Research Paper

The Role of Participatory Structure and Output Modality in Developing Iranian EFL Learners' Writing and their Perceptions: A Mixed-Method Study

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Abstract

Educational aids and new educational technologies have transformed learning systems during the last decade. The present study was an attempt to investigate the role of participatory structure and output modality in enhancing Iranian EFL learners' writing and examine their perceptions toward participating in writing activities. The population of this study included all female EFL learners (90 learners) at an intermediate level at Avayeh Daneshvaran Language Academy in Tabriz. Among them, 63 learners were selected as the sample group after conducting a sample of the PET. The participants were selected through convenient sampling; they included four intact classes. The instruments included two samples of the English language proficiency test of PET, which were administered as a homogeneity test, and the pre-tests and post-tests of writing. The collected data were analyzed using one-way ANOVA and two-way ANCOVA. The researchers analyzed the participants' responses to the open-ended questionnaire qualitatively. The findings revealed that output modality, participatory structure, and the interaction of these two had no significant effect on EFL learners' writing skills. Regarding the qualitative section, the findings showed that the learners had a positive attitude toward the use of podcasts and summary telling and writing. The findings of the study have significant theoretical and practical significance for teachers, teacher educators, curriculum designers and researchers.

Keywords: Participatory Structure, Output Modality, Writing, Perceptions, EFL Learners', Mixed-Method

INTRODUCTION

English language as the largely used language worldwide and a requirement to the attainment of a great deal of knowledge has grown into a significant issue in the educational systems of countries across the globe. The English-speaking population is constantly increasing all over the globe, thus, as stated by Graddol (2006), the number of non-native fluent English speakers is more than the number of native English speakers. Recently, the process of language learning is not restricted to the course books and computer technology is implemented in this process to develop the value of education and learning. In Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), teachers are able to encounter the traditional methods of teaching and learning (Hasan & Hoon, 2013) via integrating the computer technology into the process of language teaching. Podcast is one of the tools of CALL, which was not initially intended for language learning, but it can be used for it. Podcasting can have enormous potential in developing learners' writing and speaking skills (Ramli, 2018; Dianithi, 2017; Bamanger & Alhassan, 2015).

In fact, using modern materials like podcasts in language classes can provide language learners with authentic language input. That is to say,

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podcasts can act as comprehensible input and be a role model for the learners in helping them to produce authentic and accurate spoken and written texts. The output that learners produce can be written or oral, which can be produced individually or through participating with others. However, lack of ability to use foreign language productively, that is, in speaking and writing, may demotivate learners from language learning since in most of the cases the ultimate expectation from foreign language learners is the mastery of speaking and writing skills.

Much like other EFL contexts, English is taught as a compulsory subject at Iranian high schools. However, learning English language has permanently been an excessive challenge for Iranian learners owing to the restricted interaction with target-language speakers and lack of occasions to practice it in their everyday lives and interact with native speakers. That is why most of students prefer to improve their English in language institutes and academies. Here, the administration of modern tools like podcasts can have an encouraging role in providing EFL learners with comprehensive input.

The use of podcasts in EFL contexts by teachers and learners can resolve this deficiency (not having access to NSs) to some extents, and facilitate the process of language learning and gaining authentic input through listening to and practicing podcasts to produce comprehensible outputs through active participation or individual efforts. Furthermore, numerous EFL learners face troubles in speaking and writing throughout the class; they feel apprehension and become anxious when interacting with their teacher or even with their peers. In this regard, Jahin and Idrees (2012) mentioned that writing seems burdensome regardless of being native or non-native students since every author or writer is anticipated to exert stability amongst numerous features in his/her text for instance the content, audience, purpose, mechanics, vocabulary, organization, and the like.

Previous studies (e.g., Sayadi & Mashhadi Heidar, 2018; NamazianDost, Bohloulzadeh, & Rahmatollahi, 2017; Davoudi & Rezaei, 2016; Samad, Bustari, & Ahmad, 2017; Yoestara & Putri, 2018) on the role of podcasts especially in EFL contexts have concentrated on learners in a variety of academic and non-academic settings in Iran and the world over. However, there is not any comprehensive study that examines the role of participatory structure and output modality in developing learners' writing skill in classes in which podcasts are used.

Generally, EFL teachers can use the findings of the present study in providing comprehensible input for the learners and guide them to produce acceptable outputs that can be in the form of written performances. Learners will also recognize the influence of acting individually or participating with the classmates in order to perform a linguistic or communicative task. Teachers can make use of technology and modern material in order to enhance learners' learning and performance. As believed by Setiyadi (2020), to language learners, language learning is not just about obtaining a group of unconscious behaviors, however rather a process of realizing the fundamental rules, and administering them in their performances. In order for this realization to take place, the learners have to get through numerous phases and procedures. Equipping learners with acceptable and tangible input and instructing them to work with others in dealing with language tasks can lead to professional outputs. Moreover, knowing about the perceptions of EFL learners toward task types and task conditions can inform teachers and material developers to provide the best contexts and appropriate materials for the learners in EFL contexts.

