Research Paper

Analyzing the Main EFL Learners' Writing Problems with Focus on Figurative Language: Metaphor and Metonymy Instruction

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Abstract
This study was an endeavor to explore the main sources of EFL learners' writing problems through dialogic interactions. It also investigated the effect of metaphor and metonymy on EFL learners' writing achievement. To achieve this end, the researcher adopted mixed-method research with a sample of intermediate language students from both genders. In the qualitative section, 20 EFL learners were selected through purposive sampling, and in the quantitative section, 120 language students were selected through convenience sampling from a university in Gorgan. Data were gathered through Quick Oxford Placement Test (OPT), writing tests, and a semi-structured interview. After recording and transcribing the interviews, the transcripts of the interviews were formatted using the software NVIVO 11 Pro®. With the help of this software, the textual data were reduced into some statements which could reflect the main ideas of the participants' lived experiences without any intervention from the researcher. However, the data of the tests were inserted into SPSS software and the ANCOVA test was run to indicate differences between the three groups in terms of their writing improvement. The main results suggested that metaphor and metonymy through dialogic interactions had significant effects on the participations' writing achievement. As well as that, findings from the analysis of data revealed the four main sources of writing problems as linguistic, personal, epistemological, and ecological.

Keywords: *EFL Context; Figurative Language; Metaphor; Metonymy; Writing Skill*

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تجزیه و تحلیل مشکلات اصلی نوشتاری زبان آموزان زبان انگلیسی با تمرکز بر زبان تصویری: آموزش استعاره و کنایه

این مطالعه تلاشی برای کشف منابع اصلی مشکلات نوشتاری زبان آموزان زبان انگلیسی از طریق تعاملات گفت و گوی و همچنین بررسی تأثیر استعاره و کنایه بر پیشرفت نوشتاری زبان آموزان زبان آموزان بود. نمونه ای از دانشجویان زبان متوسطه از هر دو جنس، در بخش کیفی، ۲۰ زبان آموز زبان انگلیسی به روش نمونه گیری هدفمند و در بخش کمی، ۱۲۰ دانشجوی زبان از طریق نمونه گیری در دسترس از دانشگاه گریگوری انتخاب شدند. آزمون های نوشتاری و مصاحبه نیمه ساختاریافته پس از ضبط و رونویسی مصاحبه ها، متن مصاحبه ها با استفاده از نرم افزار NVIVO 11 Pro فرمت شد و با کمک این نرم افزار، داده های متنی به عباراتی تبدیل شد که می تواند منعکس شود. ایده‌های اصلی تجربیات زیسته شرکت‌کنندگان بدون هیچ مداخله‌ای از سوی ریسه اما داده‌های آزمون‌ها وارد نرم‌افزار SPSS شد و آزمون ANCOVA انجام شد تا تفاوت‌های سه گروه را از نظر بهبود نوشتاری نشان دهد. همچنین، یافته‌های حاصل از تجزیه و تحلیل داده‌ها، چهار منبع اصلی مشکلات نوشتاری را به عنوان زبان‌شناختی، شخصی، معرفت‌شناختی و بوم شناختی نشان داد.

واژگان کلیدی: زبان تصویری، استعاره، کنایه، مهارت نوشتاری

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Introduction

Writing as one of the most important skills both in general English classrooms and university courses plays important role in the educational system of Iran. On one hand, learners must pay special attention to writing to become successful in the workplace and their educational life. On the other hand, those who want to continue education at higher levels, need academic writing. However, writing skill is well-known for being difficult and stressful and learners usually show negative attitudes toward them. Writing has always been one of the most challenging areas of language learning, especially for Iranian EFL learners. Usually, in conventional writing classrooms, activities are reduced to a reformation of pre-fabricated structures and fixed expressions based on cliché topics in essay/ writing classes, and little creativity in the content of writing can be seen. In this approach, teachers usually don't pay attention to creativity; therefore, the writing of the students who are developed in this system may suffer from a lack of creativity and novelty. In other words, creativity in bringing new ideas is missing in today's Iranian writing classrooms. That is one of the major reasons for students to find novel ideas and expressions to write.

