
The Relationship between Advanced EFL Learners' Writing**Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Their Writing Performance: A Case of Iranian Students****¹ Mozhgan Mehdizadeh, ² Maryam Lak, ³ Ahmad Modaberi**¹ Department of Linguistics and Foreign Languages, Payame Noor University, Rasht, Iran² Department of Linguistics and Foreign Languages, Payame Noor University, Qum, Iran³ Department of Linguistics and Foreign Languages, Payame Noor University, Rasht, Iran**Corresponding email address**

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Abstract: Self-efficacy is defined as the belief in one's capabilities to carry out, organize and perform a task successfully. The learners with high self-efficacy feel confident about finding the solution to a problem. The present study was an attempt to investigate the relationship between writing self-efficacy belief and writing ability of Iranian advanced EFL learners. In order to conduct the research, out of a total number of 150 EFL learners of nine different English institute in Tehran, aged between 21 -32, 100 learners both male and female with the same level of language proficiency were chosen as results of Nelson test. The required data for this study came from one writing self-efficacy belief questionnaire and one writing test. In order to analyze the raw data of the research, descriptive statistics followed by Pearson correlations were run to answer the research question. The findings showed that there were statistically significant relationships between the writing self-efficacy belief of Iranian EFL learners and their writing performance at advanced level and the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings of the present study may be beneficial to language learners and teachers in Iranian EFL setting, language educators and material developers.

Key words: EFL advanced learners, language learning, self-efficacy, writing performance, writing self-efficacy beliefs.

1. Introduction

Writing is a very difficult skill not only for foreign language learners but also for native language learners (Khanshir & Hozhabri, 2014). June (2008, as cited in Jebreil, Azizifar & Gowhary, 2014) states that among the four language skills, writing has always been the main concern of EFL practitioners and researchers. According to Tuan (2010), the ability to write in English has crucial role on learners' success in college and their future careers. Khanshir (2012, p.282) added that "writing is one of the most important skills that second language learners need to develop this ability to communicate ideas and information effectively in target language". Anders (2002) claims that language learning is affected by both domains which are the mental and emotional sides of human behavior. Self-efficacy as one of the most important affective factors influences emotional sides of learners and plays a key role in language learning and motivates students effectively (Anders, 2002). Many researchers asserted a significant relationship between language learning and self-efficacy (Naseri & Zafarani, 2012; Magogwe & Oliver, 2007; Shang, 2011). In the language learning process, learners with high self-efficacy participate in tasks more rapidly, work harder, and persist longer when encountering failures than those who doubt their own capabilities (Kargar & Zamanian, 2014; Liao, 2009 cited in Cirocki & Caparoso, 2016). So according to above mentioned statement about importance of writing and self-efficacy, the researchers in the current study aim to investigate the relationship between these two variables.

2. Review of the Related Literature

It has been more than three decades since Bandura (1977, as cited in Hetthong & Teo, 2013) introduced self-efficacy theory and the construct has gained attention in various fields of knowledge. According to Bandura (1986) self-efficacy is learners' beliefs in their capability to succeed and acquire new information or complete a task or activity to an appointed level of performance. Bandura (1992, as cited in Hashemnejad, Zoghi, & Amini, 2014) believes that there is a difference between students with high self-efficacy and those with low self-efficacy. The learners with high self-efficacy feel confident about finding the solution to a problem because the learners have created an idea to problem solving that has accomplished in the past. They believe that their own competency will better when they work more, the learners assign their success according to their own attempts and schemes and acknowledge that errors are a process of acquisition. However, low self-efficacious learners believe that they have innate low ability, choose less requesting tasks on which they will make few errors, and do not try hard because they believe that any attempt will reveal their own lack of ability.

Bandura (1997) also believes that people with high self-efficacy beliefs can decide how act, think and feel better. Therefore, if persons believe they can reach their goal, they will be motivated and it can encourage them to develop a definite action. When someone want to take part in an activity, self-efficacy beliefs influence them to face with troubles. (Bandura, 1986; Schunk, 1991). From among all the motivational constructs, self-efficacy seems to have the strongest predicting power, over individuals' writing performance; such idea was supported by Bandura (1986) based on his social cognitive theory that self-efficacy has a main function in predicting writing performance.