All these points inspired the researcher to conduct the present study and investigate the problems related to the improvement of writing skill in Iran; the study can provide a better understanding of using podcasts in producing comprehensible outputs in language classes, individually or in pairs. Thus, in the current study, podcasts were employed to provide authentic input and see how learners' productive skills of writing can be improved within different task conditions.

The following research questions were posed to meet the purpose of the study:

RQ1: *Is there any significant effect of output modality on intermediate EFL learners' writing performance?*

RQ2: Is there any significant effect of participatory structure on intermediate EFL learners' writing performance?

RQ3: Is there any significant interactional effect of participatory structure and output modality on intermediate EFL learners' writing performance?

RQ4: What are the intermediate EFL learners' perceptions toward the participatory structures in written tasks?

LITERATURE REVIEW
Task-Based Teaching

Trying to find the most operative methodology for SLA (Second Language Acquisition) has caused a rising body of empirical research and principles grounded on them, besides these have raised the application of numerous pedagogical means supported by scholars. The methods and means range from implicit ones, namely, the methods lacking any conscious training on the language structure, for instance input enhancement (Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Sharwood-Smith, 1993) and input flooding (Krashen, 1985), to explicit methods like metalinguistic explanatory feedback (Pica, et al. 1987; Gass & Mackey, 2007) and consciousness-raising procedures (Sharwood-Smith, 1993).

For years, teachers, researchers, testers, and syllabus designers have regarded the process of language teaching and learning as an area of interest. This attention has caused the emergence of diverse traditional methodologies. Following traditional styles, as argued by Skehan (2003), the experts assumed that it is not sufficient to emphasize on the language forms, however, teaching requires to be complemented by a focus to improve the skills to express meaning. In a task-based syllabus, the focus is primarily on meaning, not on linguistic form, which could promote functional and communicative foreign language development. Spade (1997) claimed task-based instruction, is the most beneficial to interlanguage development. Task-based instruction incorporates a task-induced focus on meaning and focus on form or an explicit, not necessarily task-induced, focus on forms. Although both approaches (task-induced focus on meaning and form, and explicit focus on form) have been shown to be effective, these approaches are more obtrusive, interrupting the flow of communication (Norris & Ortega, 2000).

Output Hypothesis

Swain (1985) developed the Output Hypothesis based in the Sociocultural or Social Interactional Theory, developed by Vygotsky. Accordingly, Swain pondered that the learning happens and to attain real learning the learners need to have the opportunity to test, produce, and to deliberate on different points. The Output Hypothesis incorporates the written and oral production (output).

Swain (1985) claimed that the Output Hypothesis, includes three functions that occur interchangeably: the hypothesis testing, the noticing function, and the metalinguistic function. Swain notes that during second language production, a learner could realize what he/she knows completely or partly. The learner could similarly check whatever he considers right way of writing or speaking in the foreign language. During this process, he could participate in a metalinguistic achievement. That is to say, Swain believed that in language production (writing/speaking) the learner can notice the gaps in his/her interlanguage, then in trying to create the foreign language, spontaneously he/she will check what he recognizes about it and think about it, which results in real learning.

Swain (1985, 1995, 2005) claimed that comprehensible output (i.e., second language production) has a significant position in second language acquisition as it confirms mental grammatical processing and is the most operative stimulus for the expansion of the learner's interlanguage. The studies of Swain exposed that regardless of comprehensive contact with a target language input, the productive ability of immersion students is unlike that of native speakers. She maintained that it is merely throughout the production of the second language (in writing or speech), that the learners may notice that they cannot say what they try to say in the target language.

The Role of Participatory Structure in Productive Skills

According to Ellis (2004), Participatory Structure

refers to "the procedures that govern how the teacher's and students' contributions to the performance of the task are organized, e.g., in terms of teacher-class or small group interactions" (p. 347). Actually, group work is a preferred participatory structure in all systems of teaching not just in task-based language teaching (TBLT).

Several supporters of TBLT (e.g., Prabhu, 1987) have excluded group work in their methodology. Prabhu (1987) contended that to have operative task-based teaching, learners are required to be extremely exposed to worthy models of the foreign language; Prabhu mentioned that this point necessitate the teacher to assume the responsibility of the mission. In fact, input-based tasks entail a teacher-class participatory arrangement; thus, the teacher will provide the input in these tasks and the learners will respond nonverbally to expose their understanding. In addition, the teacher interacting with the whole class can conduct the tasks related to speaking. For example, in information-gap tasks, the information can be divided between the teacher and the learners. The resulted interactions can provide special occasions for the teacher to remain much more than simply a supervisor and facilitator of a particular communicative task. The teacher is the main source of input (i.e., Prabhu's 'good models') and is able to respond to any communicative and linguistic problems that happen.

