Relationship Among Writing Apprehension, Writing Self-Efficacy, and Iranian EFL Learners' Writing Performance

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Abstract. The study aims to examine the relationship among writing apprehension, writing self-efficacy, and Iranian EFL learners' performance on a writing task. The role of such individual variables in predicting students' writing ability is also investigated. A total number of 40 Iranian EFL learners (20 males and 20 females) from the Iran Language Institute (ILI) in Isfahan, Iran were given Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) adopted from Cheng (2004), Post-Secondary Writerly Self-Efficacy Scale (PSWSES) adopted from Schmidt and Alexander (2012), and two writing tasks. Results indicated that there was a significant strong reverse relationship between Iranian EFL learners' writing apprehension and their writing self-efficacy. As for the relationship between writing apprehension and writing performance, the finding demonstrated a significant negative relationship between Iranian EFL learners' writing apprehension and their writing performance. It was also found that Iranian EFL learners' writing self-efficacy had a significant positive relationship with their writing performance. Finally, results indicated that each independent variable had a predictive power on writing performance but in an inverse direction.

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1. Introduction

Among the four language skills,writing seems to be one of the most intricate and difficult skills for teaching and learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The difficulty stems from generating and organizing ideas along with translating of them into readable text(Richards & Renandya, 2002). Becoming a proficient writer in a second language (L2) and particularly in a foreign language (FL) is a demanding task for most learners, because they encounter complicated challenges involving mastering lots of lexical, grammatical, and syntactic skills (Tabatabaei & Assefi, 2012).

On the other hand, individual differences have been widely sought in L2 studies and are regarded as the most consistent predictors of L2 learning success (D?rnyei & Skehan, 2003; Ellis, 2008). From among these variables, affective and cognitive variables have been shown to affect quality of L2 writing performance. Consequently, it is reasonable to speculate that writing apprehension-as an affective factor-and writing self-efficacy-as a cognitive variable-may influence the success in writing performance in a FL.

Apprehension has been broadly studied in language acquisition. It is one of the physiological and emotional states that a person may have in doing a task. When learners are involved in activities that entail productive skills, they experience a great amount of anxiety (Zhang, 2011). Writing apprehension is the inclination of a person to do or avoid a writing task (Daly & Miller, 1975a).

Self-efficacy, as a main component of human agency, mediates between aptitude, past achievements, and future performances of learners (Bandura, 2006). The beliefs of students in their abilities play a vital role in their capacities to acquire how to write (Jones, 2008). McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer (1985) defined writing self-efficacy as the individuals' perception and assessment of their writing skills.

Traditionally, the written products of students have been gauged based on the forms and presentations without considering the beliefs of individuals about writing. There is a requisite to nurture the affective

and cognitive aspects of EFL learning and to raise EFL students' awareness of their capabilities and attitudes. Moreover, it has been found that many Iranian EFL learners have inadequate competency in L2 writing (Jafari & Ansari, 2012; Dastjerdi & Samian, 2011). The failure of Iranian EFL learners in L2 writing achievement may be associated with a variety of factors.

Decreasing writing apprehension and enhancing writing self-efficacy is not easy to achieve for most of Iranian students whose exposure to English is limited to a few hours in a week. A better understanding of the correlation between these factors will help writing instructors to make informed choices in pedagogy. The objective of this study was to probe the relationship among the individual variables of writing apprehension, writing self-efficacy, and Iranian EFL learners' performance on a writing task. The role of such individual variables in predicting students' writing ability was investigated as well.

2. Background

2.1. Writing apprehension

The term writing apprehension was firstly introduced by Daly and Miller (1975a). They mentioned that it is a complex term due to the complexity of writing. It can be related to the tendency of individuals to approach or avoid writing. They suggested three levels of writing apprehension: high, moderate, and low. Whereas, highly apprehensive learners will avoid writing, if possible, low apprehensive ones are confident in their abilities to write and often enjoy it.

Within the deficit and the interference theoretical frameworks, the causes of apprehension can be conceptualized. The deficit theory maintains that linguistic deficiency might be the result of apprehension. It is argued that writing apprehension exists only in unskilled, poor writers (Sparks, Ganschow & Javorsky, 2000). On the other hand, the interference theory claims that apprehension interferes with skill improvement and may interact with low skills, but is not restricted to any ability level (Horwitz, 2000).

