



Integration of Learning-oriented Assessment into Writing Instruction: A Case of IELTS Writing Preparation Class

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Abstract

Learning-oriented assessment (LOA) seeks to support instruction by providing information about students' current learning conditions and their ultimate performance. This study scrutinizes the application of LOA in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing classes within Iranian language institutes. In addition, the current study examined the participants' writing traits using the researchers-developed writing traits questionnaire during the implementation of LOA. Sixty upper-intermediate students (male & female) in two intact classes at a language institute in Tabriz, Iran, were taken as the participants. One of these classes was randomly picked as the control and the other one as the experimental group. During the treatment, learners of the experimental group carried out the relevant writing tasks based on the principles of LOA. On the other hand, the control group adopted the teacher-centered approach. 120 *IELTS writing task 2* samples were collected and scored by using a scoring rubric (Wang & Liao, 2008) before and after the LOA treatment. To realize the differences in the mean scores of students in the control group and the experimental group, an independent sample t-test was used. The findings showed that the students of the experimental group benefited vastly from multiple drafting, self, and peer-evaluation, sharing learning goals with teachers and each other, and using feedforward techniques instead of feedback. The results might provide both theory and pedagogy implications for syllabus designers and language teachers with valuable guidelines on improving writing assessment in IELTS writing courses.

Keywords: Alternative Assessment, Feed-Forward Technique, Formative Feedback, IELTS Writing, Learning-Oriented Assessment

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Writing is generally considered a challenging skill for learners of a second language. As Richards and Renandya (2002) argue, it is a complex process that demands a combination of both linguistic and nonlinguistic knowledge; writing is also used for various communicative goals. It is a powerful asset operated by language users to reveal expertise and share genuine data in clearly readable texts (Kress, 1994). Writing is also regarded as an ‘intermediary activity’ in which a composing process is run to accomplish different tasks (Gardner, 2006). These issues accentuate that the assessment of this skill entails multitudinous complications and impediments.

Close scrutiny of the traditional writing assessment approaches accentuates the fact that they utilized summative evaluation to provide the decision-makers with information on the learners’ ability to carry out writing tasks. Notwithstanding, the contemporary approaches which underpin the significance of discovery learning and problem-solving skills utilize formative evaluation procedures. This kind of writing evaluation, used to facilitate and enhance both instruction and learning, has grabbed the attention and focus of second language researchers over the last forty years (Graham, Harris, & Hebert, 2011). Writing can be investigated from the perspective of the product or traditional approach, the process, and the genre approach. In product-oriented writing, focusing on form is critical in presenting the final draft and getting that final score at the end of the term. Since scoring depends on the text's type and structure, students are typically required to deal directly with the text's structure. The idea behind process writing is not to separate writing wholly from the printed end product and guide students through the varied steps of the composing process. It can highlight an influential performance-oriented teaching program. That is, "problem-solving skills connected with the writing process should be taught to students to help them realize specific goals at each stage of the composing process" (Seow, 2002, p. 316).

In recent years, writing assessment theorists have turned their attention from the test that examines students to testing as a practical phenomenon in which writing assessment can be constructed to reflect current status much better and improve literacy and learning (Hamp-Lyons, 2017). The goal of these attempts is to criticize the negative ways of assessment. It is also to argue that some writing assessment methods result in positive changes in a student’s writing, a teacher’s teaching, and the design of a writing program.

Traditional assessments, i.e., large-scale and summative assessments in classroom contexts, are believed to inflict many undesired consequences. Boud (2000) emphasizes that one of the significant problems that assessment is faced with is to what extent the right type of learning is stimulated. Assessment practice must inform students about what and how they should learn (Boud & Falchikov, 2006). This paper argues that summative assessment practice in L2 writing classes might not help and equip students with advantageous active learning in an appropriate way.

Another negative consequence is that summative assessment creates great apprehension among testees (Carless, 2007; Gipps, 1994). Researchers in writing assessment tend to highlight students' covert abilities that can be demonstrated under a stress-free environment. More specifically, summative assessment intensifies learners' test anxiety which acts as a debilitating factor and impairs their ability to take full advantage of their second language potentialities. In movements against traditional testing, there has been rising enthusiasm for the use of alternative assessment techniques, which feature an option to and dismissal of quizzes and tests, regardless of whether they happen on a huge scale or a narrow classroom assessment context (Purpura, 2004). In an alternative way of assessment, assessment procedures are different from conventional forms of assessment. They are more student-centered, and besides being an assessment tool, they provide students with a tool to be more involved in their learning (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

IELTS task 2 Writing

An examination of the large-scale and high-stake English proficiency tests shows that certain tests such as TOEFL, TOEIC, PTE Academic, and IELTS have received considerable attention due largely to academic reasons. This study focuses on the second writing task of the IELTS exam, where students have to write an extended composition. A More substantial and determinant part of an IELTS writing score is devoted to this component; thus, task 2 is more important and role-playing than task 1 in test preparation classes. Moreover, task 2 notably impacts learners' understanding of the elements of academic writing in universities in English-speaking countries. To accomplish task 2, students are required to make up a composition in reaction to a proposition or a problem. Examinees are to supply real data and layout, provide solutions, legitimize their opinions, weigh and classify ideas,

and enrich their craft with proper evidence from their own experiences (Uysal, 2010). In both IELTS writing tasks, examinees' suitable register, style, rhetorical organization, and content are assessed (Uysal, 2010).

According to IELTS writing band descriptors, examiners award a band score for each of the subsequent skills: lexical resources, grammatical range, cohesion and coherence, accuracy, and task achievement. Each score ranges from zero to 9. This method of scoring is identical to Wang and Liao's scoring rubric, which is the leading research instrument of this study. This study can have some crucial points for being significant since it aims to reveal the effectiveness of applying the LOA strategy to writing skills to present a model of assessment for EFL classrooms. Moreover, it can help teachers improve their instructional plans and techniques with such new and practical information about the assessment by providing guidelines to demonstrate how to use this new kind of assessment while analyzing learners' writing contents. It also attempts to introduce the integration of process writing with LOA strategy to enhance students' writing performance in institutes, schools, and universities. Furthermore, the results of this study may persuade relevant authorities to consider LOA along with other formal tests in EFL programs since, based on the results of current studies, this kind of assessment which focuses on learning rather than the assessment of writing, would increase students' writing ability and interests to write a well-structured text and turn them to be self-editor, too.