The discoveries of recent research revealed positive outcomes of collaborative writing on evolving thinking abilities. It is revealed from preceding research equally in first language and EFL learners that shared production technique is a way to facilitate reflective thinking (Storch, 2002; Storch, 2005). Farrah (2011) stated that regarding critical thinking skills, it was established that the collaborative approach allowed several of the learners to create a richer bulk of content and challenge other learners to think more cautiously related to the subject at hand.

Writing Skill

It is assumed that EFL teachers consider writing as the most challenging language skill to explain. The justification is that writing is a productive skill that encompasses the organization of the author's information into a written design (Hu, 2009). In an analytical study of the difficulties of writing skill that Saudi learners experience, Raja and Zahid (2013) specified that academic writing is regarded as the most problematic skill. EFL learners have trouble in English writing owing to the dissimilarity between English and their native languages (Hu, 2009).

According to Elashri (2013), for EFL learners writing is not an easy issue, particularly when the learners' English proficiency is not developed perfectly. There are four viewpoints for writing skill teaching and learning: the process-focused approach, the product-focused approach, the genre-based approach to teaching writing, and process and genre based approach to teaching writing. The process approach centers more on using techniques such as rewriting, brainstorming, exploring ideas, and peer editing. The product approach is a traditional methodology to teaching writing in which the teachers classically provide the learners with a model and encourage to mimic it to produce a comparable product. A genre-based approach rests on the kind of the texts that the learners write. The most modern methodology is to associate process and the genre style.

Podcasts and their Applications in Foreign Language Classrooms

Fast evolution of concentration in MALL and the pervasiveness of high-speed Internet have caused the development and approval of podcasts (Hawke, 2010). Levy (2009) defined podcasting as, "an audio/video file that can be broadcast via the Internet with sound files that are 'pushed' to subscribers, often at regular intervals" (p. 775). Podcast is a groundbreaking advanced innovation that can be utilized viably for foreign language learning. As indicated by Robinson (2009, as cited in Namazian Dost, Bohloulzadeh, & Rahmatollahi, 2017) the term podcast is a mix of two words: Pod means iPod-the name of a well-known MP3 player and Broadcasting. As he considered, podcasts are video or sound records on the Internet that can be downloaded to a computer and listened to using any PC or any compact playback gadget that supports MP3 files.

As stated by Yoshida (2013), in most of EFL contexts that the learners have insufficient opportunities to use the foreign language outside the class, offering authentic and real occasions for them to practice productive skills can be a valued activity. Prior to the opening of the twenty-first century, the concept of CALL was supposed to have very partial uses in teaching productive skills to the EFL learners (James, 1996). However, from the beginning of the twenty first century to date, owing to a growth in the possession of cellphones and the range of the Internet, new means of dealing with this matter have been suggested. One of these new approaches is regarded to be podcasting. Certainly, numerous scholars believed that podcasting can have significant effects on the learners' productive and receptive skills (e.g., Pun, 2006; Stanley, 2006; Nikolou & Darra, 2018; Bueno-Alastuey & Nemeth, 2020).

Learner Perception

Learner perception is the process that gives the foundation for learning, understanding, knowing and learning or motivating a specific action or response (Greenberg & Baron, 2008). According to Davis (1989), learners' perceptions involve two cognitive beliefs: learners' perception of the usefulness of an object (PU) that is the amount to which a technology develops one's output or skill in a certain job and the perception of the ease of use (PEU) that is the capability to apply a technology with little or no trouble. As argued by Davis (1989) learners make decisions centered on their impression of how they distinguish each method of learning. Thus, learners' perceptions related to online learning may cause learners to consider learning with definite outlook that may improve or weaken their strength to administer particular resources. On the other hand, learner autonomy necessitates that learners manage their learning process through adapting, re-adapting, and enhancing their learning behavior in various learning conditions. Autonomous learners are frequently motivated which results in operative learning consequences via the establishment of varied occasions for learning.

METHOD
Participants
The population of this study included all female EFL learners at intermediate level who were studying English at Avayeh Daneshvaran Language Academy in Tabriz. They were almost 90 EFL learners at intermediate level. Among the population of this study, 63 learners were selected as the sample group of the study after conducting a sample of the PET English proficiency test. The participants were selected through convenient sampling; they included four intact classes. Yet, to counteract the effect of selection bias, the groups were randomly assigned to four experimental groups, including two writing groups, that is, 16 learners in the individual summary writing group and 16 in the paired summary writing group and two speaking groups, that is, 16 learners in the individual summary telling group and 16 in the paired summary telling group. They ranged in age from 16 to 35 years old with different educational background.

