writers of the assigned reading passages use.

- the first participant stated that reading a text sometimes generates some new ideas and also by reading new materials, you can learn some new vocabularies, collocations and grammar points, etc., but since she appreciates creativity and originality, she tries to use them somewhere else and utilize her own words in her writings.

- The second participant also mentioned that he has learned new words such as adjectives, adverbs and how and where to use them in addition to new structures.

- The third participant believed that reading or generally texts include some new information and ideas that writers want to share with their readers. In her opinion, besides using these new ideas, she also attends to grammar, for example, how to use different structures, punctuations, etc.

- And the last one stated that she has learnt some new words, phrases and sentence patterns that has improved her general knowledge.

In the sixth question, the participants were asked if they think a good writer is a person who reads a lot and if so, what the connection between a good writer and reading a lot is.

All of the participants indicated that a good writer is a good reader who reads a lot and they reasoned that good writers, who wants to write an appealing text, should have a lot of information about the topic, different styles of writing, sometimes psychology, etc. and they know that these kinds of information are obtainable by reading a lot.

The last question was inquiring about the problems that participants had with the course that is related to reading.

- The first participant thought that if some of the readings were chosen from decent journals, they could be more effective for them as MA candidates.

- The second participant believed that it would be better if the length of reading passages were shorter because long reading is boring for readers.

- The third participant stated that it could be better if reading strategies were also taught, this way, they could use readings more.

- And the last one did not have any problem.

4. Discussion

The first null hypothesis of the present study was that, "There is no significant difference between the writing performances of reading-to-write and writing-only task groups of Iranian EFL learners." According to the findings, presented in chapter four, this hypothesis was rejected.

With regard to the writings of both classes, the participants in the reading-to-write class performed better than the participants in writing-only class. Therefore, the finding of this hypothesis showed a significant difference between the writing performances of reading-to-write and writing-only classes.

The finding related to this part of the study is consistent with studies conducted by Wong (2001), Helal (2003), Smith (2003), Bakir (2004), Hany (2007), Shen (2009), Yoshimura (2009), Kirin (2010), Alkhawaldeh (2011), De Rycker and Ponnudurai (2011), Erhan (2011), and Zainal and Husin (2011). All of these studies concluded that using extensive reading improves writing skill. Along the same line, the finding of the present study demonstrates that the difference in the performances of the students might be due to the inclusion of the reading texts in writing classes. The reading-to-write participants significantly performed better than writing-only participants during the semester.

Salehi, Asgari and Amini, (2015) conducted a study in which they examine the impacts of the extensive reading texts on the writing performance of Iranian EFL pre-university students.

Their findings are in line with this study; thus, the differences between the two groups might be accredited to some more reasons. First, using the reading tasks in the writing classes is a novelty. This novelty may have increased the student's motivation and have encouraged them to complete their tasks enthusiastically, which, in turn might have been led to the writing achievement. Second, reading many different texts and doing many writing tasks helped students, through consistent exposure to the meaningful content of the texts and grammatical structures, to develop writing habits; therefore, their writing performance improved. Third, the reading passages implicitly taught students how a main idea is developed throughout a passage.

Moreover, reading tasks provided the students a range of vocabulary to be used later in their writing. Through using reading passages in writing classes, students know what exactly they wanted to write; therefore, it might lower their anxiety and the students might be able to collect necessary ideas and information for writing through reading passages which results in good writing.

The finding related to this research hypothesis also support directional hypothesis of Eisterhold (1990), as mentioned in chapter two. Eisterhold (1990) presents three possible hypotheses for the reading-writing relationship. Directionality, non-directionality, and bi-directionality. In the directional hypothesis, since reading and writing share structural components, whatever is learned in one domain can be used in the other. For instance, the ability to identify rhetorical structure in reading needs the ability to produce this structure in writing. Because this transfer of structure happens in one direction: from reading to writing this hypothesis, or model, is called directional. Eisterhold (1990) claims that this direction, reading-to-write, is the most common directional model. Here, the argument is that reading influences writing and that writing does not essentially improve reading. Nevertheless, Eisterhold (1990) does not overlook other studies that demonstrate that writing activities can improve reading comprehension and retention of information. But he claims that research evidence well supported the reading-to-write directional model. However, he argues that in this model, the transfer is not automatic. Consequently, he presumes that instruction in reading can influence writing ability when he considers common structures of writing and reading. In the present study, the influence of reading on writing is observed which is consistent with the directional model of Eisterhold (1990). This might justify the superior performance of students in reading-to-write class.

The second null hypothesis which stated no significant difference between the writing strategies used by Iranian EFL students in reading-to-write and writing-only groups was confirmed by the findings of the study.

