The Impact of Negotiated Syllabus on the EFL Learners' Writing Ability and Self-Esteem

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Abstract- The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of negotiated syllabus on developing EFL learners' writing ability and self-esteem. To do so, first Nelson proficiency test was administered to 90 participants to select intermediate homogenous learners. The scores were analyzed and the mean was obtained. Then one standard deviation above and below the mean was considered as a technique to homogenize the participants. Therefore, 61 learners were selected as homogeneous intermediate participants for this study. The learners were divided into experimental group ($n = 30$) and control group ($n = 31$). A writing test and self-esteem questionnaire (SEI) as pre-tests were given to both groups in order to determine their writing ability and level of self-esteem before starting the treatment course. The control group received conventional writing instruction but the experimental group experienced writing instruction based on negotiated syllabus. At the end of the course, the learners in both groups took a writing test and self–esteem questionnaire as post-test to find out which group had performed significantly better than the other. Independent samples *t*-test found a statistically significant difference in writing scores for experimental and control groups on the post-test favoring the experimental. Besides, *t*-test found a statistically significant difference in self-esteem scores between the two experimental and control groups on the post-test in favor of the experimental. Thus, the findings of present study indicated that writing ability and self-esteem were more significantly affected in light of the treatment via negotiated syllabus.

Index Terms- syllabus, negotiated syllabus, writing ability and self-esteem

I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a foreign language has become an increasingly important area in education because these days English is serving as the language of international communication. Therefore, many researchers try to find some ways to develop and facilitate the process of learning English. Language curriculum and syllabus play crucial roles in this regard. More precisely, since syllabus is considered the nucleus of the learning/teaching process, the use of inappropriate syllabuses may make this process end in failure. Rabbini (2002) defined that a syllabus acts as a guide for both teacher and learner by providing some goals to be attained. A syllabus can also be seen as a summary of the content to which learners will be exposed. Negotiated syllabus is a significantly different syllabus type because it allows full learner participation in the selection of content, mode of working, assessment. In negotiated syllabus students are more aware of their goals and select course objectives.

According to Coopersmith (1967), self-esteem is defined as the set of attitudes and beliefs that a person bears in relation to the outside world, which includes expectations of success/failure, the effort required for possible success and the reaction to possible failure.

Bandura(1995, p. 2) cited that writing ability is "the beliefs in one's capability and self-esteem to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations". Students' beliefs about themselves play a crucial role in their ability to learn how to write. Regardless of students' actual writing ability, self-esteem perceptions influence choice of activity, task perseverance, level of effort expanded and, probably, the degree of success achieved (Fleming, 1984). It was assumed that a direct result of negotiation in a writing class would be increased enthusiasm on the part of students for practicing writing and, accordingly, developing a more favorable attitude to learning English, in general, and more positive perceptions of their own writing ability. Writing apprehension of EFL students negatively co-related with their self-esteem" (Grodnick, 2001). Bandura (1986) suggested that higher self-esteem would contribute to better writing performance. However, the current study is developed and also conducted to substantiate proclaim of interrelationship and make a counter to a measure of hesitations by investigating the relation between syllabus and writing, and more precisely reveal the effect of using negotiated syllabus on the Iranian EFL learners' writing ability and self-esteem.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Negotiated Syllabus

Findings on negotiated syllabus viewed that negotiated syllabus is a kind of process oriented and learner-centered syllabus in which, Rabbini (2002) found that the focus is on the specification of learning tasks and activities that students will learn or undertake during teaching and learning course. Following the advent of communicative method, negotiation became very important. Riddle (2000) said that the negotiation of meaning in which the learners interact with each other and with instructor. Advocates of the learner-centered curriculum or syllabus negotiation argued for learners' active involvement in the shared task of developing the learning program through the process of negotiating with the teacher (Bloor & Bloor, 1988; Boomer, Lester, Onore, and Cook, 1992; Breen, 2001; Breen & Littlejohn, 2000; Markee, 1997; Nunan, 1988, 1999; Tudor, 1996). However, theoretically, syllabuses are of two types: *product-oriented* syllabus and *process-oriented* syllabus. Nunan (1994) defined that "product- oriented syllabus focuses on what the learners will know as a result at the end of instruction session". He stated that "product-oriented syllabuses aiming at knowledge and skills which learners should gain as a result of instruction" (p. 27). In contrast, processes syllabuses are more major to the process of language learning and focuses on the pedagogical processes leading to the language outcomes. Breen stated that, an important characteristic of the process syllabus is that " it is an infrastructure rather than a learning plan, with the syllabus designer no longer pre-selecting learning content, but providing a framework for teacher and learners to create their own on-going syllabus in the classroom"(1987a, p. 166), and learners are involved in evolving the syllabus.

