

The Relationship Among Autonomy, Self-Confidence and Written Performance Between Iranian Male and Female EFL Learners

Vahid Rahimi

M.A Student in TEFL

Department of English Language Teaching
Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University
Tabriz, Iran

E-mail: Rahimi.vahid1361@gmail.com

Farnaz Sahebkhair*

Assistant Professor of TEFL

Department of English Language Teaching
Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University
Tabriz, Iran

E-mail: fsahebkhair@iaut.ac.ir

Abstract. Autonomy and self-confidence are among crucial issues in determining learning. So, the aim of this study was to consider the effect of these issues on one of language skills. As a result, we considered their effect on written performance between male and female students. According to the questions of this study, the purposes of this study are as follows: First, the aim of this study is to examine if there is any relationship between written autonomy and written performance of male EFL learners. Second, it tries to find out if there is any relationship between written self-confidence and written performance of male EFL learners. Third, it tries to find out if there is any relationship between written autonomy and written performance of female EFL learners. Fourth, it tries to examine if there is any relationship between written self-confidence and written performance of female EFL learners. Fifth, it tries to examine if there is any relationship between written self-confidence and written autonomy of Iranian EFL Learners. Sixth, it

Received: October 2021; Accepted: January 2022

*Corresponding author

tries to find out if there is any significant difference between written autonomy of Iranian Male and female EFL learners. Finally, it tries to examine if there is a significant difference between written self-confidence of Iranian male and female EFL learners. The participants who took part in this research were English learners at Islamic Azad University-Tabriz Branch in Iran. They were at intermediate level passing advanced English writing class. The age group was not confined. The study had male and female participants randomly. Then for having homogeneous groups, a modified PET test was used and those who got 1SD over or below the mean score were chosen. After homogenizing the groups using a modified PET test, two questionnaires (written self-confidence questionnaire and written autonomy questionnaire) were used for assessing the confidence and autonomy of learners. The last writing task in the class was also used for assessing their language achievement. The results show that as a whole, there is no difference between male and female written performance considering self-confidence and autonomy. Furthermore, there is no difference between self-confidence and written performance of men and female students. There is a significant difference between autonomy and written performance of male students; however, there isn't any significant difference between autonomy and written performance of female students. As a whole, the mean score for autonomy is higher among female students.

Keywords: Autonomy, learner autonomy, learning, self-confidence, writing performance

1. Introduction

As it originated from the areas of politics and philosophy, we can consider the idea of 'autonomy' to be a large field of multilateral inquiry. Its meaning lies in flexible grounds when considered from the perspective of language learning, while the tendency to incorporate it into academic realms has largely increased. From practical approaches, learner autonomy developed into a dynamic discussion from teacher-researchers in the early 1970s. Describing people's ability in taking charge of and responsibility for their learning came out for practical reasons which, in part, informed an inclination for optimizing the output of learning. Being free from teacher direction is one aspect of autonomy. However, learners need the capacity to take self-made decisions in relevant areas that are most often outlined by an institution, instructor or book. Learner's autonomy can be based on several variables that determine its

strength and rate of success. The variables include, but are not limited to methods and techniques in self-learning and teacher-learner relations, the objectives they pursue and the contents they seek. Furthermore, place, time and pace of learning and its evaluation are important factors (Smith, 2008). In learning, the concept of inclusion is very much related to self-confidence in classrooms. As a matter of fact, self-confidence is a precursor to individualization, from which the inclusion of an individual into the atmosphere of a classroom can become more successful (Brookes & Grundy, 1988). Differentiation (Dutton, 1997) and integration (Dam & Legenhausen, 2013) are two concepts that aid one's strength in self-confidence, especially in learning, and these have informed ELT discourse through the past several decades. The notion of self-confidence and its relation to the integration of individuals from their personal worlds into the atmosphere of the classroom can emanate from a view of teaching. This view has to evolve gradually through research and quantitative assessments if new hypotheses are to arise from the connections between self-confidence, inclusion and personality. Individual differences among learners are best examined when a reliable bedrock for autonomous expression is provided by teachers and parents in school and at home. This can lead to a broader socialization of teaching and an increase in the interactive nature of teacher-learner relations (Stadler & Heer, 2019). However, the diagnosis of new skills that aid the formation of bridges between learner autonomy and self-confidence needs to be addressed and monitored when teaching language. Students differ in terms of basic cognitive processing (Kormos, 2017, as cited in Stadler & Heer, 2019) which can cause a broad spectrum of how learner autonomy interacts with self-confidence. The barriers in learning can be overcome by first assessing the individual psychological capabilities of each learner and then setting out a plan to challenge available practical solutions in an effort to find new, flexible outcomes.

This research is an endeavor to assess the said features in learners and to form a basis for connections between learner autonomy and self-confidence through analyses of individual inclinations in learning capacities and in the features that are relevant to this specific field of inquiry. It can be said that collaborative learning and autonomous learning both

need some degree of self-confidence, but the nature of these two types of self-confidence could differ. Ultimately, this difference is expected to give rise to the idea that self-confidence can be multifaceted.

The intersecting issue of self-confidence and autonomy is valuable in terms of success, perseverance and sustainability in learning. When there is autonomy, there ought to be a certain degree of self-confidence. However, the specific modes by which these two factors correlate are not fully understood. Furthermore, it is valuable to realize the ways in which autonomy helps the development of self-confidence and vice versa.

