

The Effect of Negotiated Versus Product-Oriented Syllabi on Improving EFL Learners' Writing Performance

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Abstract. The approach of teaching and learning writing has gone through significant advances over the past decades. The negotiated syllabus, in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts, is now considered one of the most popular ones. However, the product-oriented syllabus is now somewhat neglected. Therefore, this study focused on the effect of process versus product-oriented syllabi on EFL learners' writing performance. To this end, 44 Iranian upper-intermediate undergraduate EFL learners were selected from two intact classes based on convenience non-random sampling. Each class was taught how to write an essay through one syllabus type, i.e. negotiated and product oriented during a 6-week period. The treatment took six sessions of about 90 minutes for each group. Before the treatment, the participants were given a writing test. After the end of the treatment, they were also given a writing post-test. The writing tasks were scored by two scorers. Finally, the collected data were analyzed through independent and paired sample t-tests to pinpoint the differences between the groups. The results revealed that the negotiated group had better performance after receiving the treatment. Moreover, both groups showed significant improvements in writing performance after the treatment. The findings indicated a need to consider a negotiated curriculum in university settings which will potentially lead to better educational results.

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1. Introduction

The curriculum is concerned with making a common statement about language learning, learning purpose, experience, evaluation, and the function and relationships of teachers and learners. On the other hand, Syllabi are more localized and are based on accounts and records of what occurs at the classroom level as teachers and learners apply a given curriculum to their situation (Candlin, 1984).

Product-oriented syllabus helps students develop their knowledge of production skills, collaborative learning, and interpersonal skills, effective information to manage the skills (Nation & Macalister, 2010). The product-oriented syllabus is one in which the focus is on the knowledge and skills that learners should gain as a result of instruction. A product-oriented syllabus focuses on outcomes and things learned at the end of a learning process (Nunan, 1999). On the other hand, some scholars believe that the syllabus which comes out from the negotiation process is more flexible and relevant to learners' needs and hence more motivating and allows learners to play a more informed and self-directive purpose in their learning (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000; Nunan, 1999). According to Nation and Macalister (2010), "a negotiated syllabus involves the teacher and the learners working together to make decisions at many of the parts of curriculum design process" (p. 149). 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 (Clarke, 1991).

In negotiation-based approaches, teacher and learners come to agreement on what to learn and how to learn (Tuan, 2011). It is normally accepted today that process (negotiated) syllabus plays a crucial role in particular educational context in which humanism is of great importance. The importance in negotiated syllabuses arising from humanistic methodologies like Community Language Learning (CLL) which are very learner-centered, from need analysis which focuses on learners' needs,

from work in individualization and learner autonomy, and from learner strategy research which sees the learner playing a central role in determining how the language is learned. The negotiated model is totally different from other syllabuses in that it allows full learner participation in selection of content, mode of working, route of working, assessment, and so on. In this way, learners might be allowed a degree of choice and self-expression, unavailable in most existing syllabus types (Clarke, 1991).

In relation to writing domain, Lo and Hyland (2007) suggested that one way of enhancing students' motivation and engagement to write is to prepare chances for them to attract 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 arranging writing tasks which have meaning and attraction to them and offer opportunities for social interaction and self-expression.

Although a great body of research has been conducted in this area, little studies have been made about comparing the negotiated and product-oriented syllabi. Considering the interplay of EFL negotiated syllabus and writing ability, this study was conducted to verify the reported cases of interplay and to respond to a fraction of doubts and concerns in the literature by investigating the effects of negotiated syllabus versus product-oriented syllabus, and more specifically exploring pedagogical efficiency of negotiated and product-oriented syllabi in teaching writing ability to adult Iranian intermediate level EFL learners.

Since improving learning skills has usually been a major concern for EFL learners, the present study reasons that implementation of a negotiated and product-oriented syllabi would likely improve EFL learners' writing performance. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the effect of negotiated versus product-oriented syllabi on improving Iranian EFL learners' writing performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical considerations

According to the Interaction Hypothesis by Long (1996), interactive negotiation of meaning facilitates comprehension and the improvement of

L2 (Long, 1996). As learners determine they're faulty in communication, they negotiate meaning with methods such as confirmation checks or requests for clarification. Such negotiation occurs "when learners and their interlocutors anticipate, perceive, or experience difficulties in message comprehensibility" (Pica, 1996, p. 20).