Materials and Instruments
The instruments of the present study included two samples of the English language proficiency test of the Preliminary English Test (PET), which were administered as homogeneity test, and the pre-tests and posttests of writing. Moreover, a researcher-made questionnaire about the students' perceptions was administered.

PET was a complete preliminary English proficiency test published by Cambridge University Press. Initially all parts of PET, including the reading listening, writing and speaking sections, were administered to ensure the homogeneity of the participants, and the writing section of this test were also used as the pretests of the study. As the posttests of the study, the writing section of another sample of the PET test was administered. However, in line with the delimitations of the study, only the writing section of anther sample of the PET was administered as the posttest of the present study. The responses were scored according to the scoring rubric given in the test. The PET scoring rubric for writing includes four subscales: Content, Communicative Achievement, Organization, and Language.

The final instrument of this study was an open-ended questionnaire with 5 questions developed by the researcher that examined

learners' perceptions toward participatory structure and output modality of the tasks in their language classes. The content validity of this questionnaire was ensured consulting a panel of experts.

The materials of the current study included the podcasts and the course book. The podcasts used in this study were selected from the English as a Second Language (ESL) Podcasts (http://www.podcastinginenglish.com). The coursebooks were Four Corners series and the teachers in all groups taught the same syllabus.

Procedure

Having received permission from the administrators in the institute, the researchers started the data collection procedure. In the present study, initially, through a one-way ANOVA test the homogeneity of the learners in terms of their language proficiency was examined. Based on the participants' PET scores, those students who scored 1SD below or above the mean were considered as the main participants. Thus, out of 90 students, 63 students were selected as the participants of the study. The participants were in four intact groups of intermediate level, who were randomly assigned to four experimental groups. The participants were grouped in four classes based on task modality and task condition; in Group 1, the participants were asked to write the summary of the podcasts individually; in Group 2, the participants were asked to write the summary of the podcasts in pairs; in Group 3, the participants were asked to tell the summary of the podcasts individually; and in Group 4, the participants were asked to tell the summary of the podcasts in pairs.

Prior to the treatment, the writing scores of the PET test were used as the participants' writing pre-tests scores. Then, the treatment was conducted which lasted for twelve 15-minute sessions. Each session, one podcast was played in all classes. The topics of the podcasts were similar to the ones they had in their course books.

After the 10-session treatment, the participants were asked to take another sample of PET test (only writing section) as their writing posttest. It should be mentioned that the writing pre-tests and posttests were scored by two raters and the inter-rater reliability were checked. For scoring the writing of the participants, the scoring rubric of PET test for writing assessment was provided by the researcher in order to be used by the raters. At the end of the treatment, the participants in each group were requested to answer an open-ended questionnaire developed by the researcher, which asks about their perceptions toward output modality and participatory structure of the tasks.

To answer the research questions posed in the present study, the researchers collected the related data and conducted the following statistical analyses:

A one-way ANOVA to compare the writing scores of the participants on PET

A two-way ANCOVA to answer RQs 1, 2, and 3

To answer RQ 4, the researchers analyzed the participants' responses to the open-ended questionnaire qualitatively.

RESULTS

The following section provides the results of the data analysis.

Testing the Normality of the Distributions

Initially, the normality of the writing data gathered in the pre-tests and post-tests was probed by computing the ratios of skewness and kurtosis indices over their standard errors (Table 1). For continuous data, the test of normality is important to decide what statistical methods should be used for the data analysis. When the data has normal distribution, parametric tests; otherwise, nonparametric methods are used to compare the groups.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics; Testing Normality of Data

P-Structure	Modality	Skewness			Kurtosis		
		Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio
Individual	Writing	Homogeneity .291	.580	0.50	-.730	1.121	-0.65
		Pre-Speaking .504	.580	0.87	-.460	1.121	-0.41
		Post-Speaking .514	.580	0.89	.131	1.121	0.12
		Pre-Writing .264	.580	0.46	-1.001	1.121	-0.89
		Post-Writing .301	.580	0.52	-.131	1.121	-0.12
Pair	Writing	Homogeneity -.457	.564	-0.81	-1.108	1.091	-1.02
		Pre-Speaking -.247	.564	-0.44	-1.691	1.091	-1.55
		Post-Speaking -.436	.564	-0.77	-1.338	1.091	-1.23
		Pre-Writing -.606	.580	-1.04	-.903	1.121	-0.81
		Post-Writing -.614	.564	-1.09	-.503	1.091	-0.46

Since the absolute values of the ratios were lower than 1.96, it was concluded that the normality assumption was retained. It should be noted that the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their standard errors are analogous to Z-scores which can be compared against critical values of +/- 1.96 at .05 levels (Field, 2018).