The significance of the study lies in the fact that finding relationships between autonomy and self-confidence can better assist teachers in instilling these two in learners. An autonomous learner might not know the methods to improve his/her self-confidence. Likewise, a self-confident learner might not know how to foster autonomy in learning practice. Today, almost everyone has the desire to spend some time on a second language. The process of learning is inevitably affected by self-confidence and autonomy. These play important roles in second language learning.

According to Funder (2007), "individual's characteristic patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior, together with the psychological mechanisms, hidden or not, are behind those patterns" (p.5). Self-confidence and autonomy are two of the central dimensions in human learning. Thus, these affect the language learning process which involves teaching, learning, classroom interactions and personal interpretation. There is extensive literature on the effect of personality traits on learning L2. Many instructors believe that autonomous learners are more successful to acquire a second language because of their self-confidence, making them capable of engaging better in conversations. Nonetheless, there is some amount of inadequacy in this regard. Some studies should be done if there are relationships among autonomous learning, self-confidence and second language learning. Pritchard (1952) found that there was a positive correlation between self-confidence and second language fluency. Chastain (1957) stated that autonomous learners are more successful in language learning. Tucker et al. (1976) stated that self-confident learners were not only good at oral production but also performed better in listening com-

prehension. Previous studies have mostly focused on learner autonomy and self-confidence separately.

However, to the best of our knowledge, there is insufficient information on the relationship between autonomy and self-confidence, as a web of “correlation”. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine if there is any relationship among autonomy, self-confidence and writing performance in EFL learners considering their gender.

1.1 Self-confidence

Motivation and self-confidence can be seen as two synergistic themes that bring success to language learning. They can be strengthened greatly if learners are dynamically made aware of their reasons for learning. The dynamism in creating and reshaping reasons means that individuals can benefit from reviewing their reasons for learning, whereby reasons are not fixed but can change depending on the learners’ advancement in experiences of ‘reality’ and ‘language’. There is absence of an indication in the available literature that self-confidence can greatly allow learners to review their reasons for learning and to reshape those reasons depending on their ambitions. However, there should be a balance between self-confidence and consistency in accepting criticism from others, i.e. it is not favorable to change reasons for learning quickly and this should be conveyed to the learner by teachers, which also brings the notion of ‘balanced’ autonomy in learning. Empirical evidence showed that for some people a wish to integrate, in some sense, with the speech community of the language being learnt seemed to be more strongly associated with success, while for others a wish to elaborate on the usefulness of knowing a language within the learners’ own culture was more effective (Gardner, 1985). Here, the available literature suggests that motivation can have extrinsic and intrinsic sources (Deci & Ryan, 1985, as cited in Stadler & Heer, 2019), i.e. whether this is perceived as originating from within oneself or as coming from an external influence (Heckhausen, 1991). Likewise, although the available literature does not seem to mention it about self-confidence, one can hypothesize that self-confidence can have intrinsic and extrinsic sources. These sources deserve to be defined and evaluated in this research. Perception and motivation are sometimes seen in association with self-confidence. The

latter is an essential component of learner interest in language (Thanasoulas, 2000). Coopersmith defined self-confidence as a self-evaluation of valuableness—a worth that a person sees in his or herself and that leads to action, improvement and perseverance (1967). When a learner has a strong image of the self, it is unlikely to be destroyed by external forces and factors. In contrast, a weak level of self-confidence is associated with a greater propensity to generate negative opinions towards the abilities of the self. According to Rosa (1999), learning a second language is influenced by internal and external aspects that lead to an effective outcome of language learning. Research has shown that the fundamental element of self-esteem is a key individual component that is active during any affective tasks or cognitive learning of the second language. Self-confidence is strengthened by other intrinsic components such as motivation, self-consciousness, concern and the ability to take risks. Similarly, external components that influence self-confidence can be sociocultural conditions that come from the experiences of a learner of both two languages and cultures. In fact, both aspects of socio-cultural and individualism can be the precursors of successful language learning if they are used well (Rosa, 1999). In language education, the focus on self-confidence helps students organize their energy and consider personal beliefs that further language gain. However, it is important to advise students that there should be a difference between self-confidence and self-deception (Rubio, 2007). Self-deception, as opposed to self-confidence, can have two aspects or scenarios. One scenario is when the learner underestimates his/her capabilities. The other is when the learner overestimates the capabilities. Either of these can stop the learner from realizing the exact potential of their capabilities. Self-confidence is closely associated with the need to compete and succeed.