Hassan (2001) pointed out that high apprehensive writers write shorter compositions and do less qualified writing than their counterparts with

low apprehension. The latest definition of writing apprehension was presented by Lee and Krashen (2002). They conceptualized writing apprehension as anxiety about writing.

2.2. Writing self-efficacy

It has been almost four decades since Albert Bandura (1977) introduced the construct of self-efficacy. This construct has inspired much attention in various fields of study and is therefore a fundamental aspect of his social cognitive theory. One of the main propositions of this concept is that efficacy beliefs may cause individuals with same abilities do the required task differently (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997).

Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy beliefs as the judgments of individuals about their abilities to organize and accomplish courses of action required to manage at appointed levels of performances. While, individuals with high self-efficacy reveal high confidence and get involved in any activities easily, those with low self-efficacy and lack of confidence avoid activities that surpass their capabilities (Bandura, 1977). Writing self-efficacy is writer's belief in his capability to successfully complete writing tasks at a designated level (Shell, Murphy, & Bruning, 1989).

Self-efficacy is essential to increase students' cognitive, behavioral and motivational engagement, and its indispensable role has been proved in the growth of writing skill. On the contrary, being deficient in focus and determination hampers learning writing in a L2 (Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2005).

Lavelle (2006) posited that writing efficacy is usually based on high, mid, and low degrees of efficacy. Students who have strong confidence about their writing capability are called high efficacious writers. People with moderate level of writing efficacy have moderate levels of confidence in their writing performance. Conversely, low efficacious writers are those with less sense of confidence in their writing ability or those with a decreased amount of positive sense of writing efficacy.

In 2007, Pajares, Johnson, and Usher defined writing self-efficacy as the judgments of students about having confidence about the composition, grammar, usage, and mechanical skills suitable to their academic level.

According to Brown (2014), if a learner feels the capability of doing a designated task (i.e.,a high sense of self-efficacy),sufficient attempt is likely to be devoted to gaining success. Failing to achieve the personal goals may be attributed to not adequate effort expanded, but rarely, students with high self-efficacy would make an excuse and relate the bad performance to something like bad luck. On the contrary, low efficacious learners may easily attribute failure to external factors.

2.3. Writing assessment

The indispensable role of writing as a language skill in FL/SL learning and teaching underscores the importance of the way it is assessed. There is controversy among teachers about how to score writing assignments.

The first issue relates to the number of writing samples used to signify the writing abilities of students. Jacobs,Zingraf, Wormuth, Hartfield, and Hughey (1981) proposed that at least two written samples of each participant should be considered as representative of his/her writing competence. Hillocks (2008) maintained that in most of writing studies, the writing performance of students is assessed based on a single writing sample that is written during a short period of time and is graded by assigning a single score. This kind of evaluation, as Coker and Lewis (2008) claimed, has serious deficiencies such as frequently inflexible format, lack of authenticity, more focus on writing speed than writing skill, discrimination against students unfamiliar with the topic, and limitations on the writing strategies used by students.

The second issue, as Weigle (2007) highlighted, is about evaluating in-class or out-of-class writing-the dilemma that writing teachers often encounter. She argues that teachers are sure that students are unable to receive help from outside supports when they write in class. As the process of writing encompasses reflection, discussion, reading, feedback, and revision, students cannot produce their best in a single text during 30 or 60 minutes. According to Hayes, Hatch, and Silk (2000), timed writing samples would be less sensitive predictor of future performance than take-home assignments.

Another issue relates to rater bias and invalidity of writing assessments that negatively affect the summative evaluation of students' writ-

ing performance (Graham, Hebert, & Harris, 2011; Johnson & Van Brackle, 2012). It is, therefore, important to enhance consistency across the judgements of raters about writing performances. Using scoring rubrics can be appropriate for obtaining this goal. Rubrics consist of a set of predetermined criteria for evaluating student performance. A widely cited benefit of using rubric is providing valid and consistent judgment of performance evaluation that cannot be achieved by means of conventional written tests.