Moses and Mohamad (2019) argued that to improve learners' writing ability they should overcome difficulties such as lack of appropriate word choice, poor grammar, and spelling, and a lack of exposure e to specific books and reading materials. Although these elements are highly important for developing texts and improving writing, the lack of creativity itself is evident in the mentioned study. In other words, their findings focused on t form of writing rather than the content. Pratiwi (2012) stated that linguistic difficulty (language use and vocabulary aspects) was more complex when compared with cognitive difficulty (organization and mechanic aspects) and psychological difficulty (content aspect) in writing. His findings also highlight the lack of creativity which is related to the content of the writing. By considering the above-mentioned writing difficulties and problems, using figurative language (metaphor and metonymy) may moderate these difficulties and possibly elevate the learners' creation, imagination, and thinking process. Therefore, learners gain the ability to use a wide range of conventional and unconventional words, structures, and phrases instead of old-fashioned pre-fabricated patterns in writing.

The thinking process is another important factor that makes the usage of metaphor and metonymy significant for our writing classrooms. Accordingly, Panther and Thornburg (2017) considered these two writing elements as figurative thoughts. Moreover, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) turned over the idea that metaphor and metonymy were only 'linguistic devices', or 'parts of language', and expand the belief that these were basically 'figures of thought' (cited in, Gibbs, 2015). The reason that people use metaphor and metonymy abundantly is the abstract ideas that happen in metaphorical and metonymic terms. Therefore, they can be considered fundamental elements of the human thinking process. Littlemore and Low (2006a) asserted that teachers must teach learners how to use metaphor and metonymy creatively, properly, and effectively in writing. In this case, learners' writing ability will be increased and strengthened impressively. However, connecting these two variables is not easy. Supposedly, there needs to be a technique to help learners use metaphor and metonymy in their writing. This technique could be dialogic interaction which has recently been approached by researchers in the field of ELT. Regarding the various kinds of discourse existing in classrooms and, in particular, writing classrooms, it could be a sound question whether this type of talk and interaction can help learners become more aware of using figurative language in their writing. Harmer (2007) suggested that learners are more likely to be involved in productive classroom discourse when they are motivated to accept dialogic challenges. They are strengthened to challenge the problems in this kind of interaction

and learners are taught to think critically and convey openly what they think to other learners. In doing so, they can help each other to make progress in their achievements.

Since students usually copy ideas from some sources, they may have difficulty coming up with novel and new ideas in the writing classroom. The technique of practicing figurative language may remove this problem and help them develop the power of creating new ideas in their minds. In other words, the problem of learners' inability to produce new ideas can be solved by practicing metaphors and metonymy throughout the thinking process. As a result, it could be a sound question to find out whether dialogic interaction as a technique can help students create more figurative language in their writing classes or not. In this regard, learners' views are taken into account since they are the ones who experience these difficulties. Thus, learners can cast light on where the sources of difficulty originate. In other words, it can be concluded that the present study could view the writing problems from a different and novel angle which has not been reported in the literature yet. Although epistemological and ecological issues have been studied in education, they are rarely approached in ELT. To meet the research objectives, the following questions have been raised;

RQ1. Does instruction of metaphor and metonymy have effects on EFL learners' writing achievement through dialogic interactions?

RQ2. What are the main sources of writing problems among Iranian EFL learners?

Literature Review

Kramsch (2003) used a metaphor approach to examine opinions about learning foreign languages. He evaluated college students' explicit metaphors for language learning and students' essays. She claimed that students and teachers make illustrations of themselves and their skills through metaphors. Moreover, Ghane Shirazi and Talebizadeh (2013) claimed that Second language learners need Metaphorical Competence (MC) which is the capability to understand and employ metaphors in natural communication. The absence of knowledge of metaphorical concepts frequently causes students to make mistakes. They reported on a study accomplished to examine the improvement of conceptual fluency and metaphorical competence in Persian students of English. A group of intermediate language students was chosen to be studied for the effectiveness of idiomatic expressions instruction. At the end of the instruction, it was discovered that it is probable to develop students' conceptual fluency (CF) through prolonged contact with idiomatic expressions.