1.2 Autonomy

Learner autonomy (LA) is commonly known as a significant element in English language teaching (Feng, 2015). EFL students are the ones who are assumed to benefit the most from LA. Furthermore, Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) suggest that autonomous students are more capable of making decisions about studying. David Little (1991) considered LA as a demeanour that installs objectivity and independent work. He attributes

parts of the mental ability of the learning process to independence and a determination to succeed. However, Holec (1981) envisaged the concept as the capacity for individual learning. Holec was a pioneer in assessing LA regarding the teaching of second languages and believed that LA can give various shapes to each learning decision made by the learner. Moreover, Feng (2015) indicated that the notion of learner autonomy is directing teachers to concepts such as the learner-oriented and the self-led learner. According to Feng (2015), learner autonomy has rapidly shifted into a new stage that is different from the notion that learners need to manage the responsibility pertaining their decisions. However, teachers are also encouraged to make capabilities and ideas of LA because their roles are mainly supportive. Accordingly, an independent learner can be described as one who is adequately prepared to undertake a significant amount of control for his/her personal learning (Scharle & Szabo, 2000). The learner is expected to take responsibility for some level of decision-making regarding his/her individual studies. He or she is also required to establish goals, plan for schedules, try different approaches and assess his/her achievement of learning (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012). For better results in learning, learners should be motivated to be more autonomous by initiating appropriate action plans. Likewise, independent learners would collaborate, learn and reflect with peers on their studies. Feng (2015) agrees that LA is increasingly attracting much attention from learners of English language especially in studying vocabulary. This is mainly because of the significance of LA in evolving successful acquisition of language by learners. Besides, the current tendency in education implies that much focus is needed on motivation and on learners' needs, merely because they are associated with the learners' language learning (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012). It sometimes happens that poor skills undermine the occurrence of autonomy. This can be alleviated by support from teachers (Little, 1991).

2. Review of Literature

A quick look at the research conducted in the area of language learning reveals that the concepts of autonomy, self-confidence as well as the relationship between them have been empirically investigated. In the

case of learner autonomy, the vast majority of study has been done on the variables that connect to or have an impact on language learner autonomy. For instance, Dafei (2007) stated that Learner autonomy has been found to have an impact on students' language proficiency. 129 non-English majors at a teaching college in China were used as a sample for this study. The T-test and F-test were used with SPSS11.0 to examine the subject data.

According to the study, learner autonomy and English proficiency are strongly and positively correlated. Moreover, in an empirical investigation, Naizhao (2010, as cited in Feng, 2015) tried to find the relationship between learner autonomy and English proficiency and examined the advantages of fostering learner autonomy and putting autonomous learning methodologies into practice in a number of EFL classes in Shanxi University of Finance and Economics in China. In this study, four groups of non-English major undergraduate and tertiary students who were taking EFL courses at the university were divided into two groups, and the results of employing either traditional or autonomous teaching methods were compared. Nematipour (2012) examined the degree of learner autonomy and its relationship to learning style in a sample of 200 undergraduate students enrolled in the Department of Foreign Languages at Azad University- Shiraz Branch. According to the results, the learner autonomy level of her sample was significantly and positively correlated with both the visual and auditory learning modes. However, when it came to language learning style and amount of autonomy there were no appreciable variations between males and females. In addition to this, Liu (2020) conducted a study on autonomy at Bohai University in Jinzhou City, Liaoning Province in China. In this study which lasted from July 2017 to January 2018, the participants were three classes of professionals in the same grade and 90 college students with various majors. According to the results, students could acquire many techniques to boost their enthusiasm for learning and develop their own capacity for autonomous learning in a multimedia network environment.

Another study by Warni, Azizi, and Febriawan (2018) also looked at how Indonesian students used technology to learn English outside of the classroom in relation to learner autonomy, which is a crucial skill

for students' academic performance. For this purpose, students from a private senior high school in South Tangerang served as the study's subjects. Using both qualitative and quantitative techniques, including questionnaires and interviews, it was concluded that applying technology to learn English outside of the classroom has promoted the growth of learner autonomy, which encompasses traits like learning motivation, metacognitive awareness, self-confidence, and social skills. In a later study, learner autonomy in the curriculum of Indonesia was explored by Cirocki, Anam, and Retnaningdyah (2019). Determining how Indonesian secondary school students viewed the idea of learner autonomy, how motivated they were to learn English, and how prepared they were to take part in the teaching-learning process as autonomous learners were among the main purposes of this investigation. Using a mixed methods approach on 391 participants, including EFL teachers and students, from state- and privately-run urban and suburban schools, the research found that a large number of students were unfamiliar with the idea of learner autonomy. Furthermore, it was indicated that students lacked the necessary skills and competence to function as autonomous learners, and they showed a relatively low enthusiasm to study English.

Lately, EFL learners' attitudes toward learner autonomy in English vocabulary learning have been explored by Tran (2020). The goal of this study was to investigate how students felt about LA during learning English vocabulary. Ten students participated in semi-structured interviews, and 200 English majors from a Ho Chi Minh City-based higher education school in Vietnam participated in the closed-ended questionnaire. The research found that although participants were affectively and behaviorally uninterested in learning about LA, they were well aware of its significance in acquiring English vocabulary. Relying on the related literature mentioned until now, it is undeniable that learner autonomy is a requirement for efficient language learning and that it has a positive impact on language learning (Sidupa, 2016). A number of researchers have tried to examine the impact of practicing autonomy on the writing proficiency of language learners and approved the positive effect of writing autonomy on the writing performance of the learners. In this regard, Karen and Chien (2012, as cited in Sidupa, 2016) reported that students

improved their writing performance in terms of both longer word counts and richer content by taking more ownership of their education, devoting more time and effort to gathering and revising the information on topics of their own choosing.