B. Self-Esteem

"Self-esteem is probably the most pervasive aspect of any human behavior" (Malinowski, 1923). He stated that all human beings have a need for phatic communication. Degree of self-esteem, knowledge of yourself, belief in self-confidence (Malinowski, 1923 cited in Brown, 1988). According to Coppersmith (1967), self- esteem is a state of mind. It is the way you think

and feel about yourself. Having high self- esteem means having feelings of confidence, worthiness and positive regard for yourself. He noted that self-esteem refers to evaluation when individuals make and keep it regard to themselves. In briefly, "self-esteem is a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes that individuals hold toward themselves" (Coopersmith, 1967, pp. 4-5). People with high self- esteem feel good about themselves. They feel a sense of belonging and security. They respect themselves and appreciate others. They tend to be successful in life because they feel confident in taking on challenges and risking failure to achieve what they want. They have more energy for positive pursuits because their energy is not wasted on negative emotions, feelings of inferiority or working hard to take care of or please others at the expense of their own self-care. In effect, individuals come to respond to themselves in a manner consistent with the ways of those around him. Low self-esteem is likely to result when key figures reject, ignore, demean, or devalue the person.

C. Attitude toward Writing and Self- Esteem

Many studies have been conducted on the relevant factors related to writing attitudes in terms of pedagogy and learning strategy. For instance, Brindley and Schneider (2002) pointed out writing instruction should evolve into a more effective set of techniques and strategies that include modeling, shared writing, guided writing, and interactive writing (Pinnell and Fountas, 1998; Routman, 1991). Regarding the learning strategy to improve writing, Lee (1994) showed how pictures can be used as an effective guided writing strategy to facilitate students' writing process and improve writing proficiency. More specifically, such instruction using pictures in a guided writing environment can assist beginning foreign language students to develop and improve their writing skills as well as lower their anxiety in terms of expressing themselves in the target language.

According to Breen and Little John (as cited in Gourlay 2005) "teacher's interpretation of a syllabus and reasons for classroom decisions are usually covert and learners' own interpretations of what is done and how it relates to their own learning are the focus of overt consideration" (p. 211). The structure of self-esteem has become increasingly important for educators. Student self-esteem beliefs influence the perception of their ability and their associated behaviors. Self-esteem refers to the beliefs in one's own capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce specific attainments (Branden, 1983).

According to Bednar and Richard (1989), "Perceived self-esteem, or the belief in one's ability to succeed, contributes to students' level of motivation, aspiration, and academic achievement" .They claimed that the higher student's self-esteem, the more effort is exerted. Pajares and Valiante (2006) stated that "students writing self-belief has a direct influence on their apprehension towards writing" (pp. 158-170). Positive self-esteem beliefs lead to positive outcomes and negative self-esteem beliefs lead to negative outcomes. Research findings have consistently shown that writing self-esteem beliefs (students' sense of themselves) seems closely related to their writing performance.

D. Negotiated Syllabus and Writing Skill

Writing is the major medium by which students establish and present their knowledge. The ability to express one's thoughts effectively in writing relies on one's sense of ability towards the skill which an individual needs in his/her lifelong learning journey. Writing is the most popular means by which teachers assess student performance; however, it is not an easy skill to learn. Writing is a highly complex and demanding task requiring that a number of processes be

performed. Skilled writers are able to negotiate grammatical rules and mechanical actions whilst maintaining focus (Graham et al, 2000). However, most students are usually apprehensive toward writing activities, and writing instruction remains an area of low interest for those students (Lidvall, 2008; Clark, 2004). Besides, the lack of suitable learning strategies in writing results in low motivation for students (Yang & Chung, 2005; Lo & Hyland, 2007). To solve these problems, Lipstein and Renninger (2007) suggested students who are interested are more likely to develop a better understanding of writing, set writing goals, make use of various strategies, and seek feedback on their writing. Therefore, a better understanding of how to develop a suitable learning strategy or authoring tool to enhance students' writing interest and motivation is worth examining.