2.4. Empirical background

Daly and Miller (1975b)scrutinized Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores and writing apprehension scores of English speaking university students enrolled in a first language (L1)basic and a remedial composition course. The researchers did not observe differences in the writing anxiety levels of students in either courses but the SAT scores of students differed meaningfully. High writing apprehensive individuals not only reported lower perceived prospects of achievement in writing courses but also showed less inclination to take writing courses compared with low writing apprehensive ones.

Zimmerman and Bandura (1994) brought substantive and mechanical issues into better balance and developed a more comprehensive measure alliance with the standards for writing tasks. In a path analytic study, they found that writing self-efficacy significantly predicted the personal standards of learners for the quality of writing, their goal setting, and writing proficiency.

Similarly, Pajares and Valiente (1996) demonstrated that the self-efficacy beliefs of elementary students about writing capability predicted their writing performance and influenced their writing apprehension in their L1 directly. Moreover, they found that learners who gained high self-efficacy scores indicated low-level writing apprehension.

The impacts of writing anxiety on writing processes and behaviors, such as physiological effects reflected in unpleasant feelings of tension or nervousness, cognitive interference in writing process, and avoidance of writing, were scrutinized in a study by Cheng (2004). In addition, she asked the participants to do a timed English essay writing task. Her

findings portrayed a significant negative correlation between anxiety and performance.

The results of Chen and Lin (2009)showed that writing anxiety was negatively correlated with both writing self-efficacy and score on General English proficiency writing test. Additionally, positive correlation between writing self-efficacy and test score was found. Results of this study revealed that writing anxiety may not be directly linked to performance in writing tasks, and it could be correlated only with writing self-efficacy.

The purpose of the study conducted by Erkan and Saban (2011) was to detect whether writing performance is correlated with writing apprehension, self-efficacy in writing, and attitudes towards writing. The findings portrayed negative relationship between the following variables: (a) writing apprehension and writing performance; and (b) writing apprehension and writing self-efficacy. Writing apprehension and attitude towards writing were positively correlated.

The study by Prat-Sala and Redford (2012) examined the relations between self-efficacy in reading and writing and writing performance. Participants were first and second year undergraduate psychology students. However, the results demonstrated both reading and writing self-efficacy were related to writing performance, writing self-efficacy was stronger. Furthermore, higher self-efficacy in writing was found in second year students. According to the researchers, it is probably due to having more academic experience and receiving feedback on writing tasks.

Singh and Rajalingam (2012) surveyed the relationship among writing apprehension level, self-efficacy beliefs, and writing proficiency level of students. The findings of this study indicated average writing apprehension levels of respondents and converse relationship between self-efficacy factors and writing apprehension level. Interestingly, it was depicted that the higher the apprehension level, the better writing performance of respondents would be.

Hetthong and Teo (2013) looked into self-efficacy in EFL writing and the self-efficacy of students at a micro-skill level. The results showed that there was a significant positive relationship between writing self-efficacy

and writing performance both at the paragraph level and at the sub-skill level. Besides, the overall writing self-efficacy predicted the overall writing performance.

Fatemi and Vahidnia (2013) investigated the relationship between writing self-efficacy levels and writing achievement of Iranian EFL learn-ers. The researchers discovered a significant relationship between writing performance and English self-efficacy beliefs and between writing per-formance and General self-efficacy beliefs. However, there was stronger relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and writing performance com-pared with General self-efficacy.

The goal of study conducted by Sarkhoush (2013) was to examine the relationship among self-efficacy in writing, attitude towards writing, writing apprehension, and writing performance of Iranian EFL learn-ers. She found negative relation between the following variables: (a) writing self-efficacy and writing apprehension; (b) writing apprehension and attitude towards writing; and (c) writing apprehension and writing performance. The results of her study also demonstrated positive cor-relation between self-efficacy and attitude towards writing and between self-efficacy and writing performance. Differences among self-efficacy and apprehension levels were not significant.