Choi, Tatar, and Kim (2014) discovered the role of dialogic interactions in enhancing L2 undergraduate students' classroom contribution at a university in South Korea. Former research on English-mediated instruction (EMI) has concentrated mainly on the efficiency of instruction, as assessed based on the skills and proficiency levels of the learners or teachers, grounded on the supposition that L2 linguistic competence is the major requirement for fruitful EMI classes. Though, using analysis and interview data of learners' opinions of dialogic teaching and classroom observation data, they revealed the achievement of dialogic teaching. Furthermore, Gillies (2015) discovered Dialogic communications in the cooperative classroom. His research consists of three Year 7 teachers and 17 groups of students (3–5 students per group) from their classes. The educators had decided to teach two units of cooperative, inquiry-based science through two school terms. All three educators had been taught to employ a dialogic approach to teaching intended to test learners' thinking and learning. This investigation offered instances of both educators' and learners' dialogic interactions and argues the complementarity of these discourses even though the educators used dialogic approaches various to some extent in cooperating with their learners.

Ahkemoğlu and Mutlu (2016) examined the conceptual metaphors of both ELT major and non-ELT major learners concerning their perception of an English language teacher and showed

that though some metaphors are strange to English language teachers such as oracle, schizophrenic, and gum, some metaphors appear to be typical with the ones developed for the notion of a teacher such as "light", "guide" and "bridge". In a recent study, Metzger (2017) tried to offer descriptive data on (a) how high school teachers experience the dialogic interaction within reflective dialogue, (b) what evidence of learning is present in the interaction, and (c) how self-directed motivation is supported in the interaction. The outcomes showed teachers involve in a process of making meaning of their experiences through exploration, storytelling, and critical reflection on their practices. They practiced the need for competency and autonomy, but feel the need for joining mostly. These requirements are seen as they give each other the space to reveal and overcome their personal and professional anxiety and troubles together. Precise dialogic communications that reinforced educators' learning and inspiration are defined.

Method

This study contained two parts experimental and correlational. In the experimental part, 60 intermediate language students from both genders were selected through available sampling. The participants were divided into three groups of 20 learners. The first two groups were considered the experimental groups while the last one was regarded as the control group. The participants in the first group were taught how to use metaphor through dialogic interactions and the members of the second group were given the metonymy treatment through dialogic interactions finally, the students in the control group were taught based on the usual methodology of the institute which was free of any instruction related to metaphor, metonymy, and dialogic interactions. The study is a mixed-methods design, in the qualitative part, a phenomenological research tradition was adopted, through purposive sampling, 20 English language students from the Islamic Azad university of Gorgan were selected. In the quantitative part, through convenience sampling 120 English language students from the Islamic Azad university of Gorgan were selected. Data were gathered through Quick Oxford Placement Test, Writing Test, and a Semi-Structured Interview.

In the experimental part, the participants were given the writing test as the pre-test. In the first group, (metaphor group) the participants receive direct instruction methods based on the developing paragraphs along with general instructions of the "JUST" series, and then the participants were explicitly taught how to use primary metaphor and lastly clarification by a variety of examples designed and developed in the researcher-made metaphor pamphlet through dialogic interactions (teacher-learners/ learner-learner). The same activities done in the first group were applied in the second group (metonymy group) too, but the metaphor was replaced with metonymy. In the metonymy group, the researcher-made metonymy pamphlet was taught and practiced with the help of teacher-learner and learner-learner interactions. The dialogic part was done by breaking the students into groups and asking them to interact with each other to come up with a sentence containing metaphor or metonymy. In the third group which was the control group, the participants were given the usual treatment of teaching wring wrong ST" in which no focus was on metaphor and metonymy. After 14 sessions of intervention, twice a week, all three groups were given the writing test again as the post-test.