First of all, the outcomes of the study showed that there is no significant difference between the writing strategies used by participants in reading-to-write and writing-only classes. Finding this similarity in using writing strategy between reading-to-write and writing-only class shows that reading is not an effective factor that might allow for difference in using writing strategy. Rather, according to Abdul-Rahman (2011), other factors such as lack of training in strategies, level of proficiency and academic subject area are effective in strategy use.

According to Archibald (2001), instruction influences students' accuracy in utilizing target language structures in their writing; likewise, the range of the choice of vocabulary and structure available to them to use in writing increases. He also mentioned that instruction influences students' understanding of the norms of the target genres, regarding the choice of information and its sequencing and structuring, their understanding of the cultural and contextual appropriacy of particular structures or vocabulary, and their understanding of the norms and expectations of the target genres regarding form.

Heeney (2015) believed that learners' cognitive awareness of how to do tasks can be raised by strategy instruction. They will learn how to use strategies such as planning to utilize specific knowledge and then evaluating the success of the knowledge implemented during or upon completion of a task. Results of a study by Heeney (2005) showed a shift in learners' attitudes as they reported more awareness of strategy use to address comprehension problems and were also feeling more confident about reading. In reading and writing classrooms, according to some scholars, students' awareness of how to approach tasks are raised by specific strategy training (Cumming, 1989, Grabe, 2009, Hirvela 2004, Lam, 2009, Nakatani 2005, Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012).

A brief glance on the total score of each participant (in both classes, reading-to-write and writing-only classes) on each of the three parts of the questionnaire and also their tasks shows that because of the lack of strategy training in their writing classes, they not only were unaware of the effects of writing strategies on their writings but also they did not know some of them to apply during writing. However, some of the writing strategies which also were known by the participants were not used appropriately; for example, most of the participants responded, "I check my punctuation." and "I check my spelling." while it was not manifested in their writing assignments.

Findings of many studies show that teaching strategies has positive effects on the students' ability to think about their writing and to compose more appropriate and effective texts in the target language. Working with secondary school students, Sengupta (2000) refers to the influences of giving instruction in revision strategies to writers of English as a second language.

He found that explicit teaching of these strategies had a noticeable effect on the quality of the students' final draft.

The other factor which influenced the finding of this research question was level of proficiency. Many studies have been conducted on the relationship between strategy use and L2 proficiency. Research in Palestine (Shmais, 2003) and some of the other Asian countries indicated positive, strong correlations between EFL proficiency and strategy use. Based on these studies and with regard to the findings of this research question, the participants of the present study were homogeneous in proficiency and no significant difference was observed between writing-only class and reading-to-write class on their total strategy score. Regarding their total scores, almost all of them were at the intermediate level of proficiency; therefore, their use of strategies was also at the average level. Thus,

that the inclusion of reading in writing classes, with participants at the same level of proficiency, may not make any difference in strategy use.

Similar to training for strategies and level of proficiency, academic discipline generally affects students' use of learning strategies. In this study, the students of both classes (reading-to-write and writing-only group) were of the same discipline (humanities); therefore, they were the same at using writing strategies; this finding is in line with McMullen's (2009) study, in which no statistically significant difference was found among the students of one academic field of study.

The third research question concerned with the Iranian EFL students' beliefs and attitudes about reading-to-write. In this study, all of the interviewees, at the first interview, which was conducted before the outset of the term, were aware of the importance of the inclusion of reading into the writing course since all of them mentioned that reading provides them with background knowledge especially for unfamiliar subjects; it may show that Iranian students, before this course, also used to read some texts from different sources to be able to write a good writing, whether in their first or second language. However, as stated by Al-Ghonaim (2005), Bakir (2004) and Hany (2007), although the students know that the inclusion of reading into writing course could be helpful, they did not know how it could be helpful for their writings.   In the present study, although students acknowledged that writing is not very easy, they did not have a bad feeling toward writing because they want to learn English and they know the importance of writing in every language and also they know that if they have a good attitude towards something, they could learn better.

Another finding of this study was that at the end of the term, students believed that they learned new vocabularies, grammatical structures and some new phrases which they later used in their own writings. This finding is in line with the findings of the study by Alshamrani (2003) in which one of the students stated that she started to utilize new phrases she had learned from reading in her writing and the other participant described that he learned new vocabularies, especially conjunction words, and how to utilize them and this learning helped him to observe the logical connection between paragraphs and sentences. Alshamrani (2003) also indicated that in the process of developing general English knowledge, students became acquainted with new vocabulary, grammatical rules, and stylistic forms. Consequently, they understood that this familiarity influences their writings. Furthermore, this finding is in agreement with the study by Alzu'bi (2014) in EFL Jordanian context in which he found that extensive reading promoted learners' achievement in all skills, including grammar.