Integrationists are of the opinion that negotiated interaction can arouse L2 learners' interest to non-target like forms, such as vocabulary, morphology, or syntax, and thus promote SLA (second language acquisition) (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Also, many studies compare the results of different kinds of corrective feedback (CF) received by learners (Ellis et al., 2006). Some studies recommend that learners could benefit more from explicit rather than implicit CF (e.g., Ellis et al., 2006). Moreover, among the different sorts of implicit CF, recasts, occurring after grammatical errors, can assist L2 learning (Nassaji, 2009).

Peer review let student-student conferencing and negotiation of meaning that traditional feedback from the teacher don't. Furthermore, the traditional approach disconnects learners from interacting with the feedback source, while peer review motivates collaboration and interaction. The social dimension of peer review supplies a vital interactive context for the students to exchange ideas, negotiate to mean, and learn from each other. Aside from improving the writing skills and linguistic competence, peer review was also set up to improve the students' social skills and self-growth. Focusing on the ESL students' perceptions and processes in the composing effort is probably to help writing teachers, teacher trainers and researchers in providing more practical and efficient techniques in the learning of second language writing (Nassaji, 2009).

In language syllabus development, Richards and Schmidt (2013) proposed three types of syllabus designs which consist of the forward, central, and backward plan among which the negotiated syllabus in language learning and teaching appears to be of central type. In central design, determining instructing methods, activities, and techniques is the starting point in syllabus improvement which takes precedence over comprehensive specs of entering (i.e., the linguistic content of a course) or output (i.e., learning outcomes). While learners engage in significant interaction and communication, their specific needs and interests vary

from one context to any other build up the reason and content of a specific course (Walker, 1990).

Negotiated syllabus as an example of a central design has aspects of progressivism (Clarke, 1991). Some of which are: being learner-centered and concerned with learning strategies than predetermined objectives, focusing on the learner as an active participant who learns through the construction of knowledge and shaping one's learning, considering each teaching-learning context unique and the learning method as a creative problem-solving activity, and promoting the development of learners as individuals (Clarke, 1991). Besides, if the classroom is taken as an ecology (Lier, 2007). Negotiation may also be considered as explicit or implicit (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000). In explicit negotiation, shared decisions about different factors of the teaching program are directly made by trainers and trainees, while in implicit negotiation, it takes an indirect form of finding out what learners' ideas are about various factors of syllabus design. Procedural negotiation is an ability to make teachers' implicit interpretation of the syllabus and students' learning plans explicit.

During the 1970s and 1980s, a shift arose in writing research, which lead to draw researchers' attention from the written product to the writing process activities relating to this written product. Correspondingly, in this area new research methods have been developed for investigating the process of writing, including think aloud protocols, stimulated recall methods, and different logging tools (Lier, 2007).

A product-based writing class is a traditional one where standard model texts are used to guide students to write similar texts. In this type of instruction, learners follow a model or sample to compose a new product (Hasan & Akhand, 2010). This approach seems beneficial for students for learning the rhetorical patterns, using appropriate vocabulary and grammar, and developing an awareness of the writing structures. The majority of the literature related to product-based writing has examined the difference between the effects of employing the product approach with other approaches (Tangpermpoon, 2008).

2.2. Empirical studies

Ruiz-Funes (2001) conducted a study on the participants' written products and found no notable relation between the quality of the participants' writing products and the difficulty level of the task in the second language. He understood that learners not only showed eagerness in reading materials, but also took their writing what they had learned during reading specifically regarding the choice of vocabulary, coherence, and tense of verbs. Likewise, Pasand and Haghi (2013) implemented a process-product approach and found out that completing an incomplete model instead of copying it improves learners' writing ability.

In relation to writing domain, Lo and Hyland (2007) suggested that one way of involving students and attracting their attention to write is to provide chances 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 and also arranging writing tasks which have meaning and interest to them and provide opportunities for social interaction and self-expression.

Alharthi (2012) further examined the composing processes and strategies in the written composition of final-year Saudi male students majoring in English. The researcher sought to recognize and analyze the writing processes of these students to understand some of the reasons behind their poor written output. The researcher also aimed to investigate the way skilled and less-skilled students performed on their English writing to classify the differences in the use of strategies between the two groups and to study the effect of using strategies on the written product. To obtain the objectives of the study, the researcher used mixed research methods, such as written samples, a writing strategy questionnaire, and TAPs. Results from Alharthi's (2012) study indicated that students used metacognitive, cognitive, and affective strategies in their writing processes. Only highly skilled students specially employed written global planning as a writing strategy. Regarding meta-cognitive strategies, it was found that all levels of students reported planning and reviewing their writing (Alharthi, 2012).