In the qualitative part, after recording and transcribing the interviews, the transcripts of the interviews were formatted using the software NVIVO 11 Pro®. With the help of this software, the textual data were reduced into some statements which could reflect the main ideas of the participants' lived experiences without any intervention from the researcher. According to the guidelines provided by Creswell (2005 p. 83), these sentences or statements were clustered into pivotal concepts which are termed "meaning units", which were then reported as "textual descriptions" or "general themes" (in this study, the lived experiences of participants writing difficulty in verbatim quotes). In addition, a structural description which is an interpretation of

the setting or circumstances in which writing problems arise is also added to the textual descriptions by referring to the related literature and theoretical foundations. These two descriptions were linked together to constitute the main findings of the study. This process is termed "horizontalization" or "phenomenological reduction" (Creswell, 2005). In other words, in the process of horizontalization, the textual data were reviewed to be linked with the related theories and models in the related literature and come up with phenomenological reduction. In the quantitative part, data from writing tests were inserted into SPSS software and the ANCOVA test was run to see whether there would be any difference between the three groups in terms of their writing improvement.

Results

ANCOVA for Writing Pre-test
Before giving treatment to the three groups (metaphor, metonymy, and control groups), a writing pre-test was given to them to see whether they differ in their writing performance. ANCOVA test was run since the data were parametric. The following table shows descriptive statistics of ANCOVA. As seen in Table 1, the means of these three groups are not that different which can show that the participants were nearly at the same level of writing.

Table 1
The Descriptive Statistics of ANCOVA for Pre-test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Lower Bound		
Metaphor	20	74	3.241	.874	70.21	78.47	49	97
Metonymy	20	70	2.985	.541	67.25	73.20	57	95
Control	20	72	3.740	.989	69.87	75.40	46	93
Total	60	72	3.354	.744	70.23	75.35	52	95

Table 2
Parameter Estimates

Parameter	B	Std. error	T	Sig.	95% of the confidence interval	
					Lower bound	Higher bound
Metaphor	54.256	.458	84.554	.07	69.840	45.665
Metonymy	12.23	.4491	71.241	.09	3.65	-4.215
Dialogic interactions	2.15	.6658	31.119	.12	-2.541	1.65
Control	16.0021	.1247	41.945	.08	.125	.516

a This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.
Dependent Variable: Dialogic interactions

Table 2 presents regression results for this ANCOVA model. Controlling for dialogical interactions, the adjusted mean difference between control and metonymy is 12.23, and the adjusted mean difference between metaphor and control is 54.256. However, to prove statistically that there is no difference between these three groups, the result of ANCOVA should be presented.

Table 3
The Results of ANCOVA for the Pre-test

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	212.57	2	106.34	4.582	.09
Within Groups	1475.52	58	28.653		
Total	1688.09	60			

If the p-value is bigger than the sig level, then it can be claimed that there is no significant difference between the groups. According to Table 4.5, there is no statistically significant difference between these three groups (F (2,43) = 4.58, p ≤ .05). Thus, it can be said that the three groups were nearly the same in terms of writing before the treatment.

ANCOVA for Writing Post-test

To find whether there was a difference between the three mentioned groups in terms of their writing skill, the ANCOVA test was run. Table 4 shows the results of the post-test.

Table 4
The Descriptive Statistics of ANCOVA for Post-test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Lower Bound		
Metaphor	20	84	4.582	.654	78.31	92.67	58	98
Metonymy	20	82	2.541	.412	68.47	80.20	56	96
Control	20	75	3.470	.740	69.98	81.90	53	94
Total	60	77.66	3.412	.584	71.63	83.05	55.6	96

As seen in Table 4, the means of these three groups on the writing test are different which can show that the participants were not at the same level of writing in different groups.

Table 5
Parameter Estimates

Parameter	B	Std. error	T	Sig.	95% of the confidence interval	
					Lower bound	Higher bound
Metaphor	78.002	.663	75.0025	.000	65.744	63.058
Metonymy	45.14	.7236	14.0069	.000	14.5523	-36.12
Dialogic interactions	6.77	.3358	89.119	.000	-4.247	5.23
Control	14.1489	.14569	11.45	.000	.349	.741

a This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.
Dependent Variable: Dialogic interactions

Table 5 presents regression results for this ANCOVA model. Controlling for dialogical interactions, the adjusted mean difference between control and metonymy is 45.14, and the adjusted mean difference between metaphor and control is 78.002. However, to prove statistically that there is a significant difference between these three groups, the result of ANCOVA should be presented. Table 6 shows the results of ANCOVA.