The other finding of this study is that all of the interviewees emphasized that reading gives them background knowledge for their writing that is consistent with the study of Hedgcock and Ferris (2009) who believe that by extensive reading, the background knowledge is made accessible for learners;

Statements of the interviewees in these two interview sessions implicitly support the Krashen's (1984) theory of comprehensible input. They stated that they acquired many new points such as grammatical structures, new vocabularies, etc. from these reading tasks; in addition, they indicated that a good writer is a good reader who reads a lot. These statements are consistent with Krashen's theory who also believes that the abstract knowledge, or writing competence the proficient writer has about writing is because of large amounts of self-motivated reading for pleasure and /or interest. This indicates that subconsciously writing competence is obtained through reading activities during which readers are unconscious of the acquisition of writing competence.

And finally, Eisterhold (1990) stated that because writing and reading share structural components, whatever is acquired in one domain can be utilized in the other. This statement is also supported by the statements of the interviewees about using what they learned from the readings in their writings. In

this study, the interviewees stated that they have acquired new vocabularies and grammatical structures, etc. from the reading passages that they can use in their writings.

5. Conclusions

From the research findings in this study and from similar studies, it becomes evident that reading influences writing; therefore, integrating reading and writing in writing classes is one the best ways to improve student's writing because it provides them with the background knowledge; they are exposed to grammatical structures; learn new words and also format of a good writing. All of these are most effective when according to Eisterhold (1990) students are taught how to use reading to improve their writing.

Furthermore, according to the results presented, it can be claimed that reading cannot influence the use of writing strategies; there are other factors which might influence the proper use of writing strategies such as training in strategy use which gives students awareness and motivation to use them; moreover, level of proficiency is another determining factor in using strategies and most researchers agree that more proficient learners use a wider range of strategies more efficiently than less proficient ones (Green & Oxford, 1995; Kaylani, 1996; Lan & Oxford, 2003; Oxford, 1996; Oxford & Ehrman, 1995; Philips, 1991). Finally, the study shows that Iranian university students have positive attitudes toward reading-to-write classes because they are aware of the usefulness of reading for writing.

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Appendix A. Academic writing strategies questionnaire

Background information

a) Please tick the appropriate information in items 1 to 5.

b) And provide the information requested in items 6 to 12.

c) The information you provide will not be passed on to anyone else.

1. Gender: Female Male

2. Age:

3. How long have you been studying English as a second/foreign language in a formal setting (school and university)?

4. What is your score for writing? IELTS: _____ TOEFL: _____Other_____:

A. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Before start writing in English, …	never 1	rarely 2	sometimes 3	usually 4	always 5
1. I make a timetable for the writing process.					
2. I read the requirements of the writing activity.					
3. I look at a model written by a proficient writer.					
4. I analyze the topic of the writing activity.					
5. I consider the purpose of the topic.					
6. I brainstorm to generate ideas.					
7. I write without a written plan.					
8. I plan out the organization in advance.					
9. I plan out the organization as I go.					
10. I make an outline in my native language.					
11. I make an outline in English.					
12. I depend on what I already know to find things to write.					

13. I think of the suitability of expressions I know.					
14. I consult references for more information about my topic.					
15. I think of the relevance of the ideas.					
16. I think of the ideas in my native language.					
17. I read my teacher's feedback on my previous writing and try to learn from my mistakes.					
18. I discuss my topic with my friends.					
19. I discuss my topic with my teachers.					
20. I ask my classmates about the strategies they use in their writing activity that may help me.					
21. I choose a relaxing environment when writing.					

a) Please note below any other strategies you use, before you start writing or to prepare yourself for writing, that are not covered here.

_____

_____

_____

Please tick the appropriate response [from 1 to 5].

B. THE WRITING PROCESS

When writing in English, …	never 1	rarely 2	sometimes 3	often 4	always 5
22. I write the introduction first.					
23. I leave the introduction to the end.					
24 I think only in English.					

25. I think of a sentence in my native language first and then translate it into English.					
26. I use some familiar expressions in order not to make mistakes.					
27. I use some examples to explain the meaning when I cannot find the exact expressions.					
28. I highlight sentences that I want to check later.					
29. I discuss various points of view in my writing.					
30. I stop writing when I do not know what to write.					
31. I periodically check whether I am keeping to my topic.					
32. I periodically check whether my writing is making sense to me.					
33. I stick to the organization I chose initially.					
34. I change the organization I chose initially.					
35. I talk with my tutors when I have writing problems.					
36. I talk with my classmates.					
37. I handwrite a draft copy first.					
38. I produce a first, rough draft by computer.					
39. I produce subsequent drafts.					
40. I use a dictionary to make sure of my wording and usage.					
41. I use a bilingual dictionary.					
42. I use a monolingual dictionary.					
43. I use electronic/online dictionaries.					
44 I consult a thesaurus to assist me with					

vocabulary.					
45. I use spell-checkers.					
46. I use grammar checkers.					

b) Please note below any other strategies you use, when you are writing, that are not covered here.