The aforementioned undesirable consequences of summative assessment highlight the need for endeavors to revamp the assessment of writing in instructed second language learning by means of alternative assessment procedures, including LOA. Notwithstanding, the examination of the conventional writing courses in diverse learning contexts, including the foreign language context of Iran, manifests the fact that they utilize the traditional product-oriented assessment procedures in disregard for the beneficial and advantageous role of student-centered assessment alternatives. This study attempts to probe the aftereffect of the principles and procedures of LOA in an L2 writing classroom. It highlights the elements and possible uses of LOA in second language writing classrooms. More specifically, the study is an attempt to find out whether the idea of using LOA should be supported. Furthermore, it makes endeavors to specify the implementation of this kind of assessment in Iranian IELTS writing courses among sixty male

and female upper-intermediate candidates. It is hopefully looking forward to providing answers to the following questions in the Iranian IELTS writing courses:

1. Compared to the teacher-centered approach, does utilizing the LOA approach significantly improve Iranian EFL students' writing scores in IELTS writing courses?
2. What are the significant differences between Iranian EFL writing traits in the experimental and control groups regarding LOA instruction?

Literature Review

Learning-Oriented Assessment

One alternative assessment method is LOA, which focuses on learner-integrated and learning-focused assessment accompanied by the scaffolding of the evaluator with the supply of facilitative feedback (i.e., immediate as well as learning-focused) (Hamp-Lyons, 2017). It has also been used interchangeably with Assessment for Learning) AFL) throughout the literature, which is an instructional approach that engages the learners in the process of learning, provides them with helpful feedback to ameliorate their second language performance, increases their autonomy, and informs them about their learning objectives (Ali, 2013; Lee & Coniam, 2013) Generally, LOA prioritizes learning that is encapsulated in assessment within EFL/ESL classroom contexts. In LOA, theories of teaching and learning concerning what must be learned, what must be assessed, and how students must be assessed are discussed more thoroughly (Watkins, Dahlin & Ekholm, 2005).

LOA is basically characterized as a type of assessment that "involves the collection and interpretation of evidence about performance so that judgments can be made for further language development" (Purpura, 2004, p. 236). "Learning-oriented assessment is considered to encourage student learning and scaffold teaching" (Ploegh, Tillema & Segers, 2009, p. 102). Furthermore, LOA is a type of formative assessment that directly responds to learners' needs as they evolve, attends to the relevant learning objectives, and helps students achieve those goals, thus contributing to and supporting effective teaching and learning (Carless, 2007).

The term LOA is mostly differentiated from assessment of learning (AOL), which mainly emphasizes making use of an assessment to furnish an image of judgment about student learning using the information obtained

from the assessment serving administrative purposes (Wiliam, 2001). In employing AOL, learners' current attainment and future potentials are weighed against stated and customized learning standards, objectives, and criteria, frequently working for reporting functions. LOA, on the other hand, focuses on the advancement of both learning and teaching processes (Earl, 2003). LOA leads to recognizing students' vigorous capacities and weaknesses to improve learning and aid instructors in modifying teaching targets and techniques (Curriculum Development Institute [CDI], 2004). In LOA, students are no longer passive role-players but dynamic participants within the whole cycle of assessment (Gardner, 2006).

Black and Wiliam (1998) showed noteworthy achievements in students' learning process when teachers turned the spotlight on the use of assessment to facilitate and smoothen the learning process. As Carless (2007, p .59) reiterates, summative assessment is widely known as a carrier of negative overtones and harmful influences within a problematic and challenging field. However, it is believed that LOA can mitigate some of the tensions regarding testing and assessment. Compared to AOL, which is generally devised to serve ranking purposes and verify the competence, LOA suggests teachers and students provide facilitative information as feedback to amend learning and teaching processes. Such assessment becomes truly informative if the evidential result is carefully employed to enhance teaching and fulfill learning needs (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall & Wiliam, 2004). With this in mind, the top priority in LOA, as Black and William (1998) argue, lies in utilizing assessment to advance student learning.

The research into how assessment can, in a more beneficial way, focus on promoting student learning, reducing testing anxiety, and integrating learning and assessment has led to the promotion of LOA (Carless, 2007). LOA was introduced as a response to these issues (Carless, 2003). Initially, it was motivated by formative assessment research (Turner & Purpura, 2016). There is a claim that employing LOA helps learners retrieve and store educational materials and facilitate their learning process (Carless, 2007). LOA brings the learning aspects of assessment into light, assists learners, and encourages active learning (Ali, 2013).

Brualdi (1998), Freeman, and Lewis (1998) introduced seven phases in a performance-oriented assessment: 1) specifying goals and objectives of the assessment, 2) selecting evaluation tasks that ought to be based on the covered

content, 3) setting and building up appropriate rules for scoring procedure in line with evaluation purposes, 4) administering and executing the assessment, 5) scoring, grading and rating the tasks by the instructor, the learner, or peers, 6) deciphering the grades by scoring them against the criteria, and in the end, 7) providing feedback to both support and coach the learners and equip them with enough information on how to enhance and promote their upcoming performance. Thus LOA can scaffold active learning by using the phases mentioned above.

Carless (2007) and Carless, Joughin, and Liu (2006) introduced three strands of LOA. Firstly, assessment tasks should focus on learning and smoothen and improve learning. They should be ideally aligned with the goals and objectives that all participants in the classroom are well-aware of and expect. Additionally, assessment tasks should reflect real-life application and authenticity to motivate students. Secondly, Students need to be lively, engaged with, and involved in constructing the contents of the assessment by which the transparency and the mutual trust between students and teachers are enhanced. Students can also be involved in grading their own works and their peers' works. Thus self-evaluation skills are developed. Finally, timely feedback and forward-looking advice should be given to students. The feedback provider should be able to detect and monitor the extent to which the receivers have acted on the feedback.