Teachers have always tried to encourage elements that facilitate learning so that students can feel comfortable while learning (Tilfarlioglu & Sherwani, 2018). In this regard, LA has been known as one of the most fundamental internal variables influencing a learner's learning process, particularly vocabulary learning processes (Littlewoods, 1999). It enables students to take charge of their education and gives learners the skills and self-assurance they require for learning. Because of this, many academics sought to investigate the relationships between variables associated with language learning and learner autonomy. The findings suggested that learner autonomy was associated with elements like metacognitive perspectives (Zhang, 2016), strategy-based instruction (Jarvis, 2013), telecollaborative language learning (Little, 2016), self-access language learning (Little, 2015), social media use (Chik & Breidbach, 2014), grammar learning (Pawlak, 2017), motivation of both teachers and students (Drnyei & Ushioda, 2009).

Besides, L2 self-confidence which is defined as "the overall belief in being able to communicate in the L2 in an adaptive and efficient manner" (MacIntyre, Clment, Drnyei, & Noels, 1998, p. 551), is another important affective variable in the process of learning. In this case, Kim (2004), for example, declares that since self-confidence is closely linked to L2 real performance, it is significant in SLA. Yashima (2002) made an attempt to investigate the connection between several affective characteristics and WTC in a survey of Japanese university students. According to the results of the SEM analysis, there was a statistically significant relationship between L2 communication confidence and actual L2 proficiency, as measured by an English test.

According to Demo and Parker (1987), self-esteem and autonomy are interdependent variables. In reality, both language learning and self-esteem can be influenced by one another. Furthermore, Little and Dam (1998) contend that the autonomous learner should have the power to control and guide the learning process and evaluate their progress in

light of their learning objectives and accomplishments. Therefore, as can be understood, the relationship between each of these attributes with a kind of dependent variable, and the correlation between each pair of these variables, can provide us with a more comprehensive picture of learning processes (Koosha et al., 2016).

Hence, because of the criticality of the issue, the present study is an attempt to examine the relationship among learners' autonomy, self-confidence and written performance of Iranian foreign language learners at intermediate level. Writing occupies a special place in language training since it requires practice and familiarity with the other three language abilities of speaking, listening, and reading (Klimova, 2014). Therefore, studying the concept from this perspective is worthwhile. More particularly, this study explores the above-mentioned elements between Iranian male and female EFL Learners. In fact, previous studies have indicated that male and female language learners perform differently in foreign language classrooms.

In this regard, a large number of studies have indicated that male and female language learners experience a different amount of speaking anxiety in face-to-face and online classes which influence their speaking skill (e.g., Hwa & Peck, 2017; Siahpoosh, Varghaei & Khodadai, 2022). Additionally, the relationship between Iranian EFL learners' autonomy and their vocabulary learning strategies has been investigated between men and women by (Sadeghi, Hadidi Tamjid, 2016). 82 English language teaching major students at Tabriz Azad University in Iran who had completed at least 45 credits were invited to participate in the study. According to the results, the usage of vocabulary acquisition tactics by Iranian EFL learners and their autonomy were found to be statistically significantly and positively correlated, for both male and female 33 students. However, in the domains of second language learning and instruction, gender as one of the most important factors that affect foreign language learning, has gained less attention (Sadeghi, Hadidi Tamjid, 2016).

So, as mentioned earlier, autonomy and self-confidence are two important building block variables in foreign language learning. As such, fruitful results can be gained in investigating the relationship among

self-confidence, autonomy, and written performance between female and male English language learners at intermediate level. So for finding the relationship among these variables, the following questions were formed:

1. Is there any relationship between written autonomy and written performance of male and female EFL learners?
2. Is there any relationship between written self-confidence and written performance of male and female EFL learners?
3. Is there any relationship between written self-confidence and written autonomy of Iranian male and female EFL learners?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants who took part in this research were English learners at Islamic Azad University-Tabriz Branch in Iran. They were at intermediate level passing advanced English writing class. The age group was not confined. The study had male and female participants randomly. Then for having homogeneous groups, a modified PET test was used and those who got 1SD over or below the mean score were chosen.

3.2 Instruments

There were two questionnaires in this research. One for assessing written learner autonomy (Ghufroon & Nurdianingsih, 2019) and another one for assessing written self-confidence (Nielsen & Smyth, 2017). These two questionnaires were handed out to English learners passing advanced writing course at Islamic Azad University-Tabriz Branch. A modified PET test, including 25 reading comprehension questions and 25 grammatical questions, was used to choose homogenous groups. We had a pilot class, so considering time and language proficiency of learners, these questions for PET test were used. The last writing task done by the learners was used as the final language achievement. All the written tasks which were used in the class were argumentative types from Zahedi (2001). The final written task was assessed through analytic method devised by Anderson (1968, cited in Hughes, 2003). This scale for assessing writing consists of grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, fluency, and

form/organization parts. Every part was scored from one to six. The final writing score was the result of adding up the score of all parts.

3.3 Procedure

Participants for this study were chosen from EFL learners who were passing advanced writing at Islamic Azad University- Tabriz Branch. After homogenizing the groups by using a modified PET test, two questionnaires (Writing self-confidence Questionnaire and Writing Autonomy Questionnaire) were used for assessing the confidence and autonomy of learners. The last writing task in the class was used for assessing their language achievement.

3.4 Design

The design of the current study was an ex post facto one. The Spearman correlation was used in order to find the correlations. It was a descriptive study since the focus of the researchers was to describe and interpret the current status of phenomena. We studied the degree to which two or more quantitative variables were related. The researchers tried to find the quality and quantity of the relationship between variables rather than establishing a cause-and-effect relationship.