Table 6
The Results of ANCOVA for Post-test

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	223.21	2	121.52	3.87	.004
Within Groups	1562.42	58	32.441		
Total	1785.63	60			

If the p-value is smaller than the sig level, then it can be stated that there is a significant difference between the groups. According to Table 7, there is a significant difference between

these three groups (F (2,43) = 3.87, p ≤. 05). Thus, it can be said that the three groups were not the same in terms of writing after the treatment through using dialogic interactions.

To find out where this difference is and what two groups are different from each other, the post hoc test was run. Table 7 shows the results of the post hoc test of ANCOVA.

Table 7
The Post hoc Test Results

(I) Group (J) (II) Group		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig	95% Confidence Interval			
					Lower Bound		Upper Bound	
Mtph	Mtn	-2.56*	3.21	.007	-5.77	-.96	-2.10	2.36
	Cont	8.63*	1.24	.002				
Mtn	Mtph	2.56*	3.21	.007	-2.10	-.52	-5.77	1.84
	Cont	7.41	.845	.041				
Cont	Mtph	-8.63*	1.24	.002	-2.54	-2.63	-1.47	
	Mtn	-7.41	.845	.041			.85	

As seen in Table 7, there was no significant difference between the metaphor group and the metonymy group (.007 ≤ .05) in terms of their writing performance, with the metaphor group (Mean=84) being relatively better than the metonymy group (Mean=82) in writing. In addition, there was a significant difference between the metaphor group and the control group with the metaphor group (Mean=84) being better than the control group (Mean=75) in their writing ability (.002 ≤ .05). Besides, there was a significant difference between the metonymy group and the control group (.041 ≤.05) about their writing performance, with the metonymy group (Mean=82) better than the control group (Mean=75). All in all, the results indicated that metaphor and metonymy, as two types of figurative language, through dialogic interactions had significant effects on the participations' writing ability.

Interview Results

To find the main sources of Iranian EFL learners' writing problems, 20 participants were interviewed and 179 statements were obtained through data analysis by the software NVIVO 11 Pro®. These statements shaped 24 meaning units of writing problems.

Table 8
The Meaning Units Obtained from Statements

No	Frequency of the statement	Meaning unit
1	14	confused understanding of cohesion and coherence
2	3	inability to understand topics
3	19	Lack of grammatical mastery
4	19	Failing to know enough words
5	4	Misusing words in their correct places
6	2	Spelling problems
7	1	Punctuation problems
8	7	The negative effect of mother tongue structures and words
9	4	Confusion over formality and informality
10	8	Writing anxiety
11	1	Lack of practice and endeavor
12	1	Lack of concentration
13	14	Problems with producing content

14	4	Insufficient time for practicing writing in the class
15	4	The inefficiency of teaching methods
16	7	Incompetent teachers
17	8	Boring essence of writing
18	7	The insignificance of writing compared to other skills
19	14	Not motivated enough
20	12	Not asking us to write from primary education
21	11	Failing how to develop a paragraph
22	6	Problems with connecting ideas come to mind
23	5	Boring topics
24	4	Repetitive topics

The detailed account of the process of phenomenological reduction is as follows:

Linguistic Factors

As six meaning units (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8) refer to the issues all related to linguistic aspects of writing such as grammar, vocabulary, etc., it is not illogical to consider one main source of writing problems to lie in the linguistic aspect.

Personal Factors

The four meaning units of numbers 19, 12, 11, and 10 demonstrate the role of personal factors such as anxiety, motivation, hardworking, etc, in writing difficulties from participants' views.

Epistemological Factors

The meaning units of 1, 2, 9, 13, 17, 18, 21, and 22 refer to discourse competence and strategic competence (Bachman & Palmer, 1996); however, they were related to the epistemological mismatch between the western education which has determined the principles of academic writing and the eastern education where the participants have grown.