Jones (2010) discusses four critical principles in LOA, all related to the learner. First, teachers should consider learners' current and prior levels of knowledge. Second, learners' full involvement in learning activities should be promoted. Third, learners should fully understand the purpose behind that learning process and the goals they are dynamically progressing toward; they would be comprehensively aware of the criteria on which the whole evaluation is based. Finally, self-and peer assessment should be applied within the classroom so that students gain a more comprehensive understanding of what is needed and how to improve their work.

Carless (2015) mentions four key factors contributing to LOA: a) teacher factor – that teachers focus on the principles and encourage the practical application of LOA; b) student factor – that students are willing to get involved in assessment activities, especially self-evaluation accompanied by peer assessment; c) school factor – that school authorities and assessment policy-makers are supportively appreciating thorough execution of LOA

principles; and d) system factor – that national approaches and macro paradigms, educational programs’ accent, and the examination framework are congruous with these standards. The aforementioned strands, principles, and factors underscore the role of certain elements in LOA. The following part deals with these essential elements:

Self-assessment

Andrade and Valtcheva (2009) define self-assessment as “a process during which students collect information about their performance or progress; compare it to explicitly stated criteria, goals, or standards; and revise continuously” (p. 14). This description highlights its formative capacity for evaluation and stresses that self-assessment is far beyond simply allocating a numeric score. The primary rationale for exercising self-assessment is to improve learning and attainment, advance self-management and control, and regulate one’s learning. They detected three essential elements of self-assessment: firstly, rubrics are accessible to both students and evaluators. There ought to be a clear form of consultation and mutual agreement between teachers and learners to reach a fine description and comprehensive elucidation of rubrics and rating criteria sometime prior to the beginning of the assessment process. Second, critical reviewing should be executed by students individually and by themselves while employing the scoring rubrics. Third, students modify their craft with feedback taken from the earlier revision.

Mahlberg (2015) found that classes taking advantage of self-assessment manifested higher rates of self-regulation with a critical increment in students’ purposeful and autonomous persistence of extensive study. Segers, Dochy, and Cascallar (2006) maintain that self-assessment in writing refers to any techniques or any task through which writers come up with the evaluation and revision of their own writing on a regular basis. Rezai, Namaziandost, and Rahimi, S. (2022) investigated the potential of self-assessment, documenting the students' sharp raise of awareness accompanied by an increased level of motivation. Consequently, the writers both enhance their craft and acquire the required competence for subsequent writings. In the direction of assisting learners to do self-assessment, students need to gain the ability to monitor the whole process of performance, the end product, and

the process through which it was achieved, as all steps of the process are equally of great value.

Method

Based on the aforementioned intention of this study, the researchers adopted a quantitative approach to research to gather data on the participants' performances on the pretest and posttest of the study, as well as a questionnaire. The researchers were not able to randomly assign the participants to the groups of the study, so they used intact classes. Consequently, the study is based on a quasi-experimental (i.e., pretest-treatment-posttest) design to determine the effect of LOA as the independent variable on the participants' performance on IELTS writing task 2, which was the dependent variable. Then, the researchers assessed the participants' pretest and posttest writing performance based on the descriptions of Wang and Liao's (2008) scoring rubric and utilized SPSS software to analyze the collected data.

Participants

Sixty upper-intermediate students, both male and female teenagers, at MFT (Mojtama Fanni Tehran) language institute in Tabriz, Iran, were asked to participate in this project. These participants were the students of two intact classes of the relevant institute. These two classes were randomly selected as the control and the experimental group. Though gender has not been taken as a variable of this study, the percentage of male and female stratum were 68 and 32, respectively. All participants' L1 was Turkish. All of the students had previously been placed in the upper-intermediate level by the institute either using placement tests and interviews or following advancement from the Intermediate level. The purpose of this writing class was to prepare students to take an academic IELTS exam. The institute commonly adopted conventional approaches in writing instruction in which mainly formal aspects of language are focused on, and errors are the primary focus of teachers' scoring and feedback without monitoring the usefulness of this kind of feedback. Besides, there was limited interaction between students and teachers in both instructions and assessment along with insufficient collaboration between students in writing classrooms.

Instruments

Model IELTS writing task 2 as a Placement Test

An informal model IELTS test extracted from the Cambridge IELTS series (13 volumes) was used to put forth the writing proficiency of participants. This test was administered before categorizing the students into two groups to secure the homogeneity of both the control and the experimental group and ensure that they have the competency to be at the upper-intermediate level. The school administered this test as a part of the placement test for students who were not previously enrolled in this institute and recently joined this level.

Analytic Scoring Rubric

In this study, a contextualized version of the analytic scoring rubric, designed by Wang and Liao (2008), was used, which consists of 5 scales: vocabulary, convention, organization, elaboration, and focus, each having a range of five levels. The researchers assessed the participants' performances on the writing pretest and posttest based on the description of each of the aforementioned subscales. The details of this scoring rubric are provided in Appendix A. Wang and Liao's scoring rubric covers all areas that are ideally assessed by the IELTS task 2 writing rubric. In IELTS task 2 writing, examinees must address the question entirely, and present a clear position, provide supporting ideas without deviating, demonstrate coherence and cohesion, use a wide range of vocabulary with natural lexical features and proper grammatical structure. Wang and Liao's rubric could measure all these skills. More specifically, this rubric was selected due mainly to its compatibility with the objective of the present study.

IELTS task 2 Writing as Pre and Posttests

In order to draw an analogy between the students' writing performance before the treatment and immediately after the treatment, two IELTS task 2 writing tasks were selected from samples of IELTS writing tests as pre- and posttests. The topics were chosen randomly and not based on students' interests and predictions. In addition, topics were selected regardless of the frequency of their appearance in previous tests. There was no pattern and bias in choosing the topics of writing tasks. The researchers examined the validity of the writing pretest and writing posttest in a pilot study prior to the onset of

the treatment. This pilot study enjoyed 30 participants (15 male & 15 female) whose characteristics were similar to those features of the participants in the main study. To determine the validity of the above-mentioned tests, first, the researchers administered the writing pretest, the writing posttest, and an independent TOEFL writing task to the participants over a 3-week period. Second, they examined the correlations between the scores of writing pretest and posttest and the TOEFL writing task. Based on the results, the correlation coefficients were .81 and .84 for the writing pretest and posttest, respectively. Consequently, the above-mentioned tests were considered to be valid writing ability tests which could be safely used in the present study.