Negotiated syllabus means regularly involving the learners in decision making regarding the goals, content, presentation, and assessment of the course .In this kind of syllabus, learners learn through democratic decision-making. In negotiation-based approaches, teacher and learners come to agreement on what to learn and how to learn (Tuan, 2011). In relation to writing domain, Lo and Hyland (2007) believed that

> One way of enhancing students'' motivation and engagement to write is to provide opportunities for them to engage at a more meaningful level with the language through refocusing their writing classes to make them relevant to their social and cultural context as well as designing writing tasks which have meaning and interest to them and offer opportunities for social interaction and self-expression.'' (p. 221)

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Questions

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the following research questions were stated:

RQ1. Does a negotiated syllabus have any significant effect on developing EFL learners' writing ability?

RQ2. Does a negotiated syllabus significantly affect EFL learners' self-esteem?

B. Participants

In this study, the participants were 90 learners of both male and female. Nelson proficiency test was administered to 90 participants to select intermediate homogenous learners. The scores were analyzed and the mean was obtained. Then one standard deviation above and below the mean was considered as a technique to homogenize the participants. Therefore, 61 learners were selected as homogeneous intermediate participants for this study. After dividing the learners into experimental group ($n = 30$) and control group ($n = 31$), a writing test and self-esteem questionnaire as pre-tests were given to the two groups in order to determine their writing ability and level of self-esteem before starting the treatment course. The control group received conventional writing instruction but the experimental group experienced writing instruction based on negotiated syllabus. In fact the learners in experimental group were allowed to express their own ideas and their goals about the course. Then they negotiate about lesson planning, and selected writing topics through negotiation.

C. Instruments

The first instrument of the present study was the Nelson English language test (Test 250 B). Nelson proficiency test was given to 90 participants to select intermediate homogeneity students.

It was administered at the beginning of the study. The test consisted of three parts: cloze tests, structure and vocabulary. All parts were in the form of multiple – choice questions. There were 50 items and the subjects were given 45 minutes to mark their answer sheet for the correct answers. They were all familiar with that kind of test format, so no particular difficulty was encountered driving the test. The second instrument gauges their self-esteem. Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Ryden, 1978). It includes 26 items translated in Persian language. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability for SEI was assessed 0.85 in a pilot study done with 30 EFL learners who were similar to the main sample of the study. The third one was Writing Pre-test: [PET-Part 2 (Quintana, 2003)]. In addition, the forth one was Writing Post-test: [PET-Part 3 (Quintana, 2003)]. The last instrument was PET writing Description and Reliability. Self-esteem questionnaire and teacher-made test administered twice, before and after the treatment. Besides the inter-rater reliability value for the writing pre-test and post-test were estimated 0.82 and 0.83 respectively using Pearson correlation coefficient marked by two experienced EFL instructors (the researchers). Three EFL experts approved the content validity of the three instruments used in the present study.

D. Procedure

A writing task was administered to the students in order to identify their actual writing capabilities. Part 2 of PET, which was administered as pre-test .It described a situation and the students wrote about the situation between 35-45 words to complete the task. The instruction of pre-test of this research was this: "You are going to visit your aunt in the countryside". Write a card to your aunt. In your card, you should thank her for the invitation, say when you're going to arrive, and describe what you hoped to do there. Write 35-40 words on your paper. Part 3 of PET, which was administered as post-test, asks two questions and participants should write their answers in about 100 words. The researcher asked only one question in this study in order for the scoring to be more reliable. The instruction of post-test of this research was this: "Your English teacher has asked you write a story. Your story must begin with this sentence: *Late in the evening I heard a loud knock on the door.* Write your story in about 100 words on your paper.

In order to carry out the negotiated instruction, the following processes were done through:

Initially the learners are allowed to express their own ideas and their goals about the course. Then they were negotiated about lesson planning. The content of the materials and methodology are also were negotiated. So the goals of syllabus were explicit. It should be mentioned that the teaching carried out during 12 sessions.