In another study, Sadighi and Heydari (2012) examined the most recurrent cohesive errors committed by Iranian undergraduate EFL learn-

ers at different levels of proficiency and also the sources of cohesive errors. An overall number of 67 undergraduate students at Shiraz Azad University took part in this study. To categorize three groups of learners with different proficiency levels, the researchers operated the Oxford Placement Test 1. The participants were given a writing task asking them to write an approximately 200-word narrative composition. In the end, the data were analyzed using quantitative methods. Regarding the frequencies and percentages of errors, researchers discovered that low-level learners' most recurrent errors involved references, succeeded by errors in lexical and conjunctive cohesion. For mid-level learners, the findings indicated errors in references were the most common, followed by errors in lexical, and conjunction cohesion. The high-level learners' most frequent errors involved lexical cohesion, references, conjunction cohesion, and substitution. Accordingly, Sadighi and Heydari (2012) found errors in the use of relative pronouns, conjunctions, and different forms of repetition appeared because of the incomplete knowledge of the learners' intralingual causes. Moreover, the errors in the use of personal and possessive pronouns, demonstratives, and collocations were among the interlingual causes of errors.

Abbasian and Malardi (2013) in a study investigated the effect of negotiated syllabus on EFL learners' writing ability and self-efficacy. In this study a sample of 62 Iranian EFL adult learners either male or female were chosen from Iranian University of Applied Science. The results reveal that in the area of writing there was not any specific difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the post-test of self-efficacy. Surprisingly, the findings also showed that there was not any important difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the post-test PET. Therefore, it can be claimed neither the general language proficiency nor the self-efficacy was significantly affected in light of the negotiation-based instruction.

Safari and Bagheri (2017) examined the writing performance of EFL learners on the strategies they employed in IELTS writing and found the supremacy of the process over the product strategy. In another study, Baghbaderani and Afghari (2015) investigated the effect of process (negotiated) syllabus on meaning-focused L2 writing in adult and

young Iranian intermediate level EFL learners. Using a stratified sampling method, a total of 104 intermediate EFL learners, 52 from each gender, with an age range of 12 to 28, were randomly assigned to four groups: two control groups and two experimental groups. In order to determine the effect of process-oriented syllabus on adult and young intermediate EFL learners' productive competence, once the scores of the pretest and post-test were obtained, the descriptive and inferential statistics were implemented in data analysis procedure. The data were triangulated from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. The statistical analysis of the data showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group on the post-test of writing after receiving negotiated syllabus. The results of this study also showed that adult experimental group outperformed those in the young experimental group on post-test of writing. The findings of this study can provide certain implications to educational policy makers, material developers, EFL teachers, and second language learners.

Although many studies have been done in comparing the negotiated and product-oriented syllabi, little studies have been done in this area. Considering the interplay of EFL process (negotiated) syllabus and writing ability, this study was arranged to verify the reported cases of interplay and to respond to a fraction of doubts and concerns in the literature by investigating the effects of negotiated syllabus versus product-oriented syllabus, and more specifically exploring pedagogical efficiency of negotiated and product-oriented syllabi in teaching writing to adult Iranian EFL learners. To fulfill the goals of the study, the following research question was raised:

Q: Is there any significant difference between the effect of negotiated versus product-oriented syllabus on improving Iranian EFL learners' writing performance?

3. Method

3.1. Design

In this study, since the sampling was non-random, a quasi-experimental design was employed, with two experimental groups (i.e., the product-

oriented and negotiated groups). The treatment took six sessions of about 90 minutes. When treatment was over, the participants sat for the writing post-test. This study's aim is to establish the syllabus negotiation's viability in a classroom as well as to verify whether the learners' marks improved after shifting to this new approach in comparison to the group who did not negotiate its syllabus. The treatment took 6 sessions of about 90 minutes. When treatment was over, the participants sat for the writing post-test.