_____

_____

_____

Please tick the appropriate response [from 1 to5].

C. REVISION

When editing, proof-reading and revising,..	never 1	rarely 2	sometimes 3	often 4	always 5
47. I check whether I have written everything I wanted to say.					
48. I check whether the content is logical.					
49. I make changes in the content.					
50. I revise the draft to clarify the meaning.					
51. I check whether more examples are needed.					
52. I check whether more explanation is needed.					
53. I check whether the organization of my writing is clear.					
54. I check whether there is any deviation from the main idea.					
55. I check my sentence structure.					

56. I check whether the sentences in the paragraph are connected.					
57. I connect shorter sentences into longer, complex sentences.					
58. I break down sentences that are too long into shorter, simpler ones.					
59. I check whether the main ideas are referred to in the conclusion.					
60. I check whether the citations used are appropriate to my argument.					
61. I check my punctuation.					
62. I check my spelling.					
63. I check whether I have used academic English conventions, e.g., formality and referencing.					
64. I read the text aloud to see if it sounds right.					
65. I edit the draft myself.					
66. I edit the draft collaboratively.					
67. I give the draft to a classmate for proofreading.					
68. I give my draft to a native speaker to check.					
69. I check whether it is easy for the reader to understand.					
70. I leave the text for a while and then read it again later.					
71. I prepare a final, polished draft.					
72. I check to make sure that I have met the requirements of the writing activity.					

c) Please note below any other strategies you use, when revising or editing, that are not covered here.

_____

_____

_____

d) Please add below any other comments you may have:

_____

_____

_____

Appendix B: Interview Questions: Interview One

1. Please talk about your experience of learning English and learning writing; and describe the previous English writing courses that you took?

2. How do you feel about writing in English?

3. What do you do when you write?

4. What do you think about reading in writing course?

5. Do you think reading in the course will help you? And do you know how the reading will help you?

Appendix C: Final Interview Questions

1. Can you describe your feelings about the course?

2. How do you think your writing has changed during this course?

3. Do you think the reading assignments for the course are useful? If so, how do you think they help you?

4. Do you read outside of the course (on the Internet, from magazines, etc.)? If so, what do you read? Do you enjoy this reading? Do you think you should read more to help your writing?

5. What do you think you have learned from the readings? When you read anything else do you try to use words, sentence patterns, or other strategies that the writer use? Please, be as specific as you can.

6. Do you think a good writer is a person who reads a lot? If so, what do you think is the connection?

7. What problems do you have with course that is related to reading?

İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin yazma stratejileri kullanımı ve onların yazma için okuma ve yalnızca yazma aktivitelerine karşı tutumlarının incelenmesi

Öz

Bu çalışma İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin yazma stratejileri kullanımı ve onların *yazma için okuma ve yalnızca yazma* aktivitelerine karşı tutumlarının incelenmesi için yapılmıştır. Çalışmanın temel amacı yazma için okuma ve yalnızca yazma grupları arasında yazma performansları arasında herhangi bir farklılık olup olmadığını ortaya çıkarmaktır. Ayrıca iki grup arasında yazma stratejileri kullanımı açısından herhangi bir fark olup olmadığı da incelenmiştir. Bunun yanında, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen İranlı öğrencilerin yazma için okuma aktivitelerine karşı tutumlarına da bakılmıştır. Isfahan Sobhe Sadegh yüksek eğitim kurumunda eğitim gören 34 öğrenci çalışmaya katılmıştır. Veriler, yazma için okuma dersinde, öğrencilerin yazma, akademik yazma stratejileri ve öğrenci görüşmeleri yolu ile toplanmıştır. Bağımsız örneklem t testi sonuçları yazma için okuma grubundaki öğrencilerin sadece yama dersindekilerden daha başarılı olduğunu göstermiştir. Ayrıca MANOVA sonuçları iki grup arasında yazma stratejileri kullanımı açısından herhangi bir farklılık olmadığını göstermiştir. Son olarak nitel veri analizi sonuçlarına göre okumanın yazma performansları üzerine olumlu etkileri olduğunu düşündükleri için öğrenciler yazma için okuma dersine karşı olumlu tutuma sahip olduğunu göstermiştir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Yalnızca yazma; yazma için okuma; yazma stratejileri; inanç ve tutumlar

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