Writing Traits Questionnaire

A questionnaire was devised by the researchers (based on different sources of writing instruction and a few novel ideas which the researchers developed) to investigate the participants' writing habits. This questionnaire investigates the processes of writing, including *attitudes toward writing*, *prewriting*, *generating*, *revising*, *feedback* and *collaboration*. These phenomena are not addressed in Wang and Liao's scoring rubric. A five-point Likert scale was utilized to rank the respondents' levels of agreement for each of the ten principles of each questionnaire category (i.e., strongly disagree=1; disagree=2; uncertain=3; agree=4; & strongly agree=5).

Procedure

Both groups of the study were taught by the same teacher (the first researcher) to guarantee instruction consistency. The participants, who had successfully passed the upper-intermediate level placement test, met at the appointed institute three times a week. In both classes, writing task 2 of IELTS was employed as a pretest to grade the students' writing ability before the treatment. In both classes, students were thoroughly instructed on how to write by using the steps of the process approach and some elements of the genre approach. At the beginning of the new term, before the beginning of the classes, an informal IELTS task 2 writing test was executed in both groups as the placement test to ensure that all participants were at the same level.

The participants in the experimental group carried out the relevant writing tasks based on the principles of LOA, including self and peer assessment. The teacher explained the purpose and design of each writing

task and the scoring criteria before the tasks were assigned to students. The students were permitted to work in pairs or groups to make the most appropriate use of LOA. Self and peer assessments were emphasized to improve students' future performance. Four critical strategies of LOA were used in the experimental class, which were: (a) focusing on learning (i.e., attending the learning process instead of the final numeric product), (b) declaring the assessment objectives (learners were made aware of the goal of each writing task and how their works are assessed), (c) teacher and learner goal sharing (students were informed about the goal of activities and how the final assessment could improve their writing skills) and (d) learner motivation (by emphasizing to the students that errors are not considered bad, and they are necessary elements in making progress, and also there are not any right or wrong essays).

Therefore, LOA in the experimental class focused on learners and encouraged their autonomy, took account of how students learn, incorporated constructive and future-looking feedback, and motivated the learners by allowing self and peer assessments. Additionally, learner reflection and teacher-guided questioning appeared in the experimental group. In addition, in some sessions, students were allowed to co-construct a piece of writing by collaborating in groups and sharing their background knowledge. In those sessions that there was enough time, each student had to present his/her essay in front of the class and encouraged others to ask oral questions, and then those questions were discussed and debated.

In the control group, however, writing skills were assessed without integrating LOA strategies into process writing instruction. The students were asked to produce complete writing, graded, and assigned a score without their own or peer engagement. The scoring rubric was not given to students; they did not know what and how it was assessed. The students of this group did not tend to utilize cooperative activities, including group work, student-student interaction, and co-construction. The teacher's feedback primarily focused on errors without monitoring how much of this feedback would be acted upon in the future. In addition, none of the students presented their written work orally, and there was no oral discussion on students' written works in the control class. Instead, the remaining time was devoted to detailed teacher feedback on the various aspects of the learners' written work. Immediately after the treatment, after 16 sessions, the posttest (another

writing task 2 of IELTS) was administered to the students to measure the effectiveness of LOA principles.

Finally, all of the students from both groups were asked to complete the writing traits questionnaire in which five writing traits were examined: writing attitude, pre-writing, generating, revising, collaboration and feedback. All 60 students completed this questionnaire after the posttest to highlight more details on the processes of writing, which might be possibly ignored by scoring rubrics.

Data Analysis

In this study, the students' performances on the writing pretest and writing posttest were assessed based on the relevant description of each subscale in the utilized rubric. After the posttest, an independent samples t-test was employed using SPSS to juxtapose the scores of both groups in all five writing skills, including vocabulary, conventions, organization, elaboration, and focus (first research question). This test was utilized due to the fact that the performances of two different groups (i.e., control group & experimental group) were compared on the pretest and posttest of the study. It is worth mentioning that in both pretest and posttest, both groups were given equal time and/or assistance to do the writing task. For the second research question (i.e., the differences between the writing traits of students), a one-way MANOVA test was utilized to analyze the collected data of the questionnaire.

Results and Discussion

Results

In order to examine the consistency of pre and posttest scoring of participants, a reliability analysis was performed. The results showed that the participants' scores were relatively consistent ($r=.65$ for the pretest and $r=.72$ for the posttest). The relatively low-reliability coefficient may be related to the low number of writing scoring criteria. Moreover, as the frequency analysis showed, the distance between low and high scores in the five pre and post-writing criteria was not considerable. This resulted in low variance that affected the reliability coefficient. Boud and Falchikov (2006) examined the convergent validity of the test and argued that its validity index (.85) was satisfactory. Nonetheless, in order to examine the concurrent validity of the

pretest and posttest of the study, the researchers carried out a pilot study. In this study, first, the authors administered these tests and five TOFEL *independent writing tasks*, selected based on expert comments, to 22 EFL learners (11 male & 11 female) who had similar characteristics to the study participants in three sessions during a two-week period. To ensure that the structure and purpose of this writing task were similar to the IELTS writing task 2, the contents were reviewed by expert judges. Second, the researchers correlated the results of the learners' performances on the pretest and the posttest of the study with their performance on the TOFEL writing task. The results of the analyses showed that the concurrent validity indices of the pretest ($r=.81$) and posttest ($r=.85$) were acceptable, and the test could be regarded as a valid instrument for this assessment of writing performance.