3.2. Participants

The participants of this study were 44 (male 18 and female 26) undergraduate EFL students who were selected from two intact classes based on convenience non-random sampling at the State University of Shiraz in February 2020. They were junior students studying English Literature and had taken an essay writing course in the fifth semester. The male and female participants' age range was between 20 and 25 years. At the onset of the study, the participants took a Nelson English language proficiency test. They were at the upper intermediate level of language proficiency. After ensuring that the groups were homogeneous regarding the level of language proficiency, the researcher assigned each class to two treatment conditions; namely product-based and negotiated groups.

3.3. Instruments

3.3.1. Writing pre-test and post-test

The next instrument was a 200-word writing pretest on "Recycling and planting trees are all activities that are good for the environment. Write an essay convincing reader to actively participate in these activities." The writing post-test was used to measure the effectiveness of the treatment. The topic of the post-test was "describe techniques or methods that could help teachers do their job more effectively." Content Scoring Guide proposed by Ashwell (2000) was used to score the essays. It is a 20-point scale analytical assessment scale which measures five aspects of the learners' performance; namely, communicative quality, organization, paragraphing, cohesion, and relevance and adequacy. It also includes five bands defining various levels of the students' command of writing.

Two raters took part in marking the participants' writings in the pre-

test and post-test. They studied and discussed Ashwell's (2000) scheme before scoring the writings. Afterward, they discussed and scored essays written by the participants and scored them according to Ashwell's Content Scoring Guide. Inter-rater reliability indices for the writing pre-test and post-test, computed by Pearson's r , were 0.78 and 0.83 respectively.

3.3.2. Nelson proficiency test

As the first instrument, the researcher used Nelson English Language Proficiency Test to examine whether the participants were at the same level of language proficiency before the onset of the study. The test had 50 multiple-choice items, including vocabulary, grammar, cloze passage, and pronunciation. The reliability of the test using Cronbach's alpha was 0.85.

3.4. Data collection procedure

It is expected that some 100 participants, divided into two groups, were taught by a university lecturer who is an English language teacher at the University of Shiraz. The treatment in English language course took 6 sessions of about 90 minutes. When treatment was over, the participants sat for the writing post-test.

In the product-based group, the teacher taught academic writing according to the steps introduced by Kroll (1990). The instructor started teaching writing by presenting the overall rules for writing and highlighted the features of academic writing and then demonstrated a text sample. In this step, the instructor analyzed the sample text, giving details about the structure, vocabulary, and design of the writing sample. He wrote some rules of writing on the board while the students were taking notes. They were free to ask questions whenever they thought the explanations were not clear enough. Afterward, the learners started to write an essay on a selected topic. The learners wrote their essays individually and were not allowed to seek help from their peers or the dictionary. After 30-40 minutes, the teacher collected the students' essays, corrected them, and gave them back the subsequent session. The teacher's corrections included grammatical errors, vocabulary use, mechanics, coherence, cohesion, and the type of written comments were in an imperative form (Rashtchi, Porkar, & Ghazi Mir Saeed, 2019). There was no

cooperation or collaboration between the learners, and the teacher gave feedback on the writings. The members of the group revised their essays after receiving the teacher's feedback. The focus of instruction was on the end product of the students' writings.

In the negotiated group, the teacher followed the steps suggested by White and Arndt (1991). Firstly, he provided the class with a writing topic. Then he put the students in pairs to discuss the topic for about 10 minutes-what they understood from the topic, the related keywords, the scope of the writing, and the like. Next, the learners shared their ideas in small groups that were set by the teacher to brainstorm, write notes, and ask questions about the given topic. The students practiced fast writing collaboratively, and then wrote rough drafts in groups in 20 minutes and had another 20 minutes to read the other groups' compositions and negotiate about the essays written by other groups. As the next step, they self-evaluated, edited, and revised their drafts. Before writing the final drafts individually, which took 20-30 minutes, in 10-minute teamwork; they self-evaluated and edited the draft they had written collaboratively. The instructor collected the final drafts and gave feedback on them. The teacher intervened in the classroom process whenever necessary to guide, correct, and answers questions.

3.5. Data analysis

The data were analyzed to establish whether there were significant differences between the test scores for the different syllabi. For data analysis, SPSS software was used. First, the normality of data was ensured. Then, independent samples t-tests were run to detect any significant differences among the writing scores of two groups. Moreover, paired-samples t-tests were computed to detect any significant changes in the participants' writing scores within the groups.

4. Results

First, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests were used to check the normality of the writing pre-test and post-test (Table 1).