Ecological Factors

The meaning units of 14, 15, 16, 20, 23, and 24 directly or indirectly refer to the environmental factors which are here termed ecological factors.

Discussion

The experimental part revealed that using figurative language through dialogic interactions can help learners improve their writing performance. Considering the theoretical underpinnings of dialogic interactions (Bakhtin, 1984), the abstract aspects of language are criticized which were the issues requiring independent deep thinking. Therefore, writing alone and passing these abstract stages in writing for learners seem highly complex. It is expected that learners have difficulty using the figurative language including metaphor and metonymy in their writing if they get no help from their peers or teachers. This finding also supports Guiles (2015) who mentioned "there is no doubt that talk by teachers and peers can stimulate and extend students' thinking and advance their learning." (p.10). The mentioned stimulation in our study has been triggered through figurative language. As a result, the present study has shown that if learners use figurative language including metaphor and metonymy through dialogic interactions, they can improve their writing which is in line with the theoretical tenets of dialogic interactions.

In addition, one indispensable component of writing is using one's imagination to create ideas, without which writing may not be completed. One of the highly approachable techniques to help learners to use their imagination in writing is using figurative language like using metaphor and metonymy. This image is in line with cognitive level (one of the four variables of a dialogic talk by Christoph & Nystrand, 2001). They pinpointed four subcategories for cognitive level namely: record, recitation, analysis, and speculation. That metaphor/ metonymy has been used through these procedures. Thus, it can be generally thought that through figurative language including metaphor and metonymy, learners' writing can be improved. This is in line with the findings of Shokouhi and Isazade (2009) who tried the effect of conceptual and image metaphor types on the Iranian language learners to learn and use them. Their finding revealed that both conceptual and image metaphors are helpful in language learning and the finding of this study also revealed that figurative language helps improve writing ability as well. In another study on the role of figurative language in improving EFL learners' language achievement, Farjami (2012) tried to prove the positive effect of metaphors and metonymies in vocabulary learning in the Iranian context. Likewise, the present study in the Iranian context revealed that using figurative language can have positive effects on writing improvement. Since both writing and vocabulary achievement can be considered as various parts of language achievement, it can be concluded that both studies can be considered to be in line with each other. Although Farjami (2012) implemented a qualitative design, the present study used a quantitative design to reach this conclusion. additionally, the Findings of this study revealed that metonymy is helpful for improvement in writing which is in line with Guan (2009). Similarly, Muhammed (2015) focused on the difficulties of paragraph writing among college students. He concluded that Kurdish EFL students encountered considerable difficulties in writing paragraphs, such as paragraph components and mixing several ideas in one paragraph including worthlessness of controlling ideas and support, redundancy and repetition, and a lack of description. Regarding the findings, it can be concluded that the present study can partially support Muhammed (2015) and these two studies are in line with each other.

The finding of the present study is in contrast with MacArthur (2010) who believed that explicit teaching of metaphor expressions could not recommend acceptable outcomes. The present findings revealed that using metaphoric expression through dialogic interactions helps develop writing skills. However, practicing figurative language in writing especially metaphor and metonymy for learners is considered a difficult task to be done. In this study, it was revealed that dialogic interaction can be introduced as one effective technique to do so since imagination and its related issues require cooperation so that learners can share their weaknesses and strengths. Therefore, it can be concluded that the results obtained in this study highlight the overriding significance of both figurative language and dialogic interactions for learners who are interested in improving their writing.