Exploring the First Three Research Questions (RQs 1, 2, & 3)
The first three research questions aimed at investigating the effect of participatory structure, output modality and their interaction on the writing performance of intermediate EFL learners. In particular, they were as follows:

RQ1: Is there any significant effect of output modality on intermediate EFL learners' writing performance?

RQ2: Is there any significant effect of participatory structure on intermediate EFL learners' writing performance?

RQ3: Is there any significant interactional effect of participatory structure and output modality on intermediate EFL learners' writing performance?

However, initially, the researchers had to ensure the homogeneity of the participants in terms of their language proficiency. Therefore,

based the participants' PET scores, those students who scored 1SD below or above the mean were considered as the main participants. Thus, out of 90 students in four intact classes, 63 students were selected as the participants of the study, and the rest attended the classes but were excluded from the analyses (Table 2).

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for PET Scores

Statistics		
pet		
N	Valid	90
	Missing	0
Mean		65.7278
Std. Deviation		11.29063
Skewness		.032
Std. Error of Skewness		.254
Range		52.50
Minimum		41.00
Maximum		93.50

Additionally, the participants' writing and speaking pretests and posttests were scored by a second rater and the inter-rater reliability was calculated. Table 3 displays the results of the Pearson correlations computed to estimate the inter-rater reliability indices of the two raters who rated the participants' performance on the pretest and posttest of writing.

Table 3
Inter-Rater Reliability of Pretest and Posttest of Writing

		Pre-Rater 2	Post-Rater 2
Pre-Rater 1	Pearson Correlation	.987**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	63	
Post-Rater 1	Pearson Correlation		.981**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N		63

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on the results in Table 3, it can be concluded that there were significant agreements between the two raters on the pretest of writing r (61) = .987, representing a large effect size, p = .000, and the posttest of writing, r (61) = .981, representing a large effect size, p = .000.

To probe the first three research questions, a two-way ANCOVA was employed. Besides the assumption of normality, two-way ANCOVA has three more assumptions, that is, homogeneity of variances, linearity of relationship between covariate (pretest of writing) and dependent variable (posttest of writing) and homogeneity of regression slopes, which had to be met.

First, the analysis of two-way ANCOVA requires that the groups enjoy homogeneous variances on the posttest of writing performance. The result of the Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance is displayed in Table 4.

Table 4
Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variances; Regarding Writing Posttest

F	df1	df2	Sig.
2.991	3	58	.038

The results shown in Table 4, indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not retained on the posttest of writing, F (3, 58) = 2.99, p < .05. To compensate for the violation of this assumption, the results of two-way ANCOVA will be reported at .01 levels instead of .05 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014).

Second, a two-way ANCOVA assumes that the relationship between the posttest of writing performance (dependent variable) and its pretest (covariate) is linear. The results of the linearity test in Table 4.6 indicated that the assumption of linearity was met, F (1, 29) = 206.62, p < .05, η^2 = .891 representing a large effect size.

Table 5
Test of Linearity of Relationship between Writing Posttest and Pretest

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Post-Writing * Pre-Writing	Between Groups	(Combined)	1270.990	32	39.718	7.435	.000
		Linearity	1103.763	1	1103.763	206.62	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	167.227	31	5.394	1.010	.491
		Within Groups	154.915	29	5.342		
		Total	1425.904	61			
		Eta Squared	.891				

Eta Squared was computed as Sum of Squares Between Groups / Sum of Squares Total; and should be interpreted using these criteria, .01 = Weak, .06 = Moderate, and .14 = Large (Field, 2018, p. 737).

Finally, a two-way ANCOVA assumes homogeneity of regression slopes (Table 6), that is, the relationships between the pretest and posttest should be roughly equal across the groups.

Table 6
Tests of Homogeneity of Regression Slopes; Regarding Writing Posttest

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
P-Structure	10.125	1	10.125	2.164	.147	.038
Modality	5.664	1	5.664	1.211	.276	.022
P-Structure * Pre-Writing	15.732	1	15.732	3.363	.072	.058
Modality * Pre-Writing	9.468	1	9.468	2.024	.161	.035
P-Structure * Modality * Pre-Writing	14.035	1	14.035	3.000	.089	.052
Error	257.321	55	4.679			
Total	35936.188	62				

The non-significant interaction between participatory structure, output modality and covariate (pretest), as shown in Table 6, indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes was retained on the writing performance after controlling for the effect of the pretest, $F (1, 55) = 3$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .052$ representing a weak effect size. Since the assumptions of conducting two-way ANCOVA were not violated, it was legitimate to use this analysis to investigate the effects of modality and participatory structure on the writing performance of intermediate EFL learners.