In another study, Hashemnejad, Zoghi, and Amini (2014) aimed at exploring the relationship between self-efficacy and writing performance across gender. No significant relationship between the self-efficacy of male and female learners and their writing performance was seen. Ad-ditionally, there was a significant positive correlation in self-efficacy be-tween female and male students.

The outcomes of study conducted by Sanders-Reio, Alexander,Reio, Jr., and New man(2014) on prediction of writing performance through the beliefs of students about writing, writing self-efficacy, and writing apprehension depicted that writing self-efficacy predicted writing perfor-mance modestly. Among types of writing apprehension, anxiety about being criticized was not important; however, apprehension about gram-mar negatively predicted performance.

In another investigation, Stewart, Seifert, and Rolheiser (2015) ex-plored that low writing anxiety and high self-efficacy associated with

more use of metacognitive writing strategies by students and led to gains in written outcomes. Self-efficacy was a much stronger predictor of students' perceptions of using metacognitive writing strategies, although reduced anxiety had a small but statistically significant relationship with the outcome.

More recently, Alluhaybia (2015) observed that students with positive attitudes towards writing had moderate apprehension and self-efficacy beliefs in writing. Surprisingly, none of these variables correlated with or predicted the writing competence.

The most recent study on writing self-efficacy, writing apprehension, and writing performance has been done by Tola and Sree (2016). Low apprehension, high self-efficacy, and relatively better writing composition were observed in the older groups. While writing self-efficacy and writing performance were positively correlated, writing apprehension and writing performance had a negative relationship. Overall, almost three-fourth of the students did poorly on writing task.

In a similar vein, Khojasteh, Shokrpour, and Afrasiabi (2016) investigated the relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance across gender. They found no significant correlation between these variables.

In the light of the studies alluded to above, one can conclude that in Iran there is a dearth of studies that have concurrently explored the correlation among writing apprehension, writing self-efficacy, and writing performance and probe the prediction of writing performance by those individual differences. Considering the scant research in Iran that has concurrently investigated the relationship between the aforesaid variables, the lack of inspecting the prediction of writing performance by individual differences by Iranian investigators, and the existence of controversy in the results of previous studies, the researchers opted to cover this lacuna. Hence, the present study endeavored to simultaneously examine the association among Iranian EFL learners' perception of their self-efficacy, writing apprehension and their written production.

2.5. Research questions
The study sought answers to the following questions:

1. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' writing apprehension and their writing self-efficacy?

2. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' writing apprehension and their writing performance?

3. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' writing self-efficacy and their writing performance?

4. Do the writing apprehension and writing self-efficacy of Iranian EFL learners predict their writing performance?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants were a total of 40Iranian EFL learners (20 males and 20 females) from the Iran Language Institute (ILI) in Isfahan. Participants' age ranged from 15to 25 years. They were studying at the advanced level based on the ILI classification. They have already learned how to write aparagraph and got acquainted with different kinds of paragraph. As the students at the ILI can be considered homogenous based on the locally administered placement test used by the institute, the researchers did not use any placement test for homogenizing the learners.

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. Questionnaire One-Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) adopted from Cheng (2004)

This study applied SLWAI adopted from Cheng (2004)as the measure of writing anxiety because according to its developer, this scale is preferable to the widely used Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) for studying the relationship between L2 writing anxiety and self-efficacy. Because SLWAI is distinct from L2 writing self-efficacy, and WAT was initially developed for use with native English speakers.

SLWAI is a multidimensional L2 writing scale that assesses three dimensions of writing anxiety: physiological, behavioral, and cognitive. It consists of 22 items which respondents score on a Five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). According to Cheng (2004), this scale has high internal consistency reliability, respectable test-retest reliability, adequate convergent and discriminant

validity, and satisfactory criterion-related validity. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was, 91.

3.2.2. Questionnaire Two -Post-Secondary Writerly Self-Efficacy Scale (PSWSES) adopted from Schmidt and Alexander(2012)

For assessing self-efficacy, a number of studies have used questionnaires with Likert-type scale format though Bandura (2006) and Pajares, Hartley, and Valiante (2001) have reported low reliability indexes of these scales in comparison with response formats including more steps. Therefore, in order to alleviate this shortcoming, the researcher used PSWSES adopted from Schmidt and Alexander (2012) that has been found to be more reliable and valid.