The correlational section of the present study revealed that writing problems derive from various sources which are mainly of linguistic, personal, epistemological, and ecological types. Here, firstly, the main findings are explained, and then other related studies are discussed to see whether they are in line with the findings of the present study or not. The prominent finding is the role of epistemological and ecological sources of writing errors which have not been dealt with in previous studies in the related literature. Thus, it can be said that this finding is relatively novel and can be debated in further research to elaborate on its details more precisely. Nevertheless, the effect of epistemological aspects on the participants' writing errors can be explained by the recent paradigm shift towards socio-cultural issues of learning as reflected in the sociocultural theory of second language acquisition which puts focus on social and cultural roots of learners and their effects on their performance in language learning and achievement. To prove it theoretically, some of these meaning units are discussed. For example, meaning unit number 1 indicates

confusion over understanding cohesion and coherence. This was a concurrent theme with the high frequency of occurrence in the collected data. Cohesion and coherence are theoretically characterized as existing consistency alongside a paragraph which is mainly dealing with connecting some discourse functions such as contrast, addition, example, result, or reason through placing the related linguistic linking devices before each transition (Hyland, 2004).

Learners' inability to make sense of these functions and transitions is a common problem that Iranian EFL students usually encounter while learning writing. Drawing on the socio-cultural theory of second language acquisition, success in language achievement including various stages of the writing process requires having agency on the part of the writer. In other words, the learner as a writer should believe that he or she is free and competent enough to produce and make. On the other hand, the educational system where the participants of the present study grew up pays less significance and attention to the agency. On the contrary, in this system, the learners are implicitly taught that as a learner they should follow and memorize. That is to say, the epistemology based on which this educational system has grown maintains that a learner is not competent enough to have a voice, to change, to express, and to decide. According to this monologue-based epistemology, learners should listen to the teacher who is the only authority in the class and learners should follow and obey. The truth of the matter is that the traces of this epistemology can be seen in primary school education where learners are not given enough chances to express themselves and criticize the teachers' ideas. Thus, these learners fail to have enough understanding of what it can mean to express their ideas and produce the realization of the functions of contrast, result, example, and addition. As a result, it can be concluded that this problem is a function of an epistemological contradiction between two different educational systems. Likewise, other meaning units of this category can be related to the epistemological differences drawing on the same deduction presented.

Conclusion and Implications

The main results suggested that metaphor and metonymy, as two types of figurative language, through dialogic interactions had significant effects on the participations' writing. This finding indicated the overriding importance of figurative language which has been widely neglected in foreign language teaching programs in Iran over the previous decades (Farjami, 2012). Thus, it is suggested that teacher education centers pay more attention to figurative language while training new and novice teachers. Besides, it can be interpreted that writing academically is not a pure function of cognitive aspects, but some affective and imaginative issues play an important role in this process. In other words, metaphor and metonymy as two examples of figurative language can be practiced more by teachers in their classes. In addition, dialogic interaction was reported to be effective in writing improvement among the participants of this study which shows the significance of pair work and other collective activities in the class. Although in recent methods of language teaching, there has been a strong focus on group activities, teachers are well aware of the necessity of doing these collective activities in the class, they usually fail to use these activities for writing skills since it is usually deemed as an individual piece of work. On the other hand, about the correlational section of the present study, the remarkable point of this finding is the presentation of ecological and epistemological facets of writing as the two new areas of writing problems that have rarely been recognized previously. In other words, it can be concluded that the present study could view the writing problems from a different and novel angle which has not been reported yet. Although epistemological and ecological issues have been studied in education, they are rarely approached in ELT. As a result, the present study calls for more exploration of epistemological issues of language teaching, especially in writing. Every research study in the scope of TEFL is done to provide the practitioners including teachers, students,

testers, and material developers with some useful insights. This research is expected to exert some important points which are termed pedagogical implications. The present work calls for using group work and figurative language in writing training programs that have not been employed in foreign language courses. Thus, teachers are advised to provide some situations in the class in which more figurative language and more dialogical interactions are used and practiced. Also, material developers are suggested to insert some parts in the English course books in which learners are supposed to practice more figurative language and more dialogical interactions. More importantly, as the first source of writing problems is related to linguistic issues, EFL teachers are expected to be more prepared in terms of linguistic issues of writing before going to the class and try to look for more successful methods to teach linguistic issues of writing. They are also suggested not to ignore other sources of writing problems including personal, epistemological, and ecological sources. In terms of epistemological problems, educational theoreticians can revisit the existing educational approaches and change them into more updated and more compatible with the existing realities of Iranian society.

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