- *Selection of Topics through Negotiation*: In order to select writing topics in a negotiated manner, the teacher can follow a variety of procedures. For example, s/he asks the students for their ideas about their favorite topics. More precisely, they are asked to write down their priorities in a list and hand in the list to the teacher who can, through a simple frequency analysis, decide what topics all or most of the students are most interested in. The short-listed topics will be what students will write about during the course. Another way in which the teacher can negotiate topics with students is by suggesting them a number of topics each session and asking them to select one that they all are relatively interested to write about. Alternatively, they can be allowed to write about one of the suggested topics.
- *Genre Selection:* There are several types of genres some of which a writing teacher may decide to teach, such as descriptive, expository, journalistic, narrative, persuasive, explanatory, argumentative, example, etc.

- In order to negotiate genres with students, the teacher can do one or some of the following. S/he can ask the students for their preferences toward different genres and which they think they will need the most in their afferent genres and which they think they will need the most in their future life. Alternatively, s/he can briefly explain the nature of some genres to them and help them choose one to focus on and practice for one or two sessions. The same process can be gone through to choose another genre to practice in the following sessions.
- *Negotiation on Assignment:* The researcher considers learners preferred assignment and sometimes allow learners to generate their own tasks.
- *Negotiation on Correcting Errors:* The researcher also negotiates with learners about how they prefer the correction of errors, whether the teacher gives feedback or the peers.
- *Negotiation on Assessing Writings:* Researcher allows learners to express their ideas about writing assessment. Learners are even questioned about self-assessment and peer-assessment.
- Teacher should attempt to encourage learners to learn cooperatively and learners should be actively involved in this process.
- Finally coming up with a common idea on each of the above parts and implementing each of them through the course.
- What needs to be taken into account is that negotiation does not mean that the teacher lets students make decisions. Instead, the teacher asks for ideas and tries to incorporate them into the decisions that s/he will make as the final arbiter.

IV. RESULTS

A. Nelson Homogeneity Test Results

Nelson proficiency test was given to 90 participants to select intermediate homogeneity students. As evident from Table 1, the mean, median and mode of the Nelson scores are 33.47, 33, and 28 respectively, which are not very far from each other.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Nelson Test Scores

N	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Skewness Ratio	Kurtosis Ratio
90	33.47	33.00	28	6.22	0.49	-1.65

Based on the results of Nelson test (Table 1), those 61 students whose scores were one standard deviation of 6.22 above and below the mean of 33.47 (scores between 27 and 39) were selected as homogeneous intermediate students for the main study. Moreover, the table shows that the normality assumption of the scores for running parametric statistical test is met since the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their respective standard errors is not beyond the ranges of +/- 1.96.

B. Addressing Research Question One

The first research question of this study sought to find out if a negotiated syllabus has any significant effect on developing EFL learners' writing ability.

In order to answer this research question, independent sample *t*-test was applied. Before discussing the results of *t*-test, the related descriptive statistics are provided in Table 2. It should be noted here that two raters have marked the writings and the average of the two raters' scores has been computed for the final analysis. According to Table 2, the mean and standard deviation of the experimental ($\bar{x}$ = 13.45, SD = 1.90) and control ($\bar{x}$ = 12.92, SD = 2.24) groups are not far from each other on pre-test of writing. Additionally the results in Table 2 reflects that the students in the experimental group ($\bar{x}$ = 15.92, SD = 2.08) have acted better than those in the

control group ($\bar{x}$ = 14.23, *SD* = 2.58) on post-test of writing. Furthermore, as the table shows, Skewness and Kurtosis of the four sets of writing scores do not exceed +/- 1.96 implying normal distribution of the scores.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Two Group's Scores on the Pre-test and Post-test of Writing (Average of the Two Raters)

Test	Group	*N*	Mean	*SD*	Skewness Ratio	Kurtosis Ratio
Pre-test	Experimental	30	13.45	1.909	-0.974	-0.390
	Control	31	12.92	2.248	-0.859	-0.856
Post-test	Experimental	30	15.92	2.081	-1.103	-0.529
	Control	31	14.23	2.581	-0.653	-1.228

According to Field (2009), four assumptions (i.e., of interval data, independence of subjects, normality and homogeneity of variances) should be checked before one decides to apply parametric tests (independent *t*-test for this study). The first assumption is not violated because the present data are measured on an interval scale. Bachman (2005) declares that the assumption of independence of subjects is met when the performance of any given individual is independent of the performance of other individual. In addition, the third assumption is met since Skewness and Kurtosis of the four sets of writing scores are not beyond the range of +/- 1.96, so it has normal distribution (Table 2). The other assumption, homogeneity of variances will be presented when reporting the results of the inferential statistics.