PSWSES includes 20 items, and it is a 0-100 scale. Schmidt and Alexander(2012) explained PSWSES places more emphasis on self-efficacy beliefs related to writing than confidence in writing skill. It also evaluates writerly factors instead of writing factors. The word 'writerly' refers to the characteristic of a writer. Due to the fact that self-efficacy can be a present and/or future ability belief, all items in this scale include "I can" statements. None of the PSWSES statements need negative self-evaluation scores as opposed to many statements in other instruments. The results of the validation analysis indicate that the PSWSES has high internal consistency and reliability across items and construct validity. Cronbach's Alpha was .931 and the split-half reliability was .864 (Guttman Split-Half Coefficient = .927). In the case of construct validity evaluation, there was a significant positive correlation between the client overall writerly self-efficacy ratings and the ratings of clients' writerly self-efficacy by tutors, $r(178) = .5$, $p < .001$, $R2 = .25$

3.2.3. Writing Task

Building on the suggestion of Jacobs et al. (1981) for using two tasks as representative of writing competence of students and the argument of Hayes et al. (2000) about take-home assignments being more sensitive predictors of future performance than timed writing samples, the researchers asked the participants to write two paragraphs at home. The topics were selected from those mentioned in the course book (i.e., Advance 1, ILI series) for final sessions when students are more experienced.

3.2.4. Writing

Assessment To assuage deficiencies of timed writing and improve the reliability and validity of evaluator's judgment, two writing home assignments were scored by two raters using the most well-known analytic writing scale, the ESL Composition Profile of Jacobs et al. (1981). The designers claimed that their scale has content validity since it assesses the performance of writers on the type of writing tasks they are normally required to do in the classroom. It has been explored that Jacobs' et al. (1981) criteria have construct validity because significant differences were found when students' essay scores were compared (Bacha, 2001).

Jacobs' et al. (1981) explained that this scale consists of five components of writing skill: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Each component has different weight based on its importance, and the total score for each part is broken down into numerical ranges that determines four rating levels: very poor, fair to poor, good to average, and excellent to very good. Each component and level have clear descriptors of the writing proficiency along with a numerical scale. For example, 'excellent' to 'very good' content has a minimum rating of 27 and a maximum of 30 indicating essay writing which is "knowledgeable-substantive-thorough development of thesis-relevant to assigned topic". The ranges of the writing skills are content 13-30, organization 7-20, vocabulary 7-20, language 5-25, and mechanics 2-5.

3.3. Procedure

After obtaining the required permissions, the researchers clarified objectives, directions, and procedures in Persian to prevent students' misunderstanding. According to Hancock and Flowers (2001), participants usually have a tendency to make a good picture of themselves through desirable answers. To alleviate this shortcoming, this study followed the recommendation of Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) by informing respondents that there were no right or wrong answers and assuring them confidentiality. To enhance response validity, the researchers asked the students to answer the items on the questionnaires honestly. The participants were assured they would remain anonymous. The distribution of questionnaires was done in two sessions during

a week. That is, questionnaire one was given in a session time period, and questionnaire two was distributed in a session afterward. The time allocated for answering each questionnaire was 15 minutes.

The subjects were asked to deliver the first take-home assignment a week after administrating the questionnaires. Precisely, students followed the direction and selected one of the two topics presented in writing section of lesson four and wrote a classification paragraph of about 100 words. The writing topics of lesson four were: (1) kinds of countries: developed, developing, and underdeveloped (2) forms of travelling: by plane, by train, and by car.

The second take-home assignment referred to writing practice of the following unit. The writing topics of lesson five were: (1) similarities between cell phones and pocket PCs (2) similarities between two people you know well. Since covering each unit of the course book lasted approximately one week, the latter written products were delivered by the students a week afterward. Regarding the one-week interval between the administration of the questionnaires and the first writing sample and between two written productions, the overall time for gathering data was 20 days.