It can be claimed that writing self-efficacy is students' beliefs in their ability to perform written English task such as correctly punctuating writing, composition, and creating grammatically correct samples of writing. Those students who assess themselves as poor writers do not engage in writing works and making brief or incomplete pieces of writing while students with higher writing self-efficacy complete writing tasks at a higher standard (Bandura, 1997). The researchers have investigated the relationship between writing self-belief and writing final result in different context and have found strong relationship between them (Bruning & Horn, 2000; Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Johnson, 1996).

For the first time in the 1980s the relationship between self-efficacy and students' writing was examined by Shell and his colleagues (as cited in Khojasteh, Shokrpour, & Afrasiabi, 2016). In one of their studies (Shell, Murphy, & Bruning, 1989), they investigated the relationship between undergraduate students' writing and reading self-efficacy and their writing and reading achievement. They constructed a scale for writing self-efficacy which measured the students' skills in different writing tasks (e.g. writing a letter and an essay) and students' skills in writing components (e.g. spelling and parts of speech). Their writing achievement was obtained from the students' scores on an essay and the scores were given holistically. The results showed that the writing self-efficacy (both task efficacy and component efficacy) had a significant predictive power on writing achievement. The same result has also been reported in other studies from the same era (e.g. McCarthy, Meier, & Rinderer, 1985; Pajares & Johnson, 1996).

Besides, Pajares, and Valiante (2001) examined the influence of writing self-efficacy, writing ability, perceived usefulness of writing, and writing apprehension on the essay-writing performance and discovered that despite the anticipated strong effect of writing ability, self-efficacy beliefs made an independent part to the prediction of performance. Woodrow (2011) also attempted to highlight the significance of writing self-efficacy in a large sample size with 738 Chinese university students from four universities in a major city in China. The result indicated significant relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance. Given a research work with a similar type of results, Shah, Mahmud, Din, Yusof and Pardi (2011) explored whether the 120 Malaysian Form-3 and Form-5 students' general self-efficacy and self-efficacy in writing correlated with their writing performance. In his study, students' writing test score from a national standardized essay writing test was found to have a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.563$) with general self-efficacy, and high positive correlation ($r = 0.641$) with writing self-efficacy.

In another study Hashemnejad, Zoghi and Amini (2014) examined the relationship between the learners' self-efficacy and their writing performance across genders. To reach their purposes, one hundred twenty learners, between ages 20-29, were chosen. Two instruments were used to collect data. At three different points in time, the participants were given writing assessments and also responded to the questionnaires on self-efficacy. Results revealed that there was no significant relationship between male and female EFL students' self-efficacy and writing performance. It was also found that there was a significant positive relationship in self-efficacy between female and male EFL students.

Khosravi, Ghoorchae, and Mofrad (2017) aimed to explore the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs, writing strategies, and writing abilities of Iranian EFL learners. They first investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and writing strategies, then examined the relationship between self-efficacy and writing ability. The participants were 120 students learning English in Iran Language Institute in Gorgan, Iran. Data were gathered by means of a writing strategies questionnaire, a self-efficacy belief questionnaire, and an IELTS writing task. The results showed that there was significant relationship between self-efficacy and writing strategies on the one hand, and self-efficacy and writing ability on the other hand.

Saeidi and Kalantarypour (2011) examined the relationship between 45 males and female EFL teachers' self-efficacy

beliefs in the Iranian EFL context and their students' language achievement. For data collection two instruments were used: Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale and an Evaluation List. Data were analyzed through Pearson correlation. Results of the correlation analysis indicated significant positive correlation between teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and students' achievement.

Although some researches has been carried out on the students' self-efficacy belief, there is very little scientific understanding of the relationship between writing self-efficacy belief and the learners' writing performance in Iranian context specially in higher level. This was the motivation behind the present study and the researchers aimed to investigate the following research question:

RQ. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian advanced EFL Learners' writing self-efficacy beliefs and their writing ability?