The result of independent *t*-test that was used to compare control and experimental groups' writing scores on the pre-test are set forth in Table 3. Based on the table, the assumption of equal of variances is met as the significance associated with Levene's Test (.31) reached above .05.

Table 3. Independent Samples Test to Compare Two Groups' Scores on Writing Pre-test

Levene's Test for Variances			*T*-test for Means			
Factor	*F*	*Sig.*	*t*	*df*	*Sig.* (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Equal variances assumed	1.036	.313	.992	59	.325	.531
Equal variances not assumed			.995	58.035	.324	.531

Independent *t*-test results (Table 3), indicated that there was not any statistically significant differences in writing scores for experimental ($\bar{x}$ = 13.45) and control ($\bar{x}$ = 12.92) groups (*t* (59) = .99, *p* = .32, *p* > .05), in which the *t*-observed was lower than the *t*-critical of 2.00. Thus, we conclude that the students in the two groups have the same writing ability and therefore are homogeneous regarding writing ability before facing the treatment of the study.

Further, the results of independent *t*-test that was used to compare experimental and control groups' writing scores on the post-test are represented in Table 4. As the table represents, the assumption of equal of variances was met (*p* = .14, *p* > .05).

Table 4. Independent Samples Test to Compare Two Groups' Scores on Writing Post-test

Levene's Test for Variances			*T*-test for Means			
Factor	*F*	*Sig.*	*t*	*df*	*Sig.* (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Equal variances assumed	2.162	.147	2.811	59	.007	1.691
Equal variances not assumed			2.821	57.153	.007	1.691

The results of independent *t*-test, as appeared in Table 4, shows that there existed a statistically significant difference in writing scores for experimental ($\bar{x}$ = 15.92) and control ($\bar{x}$ = 14.23) groups (*t (59)* = 2.81, *p* = .007, *p* < .05), in which the *t*-observed was higher than the *t*-critical of 2.00. As a result we reject the first null hypothesis that states "A negotiated syllabus does not have any significant effect on developing EFL learners' writing ability" and claim that a negotiated syllabus improves EFL learners' writing ability. Figure 1 below is a bar graph that graphically shows the results of both pre-test and post-test. As demonstrated in Figure 1, the students in the experimental group have expressed significantly better performance than those in the control group on the post-test, but not on the pre-test, in view of writing ability with the mean difference of 1.69 out of 20.
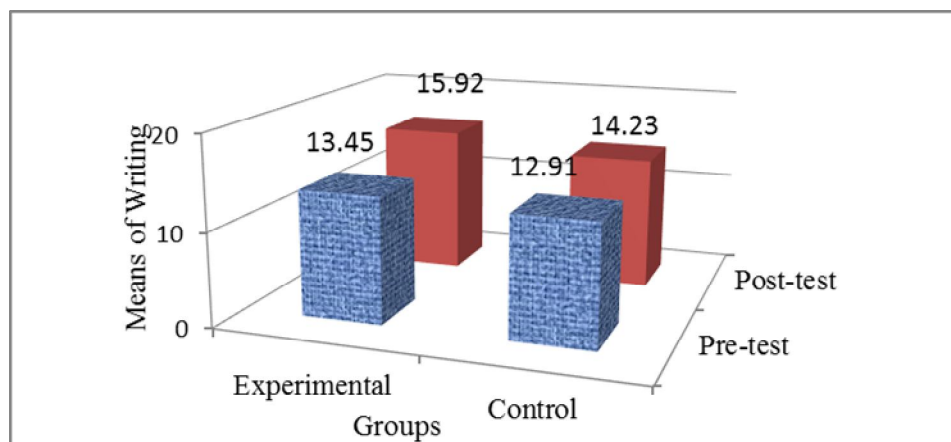