4. Results

Table 1: The result of Cronbach's Alpha

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Self-confidence questionnaire	.844	24
Autonomy questionnaire	.759	22

The results of Cronbach's Alpha for questionnaires show that they have internal consistency

Table 2: The result of Pearson Correlation test for test and retest scores

	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Self-confidence	.998**	0.001	60
Autonomy	.999**	0.001	60
PET test	.991**	0.001	60
Writing performance	.976**	0.001	60

The results show consistency between the two raters.

Table 3: Descriptive indicators of variables

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Minimum	Maximum
Self-confidence	Male	30	67.63	8.704	-.516	.205	48	85
	Female	30	67.00	10.606	.001	-.219	44	88
	Total	60	67.32	9.624	-.201	-.095	44	88
Autonomy	Male	30	76.17	13.404	.383	-.640	55	101
	Female	30	84.00	12.733	-.777	.454	49	107
	Total	60	80.08	13.550	-.172	-.790	49	107
Writing performance	Male	30	18.07	3.493	1.189	2.120	12	29
	Female	30	17.60	4.048	.870	.464	11	28
	Total	60	17.83	3.756	.943	.925	11	29
PET test	Male	30	39.33	4.097	-.118	-1.123	33	45
	Female	30	37.83	4.857	-.501	-1.084	29	44
	Total	60	38.58	4.518	-.421	-.807	29	45

Table 4: The result of One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

	N	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	p-value
Self-confidence	60	.823	.507
Autonomy	60	.863	.446
Writing performance	60	1.063	.208
PET test	60	.953	.324

The normality of scores is shown in Table 4.

Table 5: The result of independent Samples t-test for comparing PET test Scores in males and females

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
					F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.
PET test	Male	30	39.33	4.097	2.350	.131	1.293	58	.201
	Female	30	37.83	4.857					

The results of PET test show that the two groups are homogeneous.

Table 6: The result of independent Samples t-test for comparing writing performance Scores in males and females

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
					F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.
Writing performance	Male	30	18.07	3.493	1.092	.300	.478	58	.634
	Female	30	17.60	4.048					

The results of t-test for writing performance show that there is no difference in the written performance of the two groups.

Table 7: Pearson correlation test results to examine the relationship between Autonomy and Writing performance

		Writing performance
Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	.308*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.017
	N	60

There is no difference between the written scores of the two groups considering autonomy.

Table 8: Pearson correlation test results to examine the relationship between Self-confidence and Writing performance

		Writing performance
Self-confidence	Pearson Correlation	-.064
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.629
	N	60

There is no difference between the written scores of the two groups considering self-confidence.

Table 9: Pearson correlation test results to examine the relationship between Autonomy and Writing performance in males

		Writing performance
Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	.397*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.030
	N	30

Table 9 shows that there is a significant difference between the written scores of male students considering autonomy.

Table 10: Pearson correlation test results to examine the relationship between Self-confidence and Writing performance in males

		Writing performance
Self-confidence	Pearson Correlation	.160
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.400
	N	30

There is no difference between the written scores of male students considering self-confidence.

Table 11: Pearson correlation test results to examine the relationship between Autonomy and Writing performance in females

		Writing performance
Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	.294
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.114
	N	30

There is no difference between the written scores of female students considering autonomy.

Table 12: Pearson correlation test results to examine the relationship between Self-confidence and Writing performance in females

		Writing performance
Self-confidence	Pearson Correlation	-.226
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.230
	N	30

There is no difference between the written scores of female students considering self-confidence.

Table 13: Pearson correlation test results to examine the relationship between Autonomy and Self-confidence

		Self-confidence	
Autonomy		Pearson Correlation	-.032
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.808
		N	60

There is no difference between autonomy and self-confidence scores.

Table 14: The result of independent Samples t-test for comparison of Autonomy Score in males and females

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
					F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.
Autonomy	Male	30	76.17	13.404	.055	.816	-2.321	58	.024
	Female	30	84.00	12.733					

The result shows that autonomy scores are higher among female students.

Table 15: The result of independent Samples t-test for comparison of Self-confidence Score in males and females

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
					F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.
Self-confidence	Male	30	67.63	8.704	2.514	.118	.253	58	.801
	Female	30	67.00	10.606					

According to the results, there is no difference between the self-confidence scores of female and male students.

5. Discussion

The significance of independent learning and learner-centered language learning has been identified in (Little, 1991). There are a number of elements that are thought to contribute to good performance. Among these factors are autonomy and self-confidence. Learners are considered

to be autonomous when they conduct their own independent research into the subject matter and when they design appropriate learning goals for themselves (Ghufron & Nurdianingsih, 2019). There is a widespread consensus that self-assurance is an essential quality for getting started in any endeavor, especially output-based ones. Writing and being able to successfully perform a task will only inform our more general self to the degree that we identify ourselves with that task. McIntyre (2004, cited in Sun & Wang, 2020) suggested that self-confidence significantly contributes to the learner's willingness to communicate in a foreign language (Gurler, 2015). During the course of learning a language, one of the most significant problems that students of foreign languages confront is improving their writing performance. This is due to the fact that less scaffolding is provided for students throughout the writing process when compared to other aspects of language learning, and the challenge lies in assisting students in developing their capacity for independence (Sun & Wang, 2020). Therefore, autonomy and self-confidence can be the building blocks for a learner's success in the writing process. In this study, an attempt was made to determine whether or not factors such as writing autonomy and self-confidence have an effect on writing performance.