H0. There is no significant relationship between Iranian advanced EFL Learners' writing self-efficacy beliefs and their writing ability.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

To run this study, 150 EFL adult advanced learners both male and female were selected by purposive sampling from nine private language institutes in Tehran, Iran. The learners were Persian native speakers. They varied in age from 21 to 32 years. After administrating Nelson test, 100 of them who were at the same level of language proficiency were selected as main sample size of the current study.

3.2 Instruments

3.2.1. Nelson Proficiency Test

In order to homogenize all participants of the study a Nelson English language proficiency test were given to 150 advanced learners. This test consists of 50 questions. The participants had 40 minutes to answer the questions. After the test, based on the results 100 advanced learners all at the same level of language proficiency were selected to take part in the study.

3.2.2. Writing Self Efficacy Questionnaire

In order to check students' writing self-efficacy beliefs a pre designed, developed and revised questionnaire by Shell, Murphy and Bruning (1989) was adapted for use in the present study. This questionnaire includes two section that measure students' self-efficacy beliefs for writing tasks with 16 questions and component skills with 9 questions. Items from the writing task subscale of the instrument asked students to rate their confidence, on a scale of 0 (no chance) to 100 (complete certainty), to be able to successfully communicate what they wanted to say for 16 different writing tasks. Items from the writing component skill subscale asked students to rate their confidence, on a scale of 0 to 100, in their ability to perform eight different writing skills. The established reliability of the writing task subscale, assessed with Cronbach's alpha, is .92 and .95 for the component skills subscale.

3.2.3. Writing Test

In order to check the learners' writing ability, they were asked to write a paragraph with 150 -200 word in 40 minutes. Two experts confirmed the validity of the test i.e. they confirmed the topic is suitable with the level of the learners and can elicit the required data. The reliability of the test was calculated by Cronbach's Alpha.

3.3 Procedure

In order to find out the possible relationship between students' writing self-efficacy beliefs and their writing ability, the following steps were applied: First, as results of Nelson test 100 advanced learners were selected as main sample size of the study. Second, writing self-efficacy questionnaire was used to measure students' self-efficacy beliefs for writing tasks and component skills. The learners who fill out the questionnaire received two different kinds of scores i.e. for writing tasks and component skills. Based on scoring rubric specified by writing self-efficacy questionnaire the writing tasks score was computed out of 1600 and the component skills score was out of 900. Next, in order to check the participants' writing ability, they were asked to write a paragraph with 150-200 words. According to subjective nature of writing test learners' writing was scored by two raters. Finally, in order to determine the possible relationship between the above mentioned variables, a correlational statistic was employed.

4. Results

4.1. Nelson General Language Proficiency Test

Table 4.1 below displays the results of the Nelson test.

Table 4.1

Descriptive Statistics of the Nelson Test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Homogeneity	150	29.35	7.211	56.179

As it was shown in Table 4.1, the Nelson general language proficiency test was administered to 150 subjects. Based on the mean of 29.35 plus and minus one standard deviation of 7.21, 100 subjects were selected to participate in the main study.

4.2. Reliability of the Writing Test and Writing Self- Efficacy Beliefs Questionnaire

The results related to reliability of the writing test and writing self- efficacy beliefs questionnaire are presented in the following table:

Table 4.2

The Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Indices for the Writing Test and Self- Efficacy Questionnaire

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of the participants
Self- efficacy beliefs questionnaire	.79	100
Writing Test	.75	

The estimated values of Cronbach's alpha reliability for writing test and self- efficacy beliefs questionnaire were ($\alpha = .75$) and ($\alpha = .79$) respectively which were both higher than the least possible amount required (i.e. .70) and was considered acceptable.

4.3. Inter-Rater Reliability of the Writing Test

In table 4.3 below, analyses related to inter-rater reliability index of the two raters are displayed.