RQ1: Is there any significant effect of output modality on the intermediate EFL learners' writing performance?

To answer RQ1, the researchers conducted a two-way ANCOVA the results of which were used to answer RQ2 and RQ3, as well. The results of the tests of between subjects' effect are represented in Table 7.

Table
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects; Regarding Writing Posttest

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Pre-Writing	976.178	1	976.178	196.982	.000	.776
P-Structure	16.229	1	16.229	3.275	.076	.054
Modality	11.376	1	11.376	2.296	.135	.039
P-Structure * Modality	12.609	1	12.609	2.544	.116	.043
Error	282.473	57	4.956			
Total	35936.188	62				

These results and the descriptive statistics displayed in Tables 7 to 10 were used to probe the first three research questions. It should be noted that all results were reported at .01 levels because the assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated.

Table 8 displays the descriptive statistics for the effect of modality on the posttest of writing after controlling for the effect of the pretest.

Table 8
Descriptive Statistics for the Writing Posttest Considering Modality

Output Modality	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Summary Writing	23.147[a]	.408	22.329	23.964
Summary Telling	24.011[a]	.395	23.220	24.802

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Pre-Writing = 14.88.

As illustrated in Table 8, summary writing (M = 23.14, SE = .408) and summary telling (M = 24.01, SE = .398) had roughly equal means on the writing posttest after controlling for the effect of the pretest.

The results of two-way ANCOVA in Table 8, representing a weak effect size, indicated that there was not any significant difference regarding modality on the posttest of writing after controlling the effect of the pretest, $F (1, 57) = 2.29$, $p > .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .039$. Thus, the first null-hypothesis stating that there was not any significant effect of output modality on intermediate EFL learners' writing performance was confirmed.

RQ2: Is there any significant effect of participatory structure on the intermediate EFL learners' writing performance?

Table 9 displays the descriptive statistics for the effect of participatory structure (individual and pair work) on the posttest of writing after controlling for the effect of the pretest.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for the Writing Posttest Considering Participatory Structure

P-Structure	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Individual	23.060[a]	.403	22.253	23.866
Pair	24.098[a]	.403	23.291	24.905

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Pre-Writing = 14.88.

As indicated in Table 9, the individual (M = 23.06, SE = .403) and pair work (M = 24.09, SE = .403) groups had roughly equal means on the posttest of writing performance after controlling for the effect of pretest.

The results of the two-way ANCOVA in Table 9, representing a weak effect size, indicated that there was not any significant difference between individual and pair work groups' means on posttest of writing performance after controlling for the effect of the pretest, $F (1, 57) = 3.27$, $p > .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .054$. Thus, the second null-hypothesis, stating that there was not any significant effect of participatory structure on the intermediate EFL learners' writing performance was also confirmed.

RQ3: Is there any significant interactional effect of participatory structure and output modality on the intermediate EFL learners' writing performance?

Table 10 displays the descriptive statistics for the interaction between participatory structure and output modality on the posttest of writing after controlling for the effect of pretest.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics for the Effect of the Interaction between Modality and Participatory Structure on the Writing Posttest

P-Structure	Modality	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Individual	Summary Writing	22.169[a]	.578	21.012	23.327
	Summary Telling	23.950[a]	.557	22.834	25.067
Pair	Summary Writing	24.124[a]	.591	22.941	25.307
	Summary Telling	24.072[a]	.558	22.954	25.189

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Pre-Writing = 14.88.

As displayed in Table 10, the pair work groups in both summary telling and summary writing had higher means as compared to the individual groups. However, the results of two-way ANCOVA, representing a weak effect size, indicated that there was not any significant interaction effect between participatory structure and output modality on the posttest of writing after controlling for the effect of the pretest, $F (1, 57) = 2.54$, $p > .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .043$.

Thus, the third null-hypothesis, stating that

there was not any significant interactional effect of participatory structure and output modality on intermediate EFL learners' writing performance was confirmed as well.

Qualitative Analyses
RQ4: What are the intermediate EFL learners' perceptions toward the output modality and participatory structures in written summary tasks?

The RQ4 is related to the qualitative section of the study. In this regard, a semi-structured interview was conducted by the researcher to investigate the participants' attitudes toward the use of podcasts in the class and the role of summary writing in developing their writing skill. The interview questionnaire was sent to all of the participants and they were asked to answer the questions; however, only 12 of them took part in this phase. The participants' responses were read and categorized as illustrated in the following tables. The responses are provided under each question posed in the interview. Tables 11-15 represent the analyses related to writing summaries individually.