Table 1: Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Tests

| | Kolmogorov-Smirnov | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|----|------|
| | Statistic | df | Sig. |
| writing pre-test | .380 | 44 | .200 |
| writing post-test | .317 | 44 | .200 |

As presented in the Table 1, all the significance values were more than .05, implying no violation of the assumption of normality. Table 2 shows the mean score, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum scores of the participants on the writing pre-test in two groups.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Writing Pre-test Scores

| <i>Group</i> | <i>Mean Score out of 20</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>Maximum</i> | <i>Minimum</i> | <i>N</i> |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|----------|
| Product-oriented | 11.48 | 2.81 | 15 | 8 | 22 |
| Negotiated | 11.12 | 2.93 | 14 | 8 | 22 |

As Table 2 represents, the means of both groups are almost equal. The product-oriented group's mean score was 11.48 and the negotiated group's mean score was 11.12. This implies that both groups were somehow similar before the treatment. Table 3 demonstrates the mean score, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum scores of the participants on the writing post-test scores across two groups.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of the Writing Post-test Scores

| <i>Accents</i> | <i>Mean Score out of 20</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>Maximum</i> | <i>Minimum</i> | <i>N</i> |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|----------|
| Product-oriented | 14.20 | 2.45 | 19 | 10 | 22 |
| Negotiated | 16.35 | 2.84 | 20 | 12 | 22 |

As Table 3 illustrates, the higher mean score was for the negotiated group at an average of 16.35 out of 20. The maximum score was 20 and the minimum score was 10. To detect any significant differences between two groups in the pre-test, an independent samples t-test was done (see Table 4).

Table 4: Results of Independent Samples T-test on Pre-test Scores

| | Levene's Test | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|------|------------------------------|-------|------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|-------|
| | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Equal variances assumed | .11 | .81 | -.57 | 42 | .621 | -.36 | .51 | -1.45 | .92 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -.57 | 40.88 | .621 | -.36 | .51 | -1.45 | .92 |

As Table 4 depicts, the difference between the pre-tests of the groups was not significant ($p = 0.621$). To determine the difference between the post-test scores, an independent t-test was used (see Table 5).

Table 5: Results of Independent Samples T-test on Post-test Scores

| | Levene's Test | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|------|------------------------------|-------|------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|-------|
| | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Equal variances assumed | .76 | .45 | -2.43 | 42 | .007 | -2.15 | .65 | -2.90 | -.29 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -2.43 | 41.35 | .007 | -2.15 | .65 | -2.90 | -.29 |

As we can see in Table 5, the $p = .007 < .05$; therefore, it can be concluded that the difference between the post-test scores is significant. In other words, the negotiated group had better performance after receiving the treatment. Moreover, to compare the performance of each group in pre-test and post-test, two paired samples t-tests were done (Table 6).

Table 6: Results of Paired Samples T-test

| | | Paired Differences | | | | t | df | Sig. | |
|--------|---------------------------------|--------------------|------|-----|---|-------|--------|------|-------|
| | | Mean | SD | SEM | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | Lower | | | | Upper |
| Pair 1 | Product pre – Product post | -2.72 | 2.33 | .33 | -6.01 | -4.65 | -15.81 | 22 | .000 |
| Pair 2 | Negotiated pre– Negotiated post | -5.23 | 2.52 | .36 | -7.35 | -5.90 | -18.40 | 22 | .000 |

Table 6 shows that both groups improved significantly at the end of the study ($p = .000$). therefore, it can be concluded that the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores is significant. In other words, both groups had better performance after receiving the treatment.

5. Discussion

Regarding the research question concerning the effect of product-oriented versus negotiated syllabus on improving EFL learners' writing ability, the significance difference on the writing mean scores in negotiation instruction versus product-oriented syllabus was examined using an independent-sample t-test. The results revealed that negotiated syllabus had a significant effect on writing ability. This finding is consistent with the study done Candlin (1984) and Nunan (1999) who place a significant role for negotiation instruction. On the other hand, the results of the present research contradict the findings of Abbasian and Malardi (2013) who found that there was not any statistically significant effect of negotiated syllabus on EFL learners' writing performance.

The analysis of the content of the writing post-tests of the negotiated group verified the merits of the approach stated in the literature. To be exact, the content of the essays was more relevant to the topic, and the participants had selected more appropriate vocabulary and had less grammatical mistakes than the product-based group. As Richards and Schmidt (2013) proposed, both product and process approaches have their merits and demerits, and some aspects of product approach like imitation and practice, as argued by cognitive psychology, conform to the process learners need for learning to write.