3.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. Descriptive Statistics of the three variables were presented. Items 1, 4, 17, 18, and 22 in SLWAI were negatively worded and entailed inverse scoring before being calculated to yield total scores. A higher level of ESL writing anxiety was determined by a higher score achieved thereupon. Scores above 65 showed a high degree of writing anxiety. Scores below 50 were indicators of low level of writing anxiety. A moderate level of writing anxiety referred to a total score in-between.

The total points for PSWSES were 2000. Generally, the higher and lower points on the 0-100 scales of self-efficacy scale are indicators of higher and lower degrees of self-efficacy, respectively. However, it was not in the scope of this study to identify the level of variables in participants, the researchers divided the overall points (2000) by three and considered low, moderate, and high levels of self-efficacy.

As the next step, the researchers elucidated the components of the Jacobs' et al. (1981) ESL Composition Profile for the other rater.Then, the compositions of 10 students were chosen randomly and were scored analytically by two raters following the writing scale. Kappa coefficient ascertained that inter-rater reliability was .72. Generally, a Kappa larger than .70 is considered satisfactory.

Next, the raters scored all compositions. Each student's composition score was the mean of the two raters' scores. The mean score of the two writing assignments was considered as the overall writing performance of the students. As the study was conducted using a correlational design,in order to examine the relationship between the variables mentioned in the research questions, the Pearson Coefficient Correlation (r) was run. Multiple regression was also used to see if the writing apprehension and self-efficacy predicted writing ability of the participants.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics

Initially, descriptive statistics of writing apprehension is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Descriptive Statistics of Writing Apprehension

	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Writing apprehension	40	30	70	51.05	10.79

SD= Standard Deviation

The statistical analyses provided in Table 4.1 showed that the scores of respondents in SLWAI ranged from 30 to 70. The mean and SD of the writing apprehension were 51.05 and 10.79, respectively. According to Cheng (2004), the score between 50-65 signifies a moderate level of writing anxiety. Thus, it can be concluded that the participants had a moderate writing apprehension.

Table 4.2 indicates descriptive statistics of the writing self-efficacy.

Table 4.2. Descriptive Statistics of Writing Self-efficacy

	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Writing self-efficacy	40	910	1760	1403.38	236.36

As it was indicated, the lowest mean for the writing self-efficacy was 910, and the highest mean was 1760. The mean of the writing self-efficacy was 1403.38 and its SD was 236.38. The obtained mean described that the level of writing self-efficacy of students was a bit higher than the moderate level. In the next step, the mean of scores given by raters to each composition of every student was calculated. Then, the average of raters' scores for both compositions was taken as the index of the writing performance of that student.

Table 4.3 shows the output of the statistical analysis.

	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Writing task 1	40	47	88	67.10	8.96
Writing task 2	40	45	82	65.20	9.21
Overall	40	46	85	66.35	8.90

Based on the information displayed in the Table 4.3, the writing competence of students was almost similar in both writing tasks. The average of the writing performance was 66.35, and the SD was 8.90. Following the interpretative guide offered by Jacobs et al. (1981),this mean portrayed that the writing performance of the participants was generally fair to poor which was below the average. Since students at this level will probably face great difficulty in completing writing tasks, the developers of the scale proposed that such students should take a preparatory course in writing before engaging in further writing.

4.2. Research question one: Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' writing apprehension and their writing self-efficacy?

To explore the relationship between the apprehension and self-efficacy in writing, the Pearson Coefficient Correlation (r) was run. Table 4.4 shows the output.

Table 4.4. CorrelationMatrix of Writing Apprehension and Writing Self-efficacy

Writing apprehension	Pearson Correlation	1	-.693[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
Writing self-efficacy	Pearson Correlation	-.693[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40

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

As can be seen in the Table 4.4, the writing apprehension had astatistically significant strong inverse relation with the writing self-efficacy $(r = -.693, p < .01)$.

4.3. Research question two: Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' writing apprehension and their writing performance?

In order to answer the second research question,Pearson Coefficient Correlation was run again, and the results are demonstrated in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5. Correlation Matrix of Writing Apprehension and Writing Performance

		Writing apprehension	Writing performance
Writing apprehension	Pearson Correlation	1	-.628**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
Writing performance	Pearson Correlation	-.628**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40

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

Similarly, Table 4.5 revealed that the writing apprehension had a statistically significant strong negative relationship with the writing performance $(r = -.628, p < .01)$.