In order to compare the writing scores of the control and the experimental groups, an independent sample t-test was performed. The results appear in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1.
Comparing Writing Performances of Control and Experimental Groups on the Writing Pretest

	Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
pre.focus	Control	30	2.2433	.7386	.324	58	.747
	experimental	30	2.2400	.7433			
pre.elaboration	Control	30	2.3000	.74971	.159	58	.874
	Experimental	30	2.2667	.86834			
pre.organization	Control	30	2.2333	.77385	-.491	58	.625
	Experimental	30	2.3333	.80230			
pre.convention	Control	30	2.4333	.77385	-.333	58	.740
	Experimental	30	2.5000	.77682			
pre.vocabulary	Control	30	2.4333	.67891	-1.196	58	.237
	Experimental	30	2.6333	.61495			

Table 2.
Comparing Writing Performances of Control and Experimental Groups on the Writing Posttest

	Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
post.focus	Control	30	3.3667	.55605	-3.662	58	.001

	Experimental	30	3.9333	.63968			
post.elaboration	Control	30	3.1667	.46113	-4.980	58	.000
	Experimental	30	3.9000	.66176			
post.organization	Control	30	3.0667	.52083	-5.483	58	.000
	Experimental	30	3.9333	.69149			
post.convention	Control	30	3.3000	.70221	-2.948	58	.005
	Experimental	30	3.8333	.69893			
post.vocabulary	Control	30	3.5667	.67891	-3.152	58	.003
	Experimental	30	4.1667	.79148			

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the scores of students in the control group, who did not receive LOA in the writing instruction, and the experimental group in which major principles of LOA were used. According to Levene's test, variances of both groups were the same because the significance values were larger than .05. By looking at the Sig. (2-tailed) values, we can realize that before the treatment, there was no significant difference in the scores of students in both groups because of the Sig. the Value was above .05 in all skills. However, after the treatment, there were significant differences between the performances of the control and experimental groups on all of the subscales of the relevant rubric. To be more specific, there was a significant difference between the *focus* performances of the control group (M=3.37, SD=.556) and the experimental group (M= 3.93-, SD=.640); $t(58) = -3.662, p = .001$. Furthermore, the *elaboration* performance of the control group (M=3.17, SD=.461) differed significantly from the performance of the experimental group (M= 3.90-, SD=.662); $t(58) = -4.980, p = .000$. Moreover, a significant difference was observed between the *organization* performances of the control group (M=3.07, SD=.521) and the experimental group (M= 3.93-, SD=.691); $t(58) = -5.483, p = .000$. In addition, the results highlighted the existence of a significant difference between the *conventions* performances of the control group (M=3.30, SD=.702) and the experimental group (M= 3.83, SD=.699); $t(58) = -2.948, p = .005$. Finally, the *vocabulary* performance of the control group (M=3.57, SD=.679) differed significantly from the performance of the experimental group (M= 4.17, SD=.791); $t(58) = -3.152, p = .003$.

In order to provide a refined answer to the second research question, i.e., obtaining the differences between the writing traits of students) a one-way MANOVA test was performed. To this end, the descriptive statistics of the questionnaire were calculated.

Table 3.
Descriptive Statistics of the Questionnaire

	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Writing Attitudes	Control	37.70	5.676	30
	Experimental	41.30	4.640	30
	Total	39.50	5.451	60
Prewriting	Control	35.67	4.037	30
	Experimental	37.30	5.100	30
	Total	36.48	4.634	60
Generating	Control	39.37	3.439	30
	Experimental	39.30	4.587	30
	Total	39.33	4.020	60
Revising	Control	33.93	4.025	30
	Experimental	40.07	4.025	30
	Total	37.00	5.049	60
Feedback	Control	34.27	3.373	30
	Experimental	40.03	3.168	30
	Total	37.15	4.356	60
Collaboration	Control	31.93	4.025	30
	Experimental	41.50	5.419	30
	Total	36.72	6.758	60

The researchers tested the reliability of the writing questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha. The analysis results revealed that the Cronbach's Alpha reliability index of this questionnaire was .84 which is considered satisfactory. Moreover, the authors administered this questionnaire to both groups before the treatment of the study to determine the differences between their writing traits. Based on the results, there were no significant differences between the writing traits of the participants in the experimental group and the control group of the study. The results of the analysis of the participants' writing traits after the treatment of the study are provided in Tables 4 to 9, appearing in Appendix B for space purposes.

A one-way between-group multivariate analysis of variance was run to find out about the effects of the integration of LOA techniques into teaching writing. This questionnaire investigated six dependent variables: attitudes toward writing, prewriting, generating, revising, feedback, and collaboration, having the *group* as the independent variable. Preliminary assumption testing was done to check for normality, linearity, outliers, and the homogeneity of variance-covariance. No serious violations were noted. A statistically significant difference is observed between the control and experimental

groups by checking the *Multivariate Tests Table*. $F(6, 53) = 24.53, p = 0.000$; Wilk's lambda = .265; partial eta squared = .735. However, not all subskills were significantly different. As it is viewed within the table of *Tests of Between-Subjects Effects* which considers the results for the dependent variables separately, significant differences between the two groups regarding Attitudes Toward Writing ($F(1, 58) = 7.234, p = 0.009$, partial $\eta^2 = .111$), Revising ($F(1, 58) = 34.8, p = 0.000$, partial $\eta^2 = .375$), Feedback ($F(1, 58) = 46.6, p = 0.000$, partial $\eta^2 = .446$) and Collaboration ($F(1, 58) = 60.258, p = 0.000$, partial $\eta^2 = .510$) are found. However, there were no significant differences between the two groups regarding Prewriting ($F(1, 58) = 1.89, p = 0.174$, partial $\eta^2 = .032$) and Generating ($F(1, 58) = .004, p = .949$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.000$). Further, the statistical comparison of means indicated that the experimental group proved higher levels of Attitudes toward writing ($M = 41.30, SD = 4.6$), Revising ($M = 40.07, SD = 4.025$), Feedback ($M = 40.03, SD = 3.17$), and collaboration ($M = 41.50, SD = 5.4$) than the control group (See Appendix B).