The findings of this research led the researchers to conclude that autonomy does have an effect on the writing performance of Iranian EFL learners. Numerous studies on the relationship between autonomy and writing performance have produced findings that are consistent with the results of this study. The positive effect of writing autonomy on the performance of language learners has been approved by a number of researchers who have tried to evaluate the impact of autonomy on writing competence. According to research by Karen and Chien (2012, cited in Sun & Wang, 2020), when students take a more active role in their education by researching and revising their own essay topics, they produce better results in terms of length and complexity. In addition, Bagheri and Aeen (2011) investigated the effect of autonomy on the writing performance of 92 Iranian intermediate EFL learners. The outcomes of two groups of participants, those with and those without autonomy, were compared. The autonomous group outperformed the non-autonomous group.

The findings of this study confirmed that the level of writing self-confidence possessed by Iranian EFL students did not influence their overall writing performance. This finding is in line with the research that Grodnick undertook in 1996 to investigate the links between self-confidence and writing performance. The objective of the study was to ascertain whether or not self-confidence and writing ability were positively related to one another by examining the correlation between the two. The findings of the study provided evidence in support of the claim that there is no meaningful relationship between the levels of self-confidence displayed by students and the level of their writing performance. In contrast, the findings of this study are not consistent with those of Ameerah Ali Moqbel's research (2006). In this study, the relationship between writing and self-confidence was investigated. According to the results of the study, there is a positive relation between self-confidence and writing performance in general. In addition, Rezaei et al (2014) discovered that the amount of self-confidence an individual learner possesses has a significant impact on how well they write in a second language. Furthermore, Pajares et al. (1999, cited in Sun & Wang, 2020) came to the conclusion, based on the evidence they gathered, that students' writing confidence is a predictive element of their writing performance. Therefore, additional research needs to be done in this area to investigate the relationship between the level of self-confidence an EFL learner possesses and how well they write.

The results of this study disproved that there is no connection between writing autonomy and the writing performance of male Iranian EFL students, demonstrating instead that such a connection does exist. To the best of our knowledge, no studies have been conducted to determine whether or not writing autonomy has an effect on the writing performance of male EFL learners. According to Kamiar et al. (2012, Sun & Wang, 2020), the term "gender" unmistakably exposes the social and contextual expectations that society places on members of each gender (male or female) in terms of their cultural and social roles. This finding can be related to the Iranian cultural view that girls lag behind males in believing in their potential and ability to successfully perform given activities. This thinking is based on the notion that males are more

likely to believe in their own potential and capabilities (Namaziandost & akmak, 2020).

The findings of this study indicate that self-confidence in writing does not have an effect on Iranian EFL learners' ability to write effectively in English. This study is consistent with the findings of Khojasteh et al's (2016) study in which they evaluated the relationship between the writing self-efficacy of male students and their writing performance. According to the findings of their research, "writing self-efficacy" is characterized as an intense feeling of self-confidence in writing. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was investigated, and the p-value was found to be greater than 0.05 ($P = .464 > 0.05$); consequently, they drew the conclusion that there is not a significant difference between the male participants' writing self-confidence and their writing performance.

According to the findings of this research, it was determined that writing autonomy does not influence the writing performance of Iranian EFL learners. This finding may be consistent with the finding of Mickwitz and Suojala (2020) who suggested that learning to write in an autonomous environment had a detrimental impact on the learner. According to the findings, environments in which students are expected to work more autonomously are less conducive to the development of academic writing skills than those in which students are provided with more traditional learning opportunities. This research, on the other hand, appears to contradict what is assumed to be true about female EFL learners' autonomy. Girls, according to Bidjerano (2005), have higher organizational skills, as well as good self-discipline and time management skills. Furthermore, it has been observed that female students employ organizing and changing, goal setting and planning, record keeping and monitoring, requesting for peer support, and reviewing methods much more than male students (Albard & Lipschultz, 1998, cited in Sun & Wang, 2020). As a result, more research is needed to determine whether female learners' autonomy affects their writing performance.

The results of this study supported that there is no correlation between levels of writing self-confidence and the writing performance of Iranian female EFL learners. This study is in line with Khojasteh et al's (2016) study in which they sought to examine if there is any rela-

relationship between female participants' writing self-confidence and their writing performance. Specifically, the researchers wanted to discover if there is a correlation between the two. The p-value in this study was slightly greater than 0.05 ($P=.053$), which was borderline. Because the association is likewise shown to be weak, it cannot be regarded important. Therefore, there was no correlation between the amount of self-confidence that students had in their writing abilities and how well they performed.

The results of this study stated that there is no correlation between writing self-confidence and the writing autonomy of Iranian female EFL learners. This study's conclusions contradict those of subsequent studies. Many researchers have confirmed that self-efficacy is an important factor in an individual's self-regulated learning. In research examining the relationship between self-efficacy and self-regulated learning, students with high self-confidence demonstrated better learning techniques and higher levels of self-monitoring of their learning outcomes than students with low self-confidence (Kurtz & Borkowski, 1984).