Figure 1. Two groups' means on writing pre-test and post-test

C. Addressing Research Question Two

The second research question of this study dealt with the effect of negotiated syllabus on EFL learners' self-esteem. Independent sample *t*-test was performed to investigate this research question. Before reporting the results of inferential statistics, the descriptive statistics of participants' self-esteem scores in the two control and experimental groups on both pre-test and post-test of self-esteem were computed and laid out in Table 5. A quck glance at the table reveals that the mean and standard deviation of the two experimental ($\bar{x}$ = 54.40, *SD* = 6.39) and control ($\bar{x}$ = 52.90, *SD* = 5.48) groups do not differ much on pre-test of self-esteem. Though the results revealed that the students in the experimental group ($\bar{x}$ = 58.10, *SD* = 6.42) outperformed those in the control group ($\bar{x}$ = 54.00, *SD* = 5.65) on post-test of self-esteem. Besides, as can be seen in Table 5, Skewness and Kurtosis of the four sets of self-esteem scores are not beyond the range of +/- 1.96 indicating normal distribution of the four sets of scores.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Two Group's Scores on the Pre-test and Post-test of Self-esteem

Test	Group	*N*	Mean	*SD*	Skewness Ratio	Kurtosis Ratio
Pre-test	Experimental	30	54.40	6.398	1.468	0.332
	Control	31	52.90	5.485	0.740	-0.383
Post-test	Experimental	30	58.10	6.424	1.770	0.737
	Control	31	54.00	5.651	0.817	-0.413

Table 6 below contains the results of independent sample *t*-test that was conducted to compare the two control and experimental groups' self-esteem scores on the pre-test of self-esteem. The table indicates that the hypothesis of equal of variances was met since Sig. of Levene's test, .52 was greater than .05.

Table 6. Independent Samples Test to Compare Two Groups' Scores on the Pre-test of Self-esteem

	Levene's Test for Variances			*T*-test for Means			
Factor		*F*	*Sig.*	*t*	*df*	*Sig.* (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Equal variances assumed		.414	.522	.982	59	.330	1.497
Equal variances not assumed				.979	57.034	.331	1.497

Independent samples *t*-test results, as represented in Table 6, showed that there was no statistically significant difference in means between the two groups on the pre-test of self-esteem, *t(59) = .98, p >.05*, in which the *t*-observed was below the *t* critical of 2.00. Therefore, we could conclude that the two groups were homogeneous regarding self-esteem before experiencing the treatment of this study (negotiated syllabus).

For more analysis, the researcher performed another analysis of independent samples *t*-test to compare two groups' self-esteem scores on the post-test; the results of which are set forth in Table 7. As Table 7 displays, the significant level associated with Levene's test, .93 was above.05 implying that the assumption of equal of variances was not violated.

Table 7. Independent Samples Test to Compare Two Groups' Scores on the Post-test of Self-esteem

	Levene's Test for Variances			*T*-test for Means			
Factor		*F*	*Sig.*	*t*	*df*	*Sig.* (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Equal variances assumed		.006	.938	2.649	59	.010	4.100
Equal variances not assumed				2.643	57.517	.011	4.100

Independent samples *t*-test (Table 7) detected a statistically significant difference in self-esteem scores between the two experimental and control groups ($t (59) = 2.64$, $p < .05$), in which the *t* value was more than the *t* critical of 2.00. Accordingly, the second null hypothesis of the current study which reports, "A negotiated syllabus does not affect the EFL learners' self-esteem was rejected. Therefore, with 95% confidence, it can be claimed that a negotiated syllabus develops the EFL learners' self-esteem. In fact, the two groups scored differently on the final test of self-esteem. As Figure 2 illustrates, the students in the experimental and control groups have acted not very differently on the pre-test of self-esteem, nevertheless on the post-test, the students in the experimental group have performed significantly superior to those in the control group as a result of the treatment of the study (negotiated syllabus).
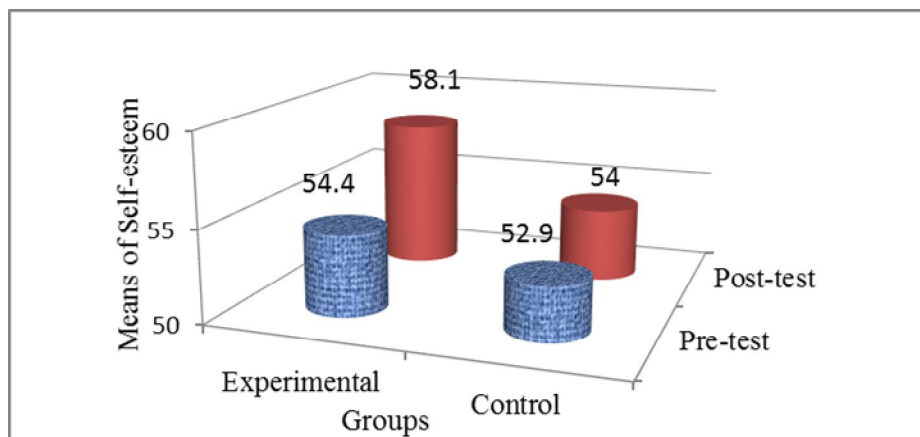