Discussion

The results of the t-test indicated that the experimental group took advantage of the integration of LOA in teaching writing. All of the writing sub-skills were improved substantially in the experimental group. To provide a refined answer to the first research question, it is argued that the use of LOA improved students' writing subskills. The learners' posttest scores accentuated the improvement of their writing performance based on the descriptions of each of the subscales of the study scoring rubric. For instance, they demonstrated better focus by addressing the writing task more adequately and straying less. This may be due to the reduced anxiety of implementing LOA principles. They used more details and examples to support their ideas in the elaboration part. Language is believed to be an agent in the production of meaning (Swain, 2006). In fact, thoughts are articulated, and ideas are formed via speech. They supported their arguments, for and against the topic, by using explanations and exemplifications, their own experiences, and even their imaginations. The learners' interaction with their peers in the LOA collaborative tasks is likely to ameliorate their acquisition of the diverse aspects of the target language. Accordingly, the outperformance of the experimental group found literature support as they talked about what

they had written to their peers. On the other hand, Brooks and Swain (2009) claimed that communicating thoughts and interaction would lead to accuracy and further development via languaging, which was present in the experimental group. Their written work organization improved since there was a more logical and explicit connection among different sections of their writing. They displayed better unity, progression and coherence by organizing their ideas in a logical and sequential way, and using less redundancy, deviation and unclear connections. Their spelling, grammar, and punctuation proved that their writing conventions improved significantly after receiving LOA strategies. This may be traced back to the verbal manifestation of rules that happened among peers. The students in this group demonstrated more vocabulary and idioms by making fewer mistakes in using them as they kept suggesting better words to each other to use. These benefits were unclear to both students and teachers before the treatment because they had never experienced alternative assessment methods. This might be attributed to lack of time, lack of awareness, the policies of the language institute, teachers' reluctance, culture-based misconceptions about the utility of learner-centered assessment, examination-oriented atmosphere, and so on. Before this study, the interaction between students themselves and between students and teachers was minimum during the various stages of writing. However, writing scores increased significantly after familiarizing students with LOA and integrating its techniques and principles. The results of this study were entirely in line and in agreement with the previous findings in the literature (Almalki, 2019; Kim & Kim, 2017; Navaie, 2018), proving LOA principles are employed for the benefit of learners and language learning contexts.

The issues mentioned above highlight the fact that LOA empowered the learners of the experimental group to plan the development of their second language writing skills, assess their progress, and determine their strengths and weaknesses regarding the performance of the writing tasks under the classroom circumstances. More specifically, this approach to writing assessment made the learners conscious of the fact that they needed to: a) gain control over the relevant affective, cognitive, and social factors, including their language learning anxiety, cognitive processing, and group work, respectively; and b) fathom out the underlying prerequisites of academic second language writing tasks.

Consequently, regarding the affective factors, as Kim and Kim (2017) pointed out, the learners, who were provided with writing instruction on the basis of the overriding concepts of LOA, were able to reduce their language learning anxiety and test anxiety during the performance of the relevant writing tasks, cast aside their inhibitions about engaging with the relevant writing tasks, raised their self-esteem in the context of the classroom, adopted more optimistic attitudes towards the acquisition and development of target language in general and writing skills in specific, became more motivated to grasp the fundamental principles of second language writing, and gained self-confidence regarding the performance of the relevant tasks.

Furthermore, regarding the cognitive factors, as Navaie (2018) noted, the LOA treatment prompted the language learners to take advantage of cognitive and metacognitive strategies in order to facilitate the development of the second language writing skill. More specifically, the learners who were provided with LOA treatment planned the process of their writing tasks and took advantage of repeated reviewing in order to enhance the accuracy and complexity of their writing tasks with the help of diverse vocabulary items and grammatical structures. Furthermore, they monitored their writing task performance and evaluated it at various stages to regulate their writing task performance and writing skill development.

Finally, regarding the social factors, as Almalki (2019) stated, the learners who received the LOA treatment became cognizant that they could take advantage of their peers' feedback to ameliorate their writing performance. More specifically, the LOA treatment raised their awareness of the fact that peer feedback capacitated them to organize their thought processes, brainstorm and arrange their ideas, express their intentions in a clear way, and rectify their writing mistakes at various stages of the relevant writing tasks during the process of task performance. Considering these issues, this study demonstrated that LOA could be beneficially implemented in IELTS writing courses in the language learning context of Iran.

The second research question explored the area of writing traits (including pre-writing, generating, revising, collaboration, and giving feedback). Based on the results of this study, some traits proved to be higher within the experimental group. Revising traits had shown an increase due to practice in self-editing and becoming self-critic through attentive composing. Reduced anxiety, as a result of aided and timed writing tasks, seemed to have

a vital role in learners' positive attitude towards the experience and the whole process of language learning. The reason behind the increase in feedback and collaboration can be peer feedback that was continuously present within the treatment. However, feedforward and feedback mainly focus on mechanics rather than the flow of ideas. Focusing on form had proved to hamper idea generation (Stapa & Majid, 2012). On the other hand, pre-writing and generating are psychocognitive tasks rather than linguistic ones. Writing is also as emotional and affective as it is cognitive (McLeod, 1987). With these in mind, no improvement in generating and pre-writing traits may seem meaningful.

Conclusion

Ending up with rather polished answers to the questions of this study may have touched on the need for dynamic evaluation of the curriculums and have helped experienced instructors narrow the gap between their old perceptions of testing and the new brave era of assessment. A lot of scholars had vastly highlighted the necessity of updating and modernizing the approach towards assessment. Alavi, Rezvani, and Yazdani (in press), and Bolghari and Aghaalikhani (2019) are cases in point.