4.4. Research question three: Is there anysignificant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' writing self-efficacy and their writing performance?

To see if there is any relationship between the writing self-efficacy and the writing performance, the same procedure was followed. Results are reported in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6. Correlation Matrix of Writing self-efficacy and Writing Performance

		Writing self-efficacy	Writing performance
Writing self-efficacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.619**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
Writing performance	Pearson Correlation	.619**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40

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

Table 4.6 indicated that there was a statistically significant strong correlation between the writing self-efficacy and performance, but in a positive direction ($r = .619; p = .000 < .01$).

4.5. Research question four: Do the writing apprehension and the writing self-efficacy of Iranian EFL learners predict their writing performance?

To answer the last research question and to find out if individual variables could predict the writing ability, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. Results are displayed in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7. Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	63.720	14.689		4.338	.000		
	Writing apprehension	-.316	.138	-.383	-2.285	.028	.520	1.922
	Writing self-efficacy	.013	.006	.354	2.116	.041	.520	1.922

a. Dependent Variable: Writing Performance

The beta coefficient depicts the relative strengths of the predictors. The analysis illustrated the largest value of Beta was .38 that belonged to the writing apprehension. This denoted that this variable made the strongest contribution to explaining the dependent variable. The negative Beta value meant regression was negative for this variable. The Beta value for the writing self-efficacy was .35, indicating that it made a less significant contribution. Besides, the regression of this variable with the dependent variable was positive. The P-value of the two predictors was less than the significant level ($p < 0.05$); it confirmed that both of the individual variables could significantly predict the writing performance. The significance value of the writing apprehension was .028, still significant, but lower than that of the writing self-efficacy ($Sig. = .041$). Thus, it became clear that the former was a stronger predictor of the writing performance and the latter was a modest one.

Table 4.7 also provided information about the collinearity diagnostics as part of the multiple regression procedure. Two values existed: Tolerance and VIF (Variance inflation factor). Tolerance shows how much

of the variability of the specific independent is not described by other
independent variables. VIF is the inverse of the Tolerance value (1 di-
vided by Tolerance). The Tolerance value less than .10 and the VIF value
above 10 would be a warning sign, indicating the possibility of multi-
collinearity. It means that the multiple correlation with other variables
is high, and the correlation matrix should be checked. In the current
study,the Tolerance value for each independent variable was .520, which
was higher than .10, and the VIF value was 1.922, which is below 10.
The therefore, the multicollinearity assumption is not violated.

5. Discussion

This study was an attempt to explore the correlation among the writing
apprehension, the writing self-efficacy, and the writing performance of
Iranian English as EFL learners. Besides, the prediction of their writ-
ing performance by apprehension and self-efficacy in writing was scru-
tinized. Below, the obtained results are compared and contrasted with
previous studies.

5.1. Hypothesis one: There is a significant reverse relationship be-
tween Iranian EFL learners' writing apprehension and their writing self-
efficacy.

The initial component of this section refers to the discussion of find-
ings of the correlation between apprehension and self-efficacy in writ-
ing. The analysis indicated that there was a significant strong reverse
relationship between these variables. This implies that highly apprehen-
sive students would have low writing self-efficacy and vice versa. Hence,
hypothesis one was confirmed. This substantiated previous research re-
garding a negative relationship between the writing anxiety and self-
efficacy (Pajares & Valiente, 1996; Chen & Lin, 2009; Singh & Ra-
jalingam, 2012).

5.2. Hypothesis two: There is a significant negative relationship be-
tween Iranian EFL learners' writing apprehension and their writing per-
formance.

In terms of the relationship between the writing apprehension and
the writing performance, the finding demonstrated a significant nega-

tive relationship between Iranian EFL learners' writing apprehension and their writing performance. In other words, the second hypothesis was approved. It can be inferred that students with high level of writing apprehension write more weakly than low apprehensive ones. This result was in line with findings of other researchers(Daly & Miller, 1975b; Cheng, 2004).