Figure 2. Bar graph of two groups' means on the pre-test and post-test of self-esteem

V. DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study was to examine the probable effect of negotiated syllabus on developing EFL learners' writing ability and self-esteem. To do so, two research questions were raised. The first question dealt with the impact of negotiated syllabus on developing EFL learners' writing ability. The results showed that the students in the experimental group outperformed the control group ($t (59) = 2.81$, $p = .007$, $p < .05$), with the mean difference of 1.69/21. Therefore, the answer to the first research question was positive, and it was declared that negotiated syllabus improves EFL learners' writing ability. This result is in line with the studies done by Boomer, Lester, Onore, and Cook (1992), Breen and Littlejohn (2000), Hall (1999), Neguyen's (2011). They all found that there is a significant positive relationship between negotiated syllabus and writing ability, and their results showed that the negotiated syllabus has significant effect on learner's writing ability.

The second research question concerned with the effect of negotiated syllabus on developing EFL learners' self-esteem. The results revealed that there was a significant difference in self-esteem levels for control and experimental groups ($t (59) = 2.64$, $p < .05$). Accordingly, we answered the second question positively as well, and we could assert that negotiated syllabus affects self-esteem of Iranian EFL learners. This finding lends support to Pajares, Miller, and Johnson's (1999) research. Their studies have revealed a great relationship between self-esteem and writing performance. The result coincides with Lavelle's (2006) opinion that learners with high self-esteem face difficult writing tasks as challenging and work thoughtfully to learn them.

Graham and Harris and Troia (2000) believe that learned helplessness, failure, self-doubts, poor motivation, and poor self-esteem will negatively affect a student's writing ability.

VI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Carrying out this study we came to the conclusion that negotiated syllabus develops EFL learners' writing ability. In addition, it was concluded that there is a positive meaningful relationship between negotiated syllabus and self-esteem of Iranian EFL learners. In fact, the syllabus which derives from the negotiation procedure is more flexible and relevant to learners' needs and therefore more motivating and helps learners to play a more informed and self-directive goal in their learning. Also as Breen and Littlejohn (2000) mention, negotiation prepares a context in which opportunities exist for learner to articulate and, so, improve their prior understanding, goals and intentions as reference points for new learning, and allows for changing the perceptions in the learners, without specifying specific content, methodology, structure, or grammar.

In addition, according to Pienemann (1985), as far as the range of decisions open to negotiation is concerned, Breen, in Breen and Littlejohn (2000), propose that procedural negotiation can be the means for teachers and students to attain agreement in four crucial decision-making areas that, in turn, can create a curriculum. Consequently, decisions in the second language classroom will be made with regard to the goal of language learning (why?), the content or subject matter which learners will encounter (what?), the ways of working in the classroom (how?), learners' preferred means of assessment of the efficiency and quality of the work and its results (how well?).

These four areas of decision-making are expressed in terms of questions the answers to which are negotiated by the teacher and the learners together. Negotiation, therefore, between the teacher and the learners and between the learners themselves, with the use of different tools, can be devoted to any one of these or similar questions, depending at certain points on the context in which the classroom group works.

Second language teachers can also use the results of the present study. They can teach writing in a pleasant atmosphere and motivate the learners to write about their interesting topics. They will be more stimulated to express their own ideas and experiences to the teacher and peers. If their needs are met during the writing class, they feel that they are important elements in the classroom and are personalized. Thus, this personalized context in the classroom promotes their self-esteem considerably.

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