The process-based group used revising and rehearsing cognitive sub-strategies more than the other strategies, and avoidance and reduction were the two communicative sub-strategies they employed. It can be inferred that by strategies of avoidance and reduction, the student-writers attempted to either remove a problem from the text or paraphrase their sentences or phrases to avoid a problem. The results indicate that syllabus negotiation adoption would facilitate language learning and that the type of syllabus design often depend on the purpose, the type of language modality (written or spoken), and the age group of learners. Al-

though it remains true that writing is a complicated process, it has been documented that the process approach to teaching writing may improve students' attitudes toward writing and enable them to experience planning their pieces, drafting, and then seeing their work published (Matsuda, 2003). Based on the results of this study, product-based writing seems beneficial for students for learning the rhetorical patterns, using appropriate vocabulary and grammar, and developing an awareness of the writing structures.

The results of this study also confirm the integrationists' point of view that negotiated interaction can provoke L2 learners' attention to non-target like forms, including vocabulary, morphology, or syntax, and thus promote second language acquisition (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Peer review allows student-student conferencing and negotiation of meaning which traditional feedback from the teacher would lack. Moreover, the traditional approach separates learners from interacting with the feedback source, while peer review encourages collaboration and interaction. A product-based writing class is a traditional one where standard model texts are used to guide students to write similar texts. In this type of instruction, learners follow a model or sample to compose a new product (Hasan & Akhand, 2010). According to Tangpermpoon (2008), this approach seems beneficial for students for learning the rhetorical patterns, using appropriate vocabulary and grammar, and developing an awareness of the writing structures. The majority of the literature related to product-based writing has examined the difference between the effects of employing the product approach with other approaches.

6. Conclusion

The findings of the study showed the effect of the negotiated approach. The learners, using this approach, could produce more coherent essays, and were more successful in communicating their viewpoints. However, product-based syllabus was also practical since the comparison of the means obtained from the writing pre-tests and post-tests showed an increase in the performance of the participants.

The results of the current study provided some pedagogical implications for the EFL language teachers and language learners in Iranian ed-

educational system. Applying negotiated syllabus brings practical and the latest instructional procedures into the Iranian EFL classrooms. More significantly, negotiated syllabus with its challenging and dynamic nature help language learners find their position as critical thinkers. It is hoped that the results of the present study promote the learning circumstances for EFL language users by providing favorable practices of task manipulation. Therefore, the teachers, curriculum designers and the material developers can pave the way for the learners to benefit from the time, energy and the money they spend on L2 learning process completely. This study extends and enhances the extant worked example literature by examining the effect of negotiated and product-oriented syllabi on EFL learners' writing performance. The product-oriented syllabus makes an impression on the students. Since the product-oriented syllabus is one of the first materials, students have about the course, and the design of the syllabus is the opportunity to make a good first impression on the students. An organized, comprehensive, easy-to-read syllabus will make a positive first impression on the students by showing them that you have put a lot of thought and effort into the organization of the course, considered what they will learn and that you care about the quality of their experience in the course.

The researcher aimed to undertake this study with rigor to generate objective, unbiased results based on the data collected. However, a number of limitations to the study exist that should be considered in interpreting the results: First, because of the small sample size any assertion of generalizability has to be treated with caution. Second, the participants in this study were selected from a particular group of EFL learners at upper-intermediate level of proficiency, so the findings may not be applicable to other groups of ESL/EFL learners. Third, a broader range of instruments could have been administered to provide more perspectives, specifically through an objective observer. For example, the present study did not include class observation. Fourth, the researcher investigated the writing performance without considering the role of motivation as an important factor that promotes the writing performance.

It is suggested to replicate this study with a larger sample size. Moreover, for further studies, a different group of EFL learners at different

level of proficiency is recommended. More precisely, applying different levels of proficiency, age and gender can be introduced as a determining factor regarding the role they play. In addition, observation methods could be more informative when supported by using video and audio-recording, to obtain deeper insights into students' behavior during the writing process, and to help the participants remember their thinking process during the think-aloud protocol pertaining to their performance of given writing tasks. Finally, future researchers could study the effect of motivation on the written product of Iranian EFL students, which would provide the field with new results and a better understanding of what drives the writing task.

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