Table 4.3
*Pearson Correlations; Inter-Rater Reliability
 Index of the Writing Tests*

		WRR2
WRR1	Pearson Correlation	.831**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	100

The Pearson correlation was employed in order to probe the inter-rater reliability index of the two raters who rated the participants' performance on the writing test during the main study. Based on the results displayed in Table 4.3 it can be claimed there was a significant agreement between the two raters, $r = .831, p < .05$.

4.4. Testing the Null Hypothesis

The Descriptive statistics for writing self- efficacy beliefs and writing test are presented in the following table:

Table 4.4
Descriptive Statistics for the Writing Self- Efficacy Beliefs and Writing Ability

Statistic	Std. Error		
41.82	Learners' Total Writing Self-efficacy score	Mean	1837.11
		Std. Deviation	148833.69
		Skewness	.622
Kurtosis	Learners' writing ability score	Mean	15.44
		Std. Deviation	6.462
		Skewness	.095
Kurtosis		Mean	15.44
		Std. Deviation	6.462
Kurtosis		Mean	15.44
		Std. Deviation	6.462
Kurtosis		Mean	15.44
		Std. Deviation	6.462

As displayed in Table 4.4 the ratios of Skewness and Kurtosis values were within the range of ± 2 and confirmed the normal distribution of scores in both tests. So, Pearson correlations were run to probe any significant relationships between students' writing self-efficacy beliefs and their writing performance.

Table 4.5.

Correlation between Writing self- efficacy beliefs and Total Writing Ability

		Writing Self-efficacy scores for writing tasks	Writing Self-efficacy score for writing compo- nent skill	Learners' Total writing Self-efficacy score
Students' writ- ing ability score	Pearson Cor- relation	.412**	.552**	.711**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	100	100	100

Based on the results displayed in Table 4.5, the correlation coefficient between the two variables is significant ($N=98$, $r=.711$, $p < 0.01$) which indicated that there was a strong relationship between total self-efficacy beliefs and writing ability. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected implying that there was significant relationship between Iranian advance EFL learners' writing self-efficacy beliefs and their writing ability. The correlation between learners' writing self-efficacy scores for writing tasks and writing ability scores was ($N= 98$, $r= .412$, $p < .05$) which indicated a medium correlation. However, this correlation between learners' writing self-efficacy score for writing component skill and writing ability scores was ($N= 98$, $r= .552$, $p < 0.05$) indicated a large correlation.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the current study revealed that there is statistically significant relationship between Iranian Advance EFL Learners' total writing self-efficacy beliefs and their writing performance. The correlation between two different section of writing self-efficacy questionnaire i.e. writing tasks and writing component skill with writing ability scores also showed medium and large correlation respectively. Researchers believed that efficacy beliefs lead to greater motivation (Graham & Weiner, 1996; Schunk & Pajares, 2002), grater behavioral, cognitive, and motivational engagement in the classroom (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). As a result, it can improve students' performance in learning different skills. Delcourt and Kinzie (1993) noted that "perceived self-efficacy reflects an individual's confidence in his or her ability to perform the behavior required to produce specific outcomes" (p. 36).

Findings of this study are consistent with the findings of previous studies (Magogwe & Oliver ,2007; Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991; Naseri & Zaferanieh ,2012; Shang, 2011) who concluded that there is significant relationship between language learning and self-efficacy. Some other researchers have found positive relationship between writing self-efficacy belief and writing performance of learners in EFL/ESL settings (Bruning & Horn, 2000; Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Johnson, 1996). So, their findings are in line with the finding of current study.

In conclusion, self-efficacy is an important concept which is considerably related to language learning. So, students should use their knowledge, skills and self-efficacy to attain good status in their writing performance. EFL learners' self-beliefs can affect their writing negatively or positively depending on the strength of their self-efficacy. Therefore, self-efficacy is essential to learner's willpower and will influence on one's performance. In this study writing performance was taken as the main feature for analysis. Further research could include the relationship between self-efficacy and other

skills. This study was conducted on 100 advance learners. The researchers suggest that this study be replicated using a larger number of participant with different level.

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