Table 11
What is the Role of Writing Summary Individually in Improving Writing Skill?

Answers
1. Having positive attitude toward the role of summary writing individually in writing development
2. Understanding vocabularies and knowing about formal and informal ways of writing
3. Using the heard key words of the podcasts in their writings
4. Time to think alone without further argument
5. Time to search and gain information
6. Use of different words and grammar
7. Better and deeper concentration
8. Having self-confidence during writing individually

Table 12
What are the Difficulties in Writing Summaries Individually?

Answers
1. No difficulty
2. Inability to replace the exact word and correct grammar
3. Feeling exhausted during writing as a result of limited knowledge
4. Forgetting previously learnt points
5. Lack of ideas and background knowledge

Table 13
What are the Interesting Things about the Podcast Treatment?

Answers
1. Enjoying the treatment
2. Learning the words and grammar of the heard podcasts
3. Being able to learn English individually
4. More concentration despite of having difficulty in finding certain words and grammar
5. Providing the learners with new and different ideas
6. providing interesting ideas

The analyses in Tables 15-18 are related to writing summary in pairs.

Table 15
hat is the Role of Writing Summary in pairs in Improving Writing Skill?

Answers
1. Having positive attitude toward the role of summary writing in pairs in writing development
2. Having negative attitude toward the role of summary writing in pairs in writing development

3. improving the writing quality and increase personal information through sharing new and unknown ideas and knowledge can
4. Preventing individual thinking by working in pairs and hindering the flow of writing through discussing different ideas of others
5. Confusion in writing due to divided responsibilities
6. Destroying writing due to having opposing ideas and arguments
7. Improving vocabulary, grammar, and spelling through working together to write a summary

Table 16
What are the Difficulties in Writing Summaries in pairs?

Answers
1. No difficulty
2. Having problems during summary writing because of different ideas
3. Feeling anxious of working with others and not being able to perform at same level
4. Having opposing and different ideas

Table 17
What are the Interesting Things about the Podcast Treatment?

Answers
1. Enjoying listening to podcasts
2. Learning the words and grammar of the heard podcasts
3. Being able to learn English individually
4. More concentration despite of having difficulty in finding certain words and grammar
5. Providing the learners with new and different ideas
6. Providing interesting ideas
7. Communicating in English during the tasks was interesting.
8. Podcasts being useful and effective
9. Enjoying working in pairs and solving problems together
10. Listening to podcasts in accordance with their proficiency level and the topics that are familiar and presented in their books
11. Following group rules and adjusting misunderstandings

Table 18
What are Your Suggestions?

Answers
1. No suggestion
2. Listening to the podcast more than once in the class
3. Presenting podcasts with more interesting topics

The analyses in Tables 19-22 are related to telling summary individually.

Table 19
What is the Role of Telling Summary Individually in Improving Writing Skill?

Answers
1. Having positive attitude toward the role of summary telling individually in writing development
2. Making sentences easily and quickly by using different words and structures during speaking that later can be applied in writing
3. Thinking about different issues individually with higher concentration
4. Improving writing correctly through planning during speaking to make accurate sentences
5. Taking notes to tell the summary being useful for writing and spelling

Table 20

What are the Difficulties in Telling Summaries Individually?

Answers
1. No difficulty
2. Inability to continue the summary
3. Unknown words, topics and concepts
4. Difficulty in finding correct words and grammatical points

Table 21

What are the Interesting Things about the Podcast Treatment?

Answers
1. Enjoying listening to podcasts
2. Concentrating on pronunciation while listening to podcasts
3. Providing the learners with new words and different ideas
4. Providing interesting ideas
5. Podcasts being useful and effective to develop speaking and listening

Table 22

What are Your Suggestions?

Answers
1. No suggestion
2. Practicing the new words after listening to podcasts
3. Listening to several podcasts with different topics
4. Taking notes during listening to improve summary telling
5. Practicing time management to deal with limited time provided by the teacher

The analyses in Tables 23-26 are related to telling summary in pairs.

Table 23

What is the Role of Telling Summary in Pairs in Improving Writing Skill?

Answers
1. Having positive attitude toward the role of summary telling in pairs in improving writing skill
2. Receiving corrective feedback from the classmates
3. Learning words and structures from the classmates
4. Learning English being fun and easy by working in pairs
5. Having partner being effective in both writing and speaking development
6. Using the words acquired during summary writing

Table 24

What are the Difficulties in Telling Summaries in Pairs?

Answers
1. No difficulty
2. Inability to find proper words and structures, which is solved with the help of the classmates

Table 25

What are the Interesting Things about the Podcast Treatment?