The findings of this research led the researchers to conclude that there is no difference between the autonomy of male and female EFL language learners and their writing performance. Instead, the findings demonstrated that there is a "significant difference" between males and females. In point of fact, males who had more autonomy had better writing performance, whereas females who had more autonomy did not. This finding is in contrast to the findings of studies such as (Albard & Lipschultz, 1998; Bidjerano, 2005; Pajares, 2002), in which the researchers offered evidence that there were differences in the self-regulated learning mechanisms utilized by individuals based on their gender. Albard and Lipschultz (1998) discovered that females reported much larger numbers of self-regulated learning strategies than boys did.

The results of this study showed that self-confidence did not play a role in the level of writing ability exhibited by Iranian students of English as a foreign language (EFL), regardless of gender. This finding is consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Khojasteh et al. (2016) which indicated that there was no significant association between the self-confidence of male and female participants and the writing

performance of either gender. The findings of this study are also consistent with those of Hashemnejad, Zoghi, and Amini (2014) who did not find any correlation between the self-confidence of their male and female participants and their writing performances. Another study that was carried out by academics found that there is not a substantial difference between the sexes in terms of performance in speaking (Gurler, 2015).

This study, however, was in conflict with the findings of other studies. For example, Pajares (2002, cited in Gurler, 2015) studied male and female elementary and middle school students and found that girls tended to have higher levels of self-confidence than boys, while boys tended to overestimate their ability to write. This finding was in contrast to the findings of other studies. In terms of differences between the sexes, Wigfield, Eccles, and Pintrich (1996, cited in Gurler, 2015) found that females had a tendency to perform better in writing activities, despite the fact that their levels of self-confidence were equivalent to those of boys (Khojasteh et al, 2016). Therefore, additional studies are required to determine whether or not self-confidence plays any role in the writing performance of people of different genders.

In this study, after homogenizing two groups by using a modified PET test, we divided two groups into male and female groups. Both groups had to write about the same topic. Their written performance was assessed analytically through Hughes's (2003) formula. Both groups completed two questionnaires, one about autonomy and the other one about self-confidence. The results showed no difference in written performance of male and female students. Furthermore, there is no difference between self-confidence and written performance of men and female students. There was a significant difference between autonomy and written performance of male students; however, there wasn't any significant difference between autonomy and written performance of female students. As a whole, the mean score for autonomy was higher among female students. We should mention that the results of this study are applicable only to students in intermediate-level proficiency. Further studies should be done with different language proficiency levels. Besides, the number of students due to corona virus and online classes was limited. This study should be done on a larger sample size.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of self-confidence and autonomy in developing writing performance produced by male and female EFL students. Two questionnaires were utilized in this study project so that students' levels of writing autonomy and writing self-confidence could be determined and evaluated. The results of the two questionnaires, as well as the outcomes of the writing assignment that the students had to complete, were compared. According to the findings, written autonomy had a significant influence on the performance of male EFL learners but had no influence on the performance of 64 female EFL learners. On the other hand, there was no correlation between the levels of autonomy that learners possessed and their levels of self-confidence, and the levels of self-confidence that learners possessed had no effect on their writing performance in either gender.

7. Pedagogical Implications

This research has pedagogical implications. This study found that autonomy influenced male EFL learners' writing performance but not females, and that self-confidence had no effect on either gender's writing performance. In reality, it provides some insight into how writing autonomy, writing self-confidence, and students' writing outputs relate to one another in an EFL context. The findings of this research may be useful to teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL), as well as designers of EFL curricula, materials, and assignments. As was mentioned, male and female language learners approach the process of learning in various ways. As a result, teachers of writing skill should take into account the distinctions between male and female students. One of the most important findings from this research was that an individual's level of autonomy has a direct bearing on how well they do in an English language learning course. As a result, in order to improve the writing of male students, instructors, syllabus planners and task designers may build different learning strategies to promote writing autonomy in male students who are not strong at writing.

References

- Albard, F. and Lipschultz, H. (1998). Self-esteem of Saudi learners and its relationship to their achievement in English as a foreign language. *English Linguistics Research*, 6(4), 1-12.
- Bagheri, M. S. and Aeen, L. (2011). The impact of practicing autonomy on the writing proficiency of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. *Journal of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics*, 15(1), 1-13.
- Bidjerano, M. (2005). Gender differences and writing performance: A brief review. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 1(2), 8-11.
- Borg, S. and Al-Busaidi, S. (2012). Teachers' beliefs and practices regarding learner autonomy. *ELT Journal*, 66(3), 283-292.
- Brooks, A. and Grundy, P. (1988). *Individualization and autonomy in language learning*. London: British Council.
- Chastain, K. (1975). Affective and ability factors in second language acquisition. *Language Learning*, 25, 153-161.
- Cirocki, A., Anam, S., and Retnaningdyah, P. (2019). Readiness for autonomy in English language learning: The case of Indonesian high school students. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 7(2), 1-18.
- Dam, L. and Legenhausen, L. (2013). Learner autonomy - a possible answer to inclusion' in Maria Eisenmann, and Margit Hempel (eds.). *Medien und Interkulturalität im Fremdsprachenunterricht: Zwischen Autonomie, Kollaboration und Konstruktion*. Duisburg: Universitätsverlag Rhein-Ruhr, 115-32.
- Demo, D. H. and Parker, K. D. (1987). Academic achievement and self-esteem among black and white college students. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 127(4), 345-355.
- Dutton, N. (1997). Getting started: differentiation. *Language Learning Journal*, 15(1), 10-13.
- Feng, T. (2015). Assessing learner autonomy and EFL vocabulary acquisition: A case study. *Beyond Words*, 3(1), 78-99.
- Funder, D. C. (2007). *The personality puzzle*. New York: Norton.

Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. London, Edward Arnold.

Ghufroon, M. A. and Nurdianingsih, F. (2019). Flipped teaching with call in EFL writing class: How does it work and affect learner autonomy? *European Journal of Educational Research*, 8(4), 983-997.

Gurler, I. (2015). Correlation between self-confidence and speaking skill of English language teaching and English language and literature preparatory students. *Curr Res Soc Sci*, 1(2),14-19.

Hashemnejad, K. G., Zoghi, M., and Amini, A. (2014). The causal ordering of academic achievement and self-concept of ability during elementary school: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 87, 624-637.

Heckhausen H. (1991). *Motivation and action*. New York, Springer.

Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy and foreign language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.

Hwa, S. P. (2014). *The impact of gender on speaking anxiety among Malaysian tertiary ESL learners*. Malaysia: University of Tunku Abdul Rahman.

Jackson, J. W. (2002). Enhancing self-efficacy and learning performance. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 70(3), 243-254.

Khojasteh, L., Shokrpour, N., and Afrasiabi, M. (2016). The relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance of Iranian EFL students. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 5(4), 29-37.

Klimova, B. F. (2014). Students of management of tourism and their writing competences. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 122, 438-442.

Kurtz, B. E. and Borkowski, J. G. (1984). Children's metacognition: Exploring relations among knowledge, process, and motivational variables. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 37(2), 335-354.

Little, D. (1991). *Learner autonomy: Issues and problems*. Dublin: Authentic.

Littlewoods, W. (1999). Defining and developing autonomy in East Asian contexts. *Applied Linguistics*, 20(1), 71-94.

- Liu, H. J. (2008). The relationship between EFL student academic self-concept and language performance. *Feng Chia Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 17, 165-184.
- McCarthy, M. (1990). *Vocabulary*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- MacIntyre, P. D., Clment, R., Drnyei, Z., and Noels, K. A. (1998). Conceptualizing willingness to communicate in an L2: A situational model of L2 confidence and affiliation. *The Modern Language Journal*, 82(4), 545-562.
- Nematipour, M. (2012). A study of Iranian EFL learners' autonomy level and its relationship with learning style. *English Linguistics Research*, 1(1), 126-136.
- Namaziandost, E. and akmak, F. (2020). An account of EFL learners' self-efficacy and gender in the Flipped Classroom Model. *Education and Information Technologies*, 25(5), 4041-4055.
- Pritchard, D. F. L. (1952). An investigation into the relationship between personality traits and ability in modern languages. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 22(2), 147-158.
- Richards, J. C. and Renandya, W. A. (2002). *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C. and Schmidt, R. (2002). *Dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics*. London: Pearson Education.
- Rosa, C. H. N. (1999). *Self-esteem and oral communicative language proficiency in the Puerto Rican teaching-learning process*. Inter-American University of Puerto Rico.
- Rubio, F. (2007). *Self-esteem and foreign language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Scharle, A. and Szabo, A. (2000). *Learner autonomy: A guide to developing learner responsibility*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sidupa, C. (2016). Fostering learners' autonomy in writing. *Journal of English Education*, 1(2), 158-164.
- Smith, R. (2008). Learner autonomy. *ELT Journal*, 62(4), 395-397.

- Stadler-Heer, S. (2019). Inclusion. *ELT Journal*, 73(2), 219-222.
- Sun, T. and Wang, C. (2020). College students' writing self-efficacy and writing self-regulated learning strategies in learning English as a foreign language. *System*, 90, 102-121.
- Thanasoulas, D. (2000). What is learner autonomy and how can it be fostered? *The Internet TESL Journal*, 6(11), 37-48.
- Tilfarlioglu, F. Y. and Sherwani, S. (2018). An analysis of the relationship among EFL learners' autonomy, self-esteem, and choice of vocabulary learning strategies. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 8(8), 933-947.
- Tran, T. Q. (2020). EFL students' attitudes towards learner autonomy in English vocabulary learning. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal*, 3(2), 86-94.
- Tuan, L. T. (2011). An empirical research on self-learning vocabulary. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(12), 1688-1695.
- Tucker, G. R., Hamayan, E., and Genesee, F. (1976). Affective, cognitive and social factors in second-language acquisition. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 32, 214-226.
- Warni, S., Aziz, T. A., and Febriawan, D. (2018). The use of technology in English as a foreign language learning outside the classroom: An insight into learner autonomy. *LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching*, 21(2), 148-156.
- Zahedi, A. (2001). *How to prepare for the TOEFL essays*. Tehran: Zaban-kadeh Publication.
- Zhang, L. J. (2016). A dynamic metacognitive systems perspective on language learner autonomy. *Language learner autonomy: Teachers' beliefs and practices in East Asian contexts*, 11, 150-166.