This study investigated the effects of the application of LOA in an L2 writing classroom in which students were preparing to take the IELTS task 2 writing exam. It attempted to highlight the usefulness of the principles of LOA applied to writing assessment. In addition, it evaluated the participants' writing traits during the implementation of the LOA. Results from the questionnaire revealed that the writing abilities of students who received LOA in writing instruction and assessment were stronger compared to students who did not. First, they demonstrated a better attitude toward writing. The learners in the experimental group had better feelings and higher self-esteem in writing endeavors inside or outside the classroom. They were not intimidated by the writing tasks and the feedback from both peers and the teacher. They initiated writing with greater confidence and engagement in the task. Secondly, they showed more robust abilities to alter their written work and revise their disorganized or flawed writings with more appropriate language forms. They also took better account of the audience, who might be the potential readers of their works. Third, they became better feedback receivers and feedback givers. They welcomed not only extensive feedback from the

teacher without losing motivation but also were active in giving and receiving feedback to and from their peers without being irritated. In addition, they used feedback to work on and improve their future performance and tried not to forget their errors.

Last but not least, their collaboration with their peers improved significantly. They enjoyed working with peers and in groups rather than individually because they realized that working in groups and social collaboration are more beneficial in improving vocabulary and grammar in writing. On the other hand, there were not any significant differences between the learners' pre-writing and generating skills in the relevant groups. All students demonstrated identical abilities to plan their writing before the first draft, use their background knowledge, brainstorm, and use reference books. As for generating skills, all students showed similar ability to organize the flow of their ideas, initiate writing by using their knowledge of vocabulary and world knowledge and finally reach their intended conclusions.

The results drew our attention to more applications of LOA in L2 writing classrooms, particularly because second language writing is an interactive, collaborative, and socially constructed phenomenon. Student inclusion in evaluation is one of the imperative strands of LOA and can be accomplished with the help of self and peer assessment. The assessment of the peers' performance could be a primary means of learning assessment as it effectively prompts the learners to assess their peers' language acquisition and permits them to take part in a collaborative evaluation utilizing different points of view (Ali, 2013).

Four key issues were observable among students who received the treatment: (a) learner-focused evaluation was promoted as a result of peer and self-assessment processes, (b) learners' understanding of assessment objectives increased due largely to the teacher's explanation of the relevant objectives in a clear way, (c) teacher's goals became more compatible with the learners' goals owing to the learners' comprehension of the structure, aims, and assessment criteria and (d) learners' motivation was improved because of the teacher's explication of the necessary role of errors in learning and making progress. Students, who carried out the relevant tasks using LOA, not only found out about their mistakes by means of peer assessment but also found ways to improve in the next writing tasks as a result of self-assessment, which enabled them to evaluate their performance in writing tasks.

First, the language teachers are required to gain a thorough understanding of the underlying assumptions of LOA and have to facilitate the learners' participation in the process of assessment in order to actualize LOA in their classrooms. Furthermore, they should take learners' language acquisition beliefs into account to enjoy the advantages of LOA in an effective way. Moreover, the syllabus designers have to pay attention to the fact the EFL materials have to be developed based on the objectives of LOA. In addition, teacher educators are required to provide language instructors with adequate information on this approach to language assessment.

Second, language learners should have a thorough understanding of the structure, intents, and assessment criteria of LOA. Furthermore, they must pay attention to the fact that LOA tasks are multi-faceted and require active participation. More specifically, learners need to be informed about the process of writing tasks. They should also consider writing various drafts and evaluating their own and their peers' written drafts as the necessary steps in developing second language writing skills.

Third, there is a need to revamp the approach to the feedback provided in the school setting. A close scrutiny of the aforementioned approach in these settings highlights the necessity of correcting all of the learners' errors without informing them about the sources of the errors and prompting them to take part in the feedback provision process. This approach has proved to be costly to both the learners and teachers because it mainly demotivates the learners and exhausts the teachers in the long run. Considering this issue, it can be averred that the school managers have to provide the language teachers with the opportunity to take advantage of LOA in the writing tasks in order to expedite the learners' development of the second language writing skill. That is, they should allow the teachers to adopt a formative approach to feedback provision by drawing the learners' attention to the sources of their errors and taking advantage of their help during the writing draft review process. Moreover, the school managers and the language teachers have to prompt the learners' parents to participate in the learners' assessment process. More specifically, parents need to understand the beneficial impact of the diverse techniques of LOA on the learners' development of writing skills. Learners' use of the relevant techniques should also be encouraged outside the school setting.

Fourth, the school administration should pay attention to the fact that placing a heavy emphasis on the writing scores is antithetical to the underlying assumptions of LOA in second language writing classes. LOA makes an endeavor to expedite the learners' development of writing skills by apprising them of the sources of their errors and encouraging them to take advantage of their peers' support. This issue highlights the fact that its formative nature contrasts sharply with the summative nature of score-based traditional writing instruction approaches. Consequently, it can be argued that the school administration has to make an effort to highlight the utility of constructive teacher feedback and peer feedback by deemphasizing the writing scores and apprising the learners of the fact that the scores fulfill a minor role in their overall evaluation. In this way, the learners might be prompted to collaborate with their peers, provide feedback on their drafts, and assist them in writing the consecutive drafts during the writing task performance.

Finally, language teachers should acknowledge that classroom interaction is a prerequisite to second language acquisition. Consequently, they ought to take advantage of LOA tasks as instruments for promoting interaction among the learners. Moreover, the teachers need to place emphasis on feedforward in their writing classes. More specifically, they need to provide the learners with useful and practical guidance on the pertinent aspects of the target language in order to expedite the performance of their subsequent writing tasks. Furthermore, the teachers have to pay attention to the fact that peer feedback has to be underpinned by teacher feedback in the context of the classroom. The teachers' focus on LOA techniques is likely to have a beneficial impact on their interaction with their learners and may reduce the learners' language learning anxiety, raise the learners' self-esteem, and ameliorate the learners' test scores.

However, sufficient attention is needed to the degree of students' engagement in the assessment. Students, teachers, parents, and educational administrators have important roles in the effective uptake of LOA principles, and more attention should be devoted to enhancing the understanding of LOA in educational environments.