In contrast, the study by Chen and Lin (2009)illustrated no relationship between writing anxiety and writing output of students. Furthermore,the result of the present investigation contradicted that of Singh and Rajalingam (2012) who found the highly apprehensive students did better on writing tasks.

5.3. Hypothesis three: There is a significant positive relationship between Iranian EFL learners' writing self-efficacy and their writing performance. With regard to the relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance, the obtained findings upheld the third hypothesis. That is,Iranian EFL learners' writing self-efficacy had a significant positive relationship with their writing performance. This signifies that the higher the writing self-efficacy of students, the better their writing performance would be. It supported the tenet of social cognitive theory (Bandura,1986),and confirmed the results of prior research(Chen & Lin, 2009; Fatemi & Vahidnia, 2013;Hetthong & Teo, 2012; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994).

This was in contrast to the results of Hashem-nejad et al. (2014) and Khojaste et al. (2016) which revealed that there was no significant association between self-efficacy and performance in writing.

The above outcomes of this study were similar to the findings of those researchers examined the relationship of the three variables together(Erkan & Saban, 2011; Sarkhoush, 2013; Tola & Sree, 2016), and contradicted that of Alluhaybia (2015) who reported that there was no correlation between these variables.

5.4. Hypothesis four: Both writing apprehension and writing self-efficacy of Iranian EFL learners predict their writing performance.

The last hypothesis of the present study referred to the prediction of writing performance by apprehension and self-efficacy in writing. Each

independent variable had a predictive power on writing performance but in an inverse direction. Hence, the fourth hypothesis was confirmed, too.

These results were consistent with literature. For example, the Pajares and Johnson (1996) and Hetthong and Teo (2013) found that writing self-efficacy predicted the writing performance. Akin to the results of Sanders-Reio et al. (2014), the writing self-efficacy was a moderate predictor of the writing performance. They also reported that anxiety about being assessed critically was not significant,but apprehension about grammar was significantly and negatively predicted performance. Ignoring the type of apprehension, the current study also explored that the writing apprehension was a significant negative predictor of writing performance.

In contrast to Stewart et al.(2015) who found self-efficacy as the stronger predictor of the perceptions of students about using metacognitive writing strategies compared to anxiety, apprehension was the stronger predictor of performance than self-efficacy in this study. Finally, the fourth result of the present study contrasted with the findings of Alluhaybia (2015)who rejected apprehension and self-efficacy in writing as predictors of writing competence.

6. Conclusion

Apprehension often deteriorates performance, and better writing outcomes have been produced by low apprehensive students, too. When apprehension occurs, the remedy may lie in enhancing self-efficacy beliefs that might positively affect the process of language learning. In the present study, the issues under scrutiny were the existence of relationships among writing apprehension, writing self-efficacy, and writing performance and the prediction of writing performance by both individual variables-areas previously unexplored in Iran. The results indicated that participants had moderate levels of writing apprehension and a slightly above moderate level of self-efficacy; their level of writing performance was fair to poor. In addition, there existed statistically significant strong negative correlation between writing apprehension and writing self-efficacy and between writing apprehension and writing performance.

Alternatively, a statistically significant positive relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance was depicted. Moreover, both independent variables predicted the dependent variable. It is possible to conclude that low apprehensive and high self-efficacious learners have higher writing achievement. Based on these findings, some implications that can be benefit for writing practitioners and learners are provided in the subsequent part.

6.1. Pedagogical implications The results of this study highlight the necessity for EFL instructors' consciousness of the individual differences that may influence the performances of students on assignments. While instructors realize decreases in the performances of students, they perhaps are unaware of other factors such as apprehension or self-efficacy that may contribute to the falling performance. Understanding the complicatedrelations between these variables will help ESL/EFL instructors meet the needs of students and pave the way for the development of language capabilities of learners. Overall, not taking into account the effect of apprehension and self-efficacy on academic achievement may result in poor academic performance. Hence, teachers should pay more attention to students' perceptions of their personal feeling as well as their actual competence. More specifically, new methods for teaching writing that produce less apprehension and increase writing self-efficacy are required. Both explicitly and implicitly training students to remove negative feeling and promote positive attitude about study skills could be helpful.

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