Answers
1. Enjoying working with others and learning from them
2. Sharing ideas and working with classmates
3. Solving problems together being interesting and useful
4. Listening to podcasts with different topics and native pronunciation

Table 26
What are Your Suggestions?

Answers
1. No suggestion
2. Working in groups doing other tasks as well

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study was an attempt to investigate the role of participatory structure and output modality in enhancing Iranian EFL learners' writing with a focus on their perceptions. In particular, the participants were asked to write or tell the summaries of the podcasts that they were provided during the treatment. The function of the podcasts was to provide comprehensible input for the participants in different groups, which could further facilitate their output production. At the end of the treatment, the effects of summary telling and writing on the participants' writing skill were examined. It is notable that, as Swain and Lapkin (1995) asserted, output is an important constituent of foreign language learning. Moreover, Ducate and Lomicka (2009) stated that one tactic which can be supportive for augmenting learners' language output is podcasting.

The findings of the present study related to the first and second research questions revealed that there were not any significant effects of output modality and participatory structure on the intermediate EFL learners' writing performance. That is to say, telling and writing summary were not effective in developing writing skill. Additionally, telling and writing summary, individually or in pair, were not effective in developing writing skill, either. Moreover, based on the results of the third research question, there was no interactional effect of participatory structure and output modality on the intermediate participants' writing performance. That is to say, summary telling and writing, either individually or in pair, were not effective in improving the writing scores of the learners. Based on the findings it can be argued that the learners have equal inclination toward output modality and participatory structure, since telling and writing summary of the podcasts individually and in pairs revealed no difference in improving their writing ability. The reason can be related to the proficiency level of the learner, the topics of the podcasts, and the teachers' emphasis on training the learners in summarizing. In the present study, the teacher only briefly mentioned some points about summary writing. Generally speaking, most of the learners may not even be aware of the steps of summarizing and the teachers are expected to implement more practices on summary writing in their classes. Moreover, the learners need to know about working in groups and sharing their knowledge and strategies in summarizing and express the remembered information of the podcasts with their groups.

The findings are not in line with the study of Abahussain (2020), which showed that participants reported the effectiveness of collaborative writing significantly higher than individual writing. Jafari and Nejad Ansari (2012) also revealed that students in the collaborative writing group outdid the learners with no collaboration.

The results obtained from the open-ended questionnaire lent support to the assumption that most of the participants enjoyed listening to podcasts in the class and they found it interesting to listen to different topics that are at their own level of proficiency. They also mentioned that podcasts were more interactive than usual tasks presented in the course books. They also preferred to work in pairs, as they would be able to share their ideas, get feedback from their peers and prepare a more accurate summary to tell or write in cooperation with their friends. The findings of the present study agree substantially with those of Ducate and Lomicka's (2009) study, indicating that including podcasting within language teaching processes aids teachers to make meaningful and contextualized activities rather than simple drilling and error correction tasks. Additionally, the results are in line with Storch's (2005) findings that revealed the students who participated in her study (16 of 18) were generally positive regarding the collaborative experience.

Furthermore, regarding the learners' perceptions toward implementing summary telling and writing and listening to podcasts in language

classes to improve productive skills, the results showed that most of the learners have positive view in this regard and believe that telling and writing summary can be effective tools in improving writing skill. The results of this study are in line with those of Facer, Abdous, and Camarena's (2009) study. They found that using podcasts could improve learners' speaking skill. In contrary, Stiffler, Stoten and Cullen (2011) provide evidence that learners did not have positive outlooks toward podcasting.

The outcomes commonly recognized the prominence of task-based language teaching in developing speaking and writing skills. This fact is in line with the conclusions of Ganjouee, Ghonsooly and Fatemi (2018) who examined the impact of task-based instruction on the enhancement of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' speaking skill and confirmed the impact of task-based instruction on the enhancement of Iranian EFL learners' speaking skill.

The findings revealed that output modality, participatory structure, and the interaction of these two had no significant effect on writing skill. Regarding the qualitative section, the findings showed that learners had positive attitude toward the use of podcasts and summary telling and writing in improving their writing performances. They were also interested in working in pairs and sharing their ideas and knowledge with each other.

The findings of this study provide some pedagogical implications for those foreign language teachers who are engaged in task-based language training. Summarizing in oral and written form teaches the learners how to recognize the most central concepts in a text, how to disregard unrelated ideas, and how to integrate the dominant ideas in an expressive way. Summarizing can improve memory of the learners and in this study, there is no difference between telling and writing summary and both are equally effective in writing skill. Moreover, working individually and in pairs revealed no significant difference, which showed the equal importance of both in improving writing skill. The present study suffered from a number of limitations and delimitations, which add further caution regarding the generalizability of these findings.

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