Declaration

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Appendix A

Wang and Liao (2008) rubric for scoring writing

Criteria	Descriptors	Scores
Focus	1. Having problems with focus or failing to address the writing task.	1
	2. Inadequately addressing the writing task.	2
	3. Addressing the writing task adequately but sometimes straying from the task.	3
	4. Addressing most of the writing task.	4
	5. Specifically addressing the writing task.	5
Elaboration/ Support	1. Using few or no details or irrelevant details to support topics or illustrate ideas.	1
	2. Using inappropriate or insufficient details to support topics or illustrate ideas.	2
	3. Using some details to support topics or illustrate ideas.	3
	4. Using appropriate details to support topics or illustrate ideas.	4
	5. Using specific appropriate details to support topics or illustrate ideas.	5
Organization	1. The logical flow of ideas is not clear and connected.	1
	2. The logical flow of ideas is less clear and connected.	2
	3. The logical flow of ideas is mostly clear and connected.	3
	4. The logical flow of ideas is generally clear and connected.	4
	5. The logical flow of ideas is specifically clear and connected.	5
Conventions	1. Standard English conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) are poor with frequent errors.	1
	2. Standard English conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) are inappropriate with obvious errors.	2
	3. Standard English conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) are fair with some minor errors.	3
	4. Standard English conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) are almost accurate.	4
	5. Standard English conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) are perfect or near perfect.	5
Vocabulary	1. Little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms and verb forms.	1
	2. Frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage. Meaning confused or obscured.	2
	3. Occasional errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage but meaning not obscured.	3
	4. Almost effective word/idiom form, choice, usage. Almost appropriate register.	4
	5. Effective word/idiom form, choice, usage. Appropriate register.	5

Appendix B

Table 4.

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices

Box's M	26.458
F	1.120
df1	21
df2	12372.787
Sig.	.317

Table 5.

Multivariate Tests

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.997	3452.007	6.000	53.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.003	3452.007	6.000	53.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	390.793	3452.007	6.000	53.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	390.793	3452.007	6.000	53.000	.000
Group	Pillai's Trace	.735	24.534	6.000	53.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.265	24.534	6.000	53.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	2.777	24.534	6.000	53.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	2.777	24.534	6.000	53.000	.000

Effect		Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.997
	Wilks' Lambda	.997
	Hotelling's Trace	.997
	Roy's Largest Root	.997
Group	Pillai's Trace	.735
	Wilks' Lambda	.735
	Hotelling's Trace	.735
	Roy's Largest Root	.735

Table 6.

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Writing Attitudes	1.532	1	58	.221
Prewriting	.443	1	58	.508
Generating	3.157	1	58	.081
Revising	.495	1	58	.485
Feedback	.725	1	58	.398
Collaboration	3.423	1	58	.069

Table 7.
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	Writing Attitudes	194.400	1	194.400	7.234	.009
	Prewriting	40.017	1	40.017	1.892	.174
	Generating	.067	1	.067	.004	.949
	Revising	564.267	1	564.267	34.826	.000
	Feedback	498.817	1	498.817	46.601	.000
	Collaboration	1372.817	1	1372.817	60.258	.000
Intercept	Writing Attitudes	93615.000	1	93615.000	3483.684	.000
	Prewriting	79862.017	1	79862.017	3775.161	.000
	Generating	92826.667	1	92826.667	5647.891	.000
	Revising	82140.000	1	82140.000	5069.651	.000
	Feedback	82807.350	1	82807.350	7736.096	.000
	Collaboration	80886.817	1	80886.817	3550.442	.000
Group	Writing Attitudes	194.400	1	194.400	7.234	.009
	Prewriting	40.017	1	40.017	1.892	.174
	Generating	.067	1	.067	.004	.949
	Revising	564.267	1	564.267	34.826	.000
	Feedback	498.817	1	498.817	46.601	.000
	Collaboration	1372.817	1	1372.817	60.258	.000
Error	Writing Attitudes	1558.600	58	26.872		
	Prewriting	1226.967	58	21.155		
	Generating	953.267	58	16.436		
	Revising	939.733	58	16.202		
	Feedback	620.833	58	10.704		
	Collaboration	1321.367	58	22.782		
Total	Writing Attitudes	95368.000	60			
	Prewriting	81129.000	60			
	Generating	93780.000	60			
	Revising	83644.000	60			

INTEGRATION OF LEARNING-ORIENTED ASSESSMENT			
	Feedback	83927.000	60
	Collaboration	83581.000	60
Corrected Total	Writing Attitudes	1753.000	59
	Prewriting	1266.983	59
	Generating	953.333	59
	Revising	1504.000	59
	Feedback	1119.650	59
	Collaboration	2694.183	59

Table 8.
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Corrected Model	Writing Attitudes	.111
	Prewriting	.032
	Generating	.000
	Revising	.375
	Feedback	.446
	Collaboration	.510
	Intercept	Writing Attitudes
Prewriting		.985
Generating		.990
Revising		.989
Feedback		.993
Collaboration		.984
Group		Writing Attitudes
	Prewriting	.032
	Generating	.000
	Revising	.375
	Feedback	.446
	Collaboration	.510
	Error	Writing Attitudes
Prewriting		
Generating		
Revising		
Feedback		
Collaboration		
Total		Writing Attitudes
	Prewriting	

INTEGRATION OF LEARNING-ORIENTED ASSESSMENT

	Generating
	Revising
	Feedback
	Collaboration
Corrected Total	Writing Attitudes
	Prewriting
	Generating
	Revising
	Feedback
	Collaboration

Table 9.
Estimated Marginal Means

Dependent Variable	Group	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Writing Attitudes	Control	37.700	.946	35.805	39.595
	experimental	41.300	.946	39.405	43.195
Prewriting	Control	35.667	.840	33.986	37.348
	experimental	37.300	.840	35.619	38.981
Generating	Control	39.367	.740	37.885	40.848
	experimental	39.300	.740	37.818	40.782
Revising	Control	33.933	.735	32.462	35.404
	experimental	40.067	.735	38.596	41.538
Feedback	Control	34.267	.597	33.071	35.462
	experimental	40.033	.597	38.838	41.229
Collaboration	Control	31.933	.871	30.189	33.678
	experimental	41.500	.871	39.756	43.244