



## **EFL Writing Skill Instruction in the Light of TBLT-Synthesized Collaborative Dialogue: Spotting Learners' Achievements and Teachers' Perceptions**

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### **Abstract**

The present study aimed to investigate the effects of TBLT-synthesized collaborative dialogue in teaching writing skills to Iranian EFL learners and also to explore their teachers' attitudes towards such an approach. Regarding the essence of the questions of the study, an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design was employed. To this end, 100 conveniently sampled Iranian B.A. TEFL and Translation Studies students were identified as relatively homogeneous in terms of their language proficiency through administering Oxford Placement Test (OPT), and ten Iranian EFL teachers attended as the participants. The experimental group students were exposed to the synthetic approach of teaching writing. In contrast, the control group experienced conventional mainstream in the quantitative phase of the study lasting for 16-session treatments. As to the qualitative phase, a semi-structured individual interview was conducted with the participant teachers. The quantitative phase revealed that the synthetic initiative had comparatively significant impacts on the EFL students' writing performance, and the qualitative phase showed that the teachers adopted some positive views toward the implementation of the applied synthetic approach to TBLT and CD in writing instruction. The findings offer some pedagogical implications for the stakeholders, including syllabus designers, EFL learners, and teachers, to include task-based collaborative dialogues in EFL instruction.

*Keywords:* collaborative dialogue, TBLT, writing skill

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## **Introduction**

A chain of instructional guidelines has driven English language teachers in Iran over many years to implement a communicative learner-centered approach to teaching the English language (Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006; Zohrabi et al., 2012). In addition, the progress of the productive language skills of Iranian students has grown to be the primary concern of academics who teach English in the classroom because there are rare opportunities to interact in Iranian EFL settings (Shirbagi, 2010). In support of this trend, Rajablou and Shirvan (2017) stated that the EFL context in which Iranian students grow up is insufficiently supportive of allowing them to read and speak English in their daily lives, which possibly stifles their motivation to learn English. Hence, a learner-oriented approach as a special kind of teaching is supposed to fill this gap.

In line with implementing a learner-oriented approach, Swain (1997), in a series of her studies, elucidated the notion of collaborative dialogue (CD) and its relation with the second language (L2) improvement. Swain et al. (2002) depicted CD as dialogic communication in which students cooperate to tackle language issues and, or co-build language or language proficiency. Based on Swain (1995, 1997, 1998), the connection between CD and second language acquisition (SLA) is according to the theory that the learners' output, specifically their spoken and written productions, can be significant to aid their L2 acquisition. Swain (1995), in her research with immersion learners, explored that immense input contact alone was not enough for students to get native-like proficiency; therefore, she proposed as her famous comprehensible output hypothesis (COH) that output can have a more impact on L2 acquisition by providing chances for students to perceive the particular L2 items that they may lack. Nonetheless, the issue with the COH is that it does not present a persuasive description of how the output via "noticing," "hypothesis testing," and "reflection" results in acquisition. To tackle this issue, Swain (2001) made an attempt to assume the relationship between output and L2 improvement by applying the Vygotskian sociocultural theory of mind, focusing on the output's reflective role (also known as the metalinguistic function of output or metatalk). Swain (2001) mentioned the output's metalinguistic function is the most significant in reflecting on the task types in which immersion learners could be involved, which may aid them to move beyond their present status of L2 improvement to more native-like proficiency. The main tenet of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of mind is that mediation is the source of all learning, that is, "the process through which humans deploy culturally constructed artifacts, concepts, and activities to regulate (i.e., gain voluntary control of and transform) the material world or their own and each other's social and mental activity" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 79). As a necessary symbolic artifact form, language mediates thinking and helps the acquisition, subsequently. The social dimension of learning is emphasized by Swain and Lapkin (2002) as a part of the Vygotskian sociocultural theory of mind, and they believed that L2 learning is mediated by output best via CD. As they maintained, learners need to talk to each other to collaborate. They engage in making meaning through their dialog and discuss the meaning.

### **Literature Review**

In several research that explored the CD writing (CDW) implementation in ESL contexts, Storch and Wigglesworth concluded that learners in groups commonly supported each other, specifically when CD implement to circle knowledge between peers or members of the groups (Storch, 2005; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009, 2012). In addition to assessing the essence of CD, scholars in the field have also studied co-constructed written products of learners at different phases of the CD writing tasks process to specify the advantages of CD compared to individual writing (Neumann & McDonough, 2015). These research studies concluded that CD has a significant effect on writing accuracy (e.g., Dobao, 2012; Storch, 2005; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007). Storch (2005) reported that collaboratively co-constructed written products are more accurate and complicated in terms of language, and their content is more well-organized. Elola and Oskoz (2010) concluded that peers could plan more meticulously before starting to write while they worked individually on the texts' structure during the writing task completion. Notwithstanding, the researchers did not investigate whether the various processes had an effect on writing organization.

In a longitudinal study, Shehadeh (2011) points out that the learners adopt positive views on CDW implementation in the class, and they believe that it is helpful and practical. Dobao & Blum (2013) maintained that collaborative writing broadened the horizons of learners concerning sharing their opinions and knowledge. In the same vein, Khodabakhshzadeh and Samadi (2017) concluded that the learners had positive perspectives toward collaborative writing usage, since this method could improve their encouragement, motivate them to implement feedback from their peers during the research, give the students a broad view regarding the topic, remove their useless writing habits, and empower the students to acquire more new vocabularies and expressions. Moreover, Alegri'a de la Colina and Garcí'a Mayo (2007) explored preintermediate students taking part in a CDW course. The results showed that students who had a collaboration in completing their tasks (e.g., jigsaw) usually implemented the proper remedy and also correct answer in responding to problems in problem-solving tasks. In addition, Dobao (2012) explored the benefits of collaborative writing tasks and compared the output of the same writing task by groups of four students, pairs, and individual students. He explored the impact of the learners' number on their written productions' complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) and the essence of the oral interaction between the pairs and the groups during collaboration. The findings indicated that though both groups and pairs focused to some extent frequently on language items, groups generated more output than pairs. Consequently, the texts submitted by the classes were not only more reliable than those written separately but also more accurate than those written in pairs. In the same vein, Hani-Yan (2014) examined the teaching of English writing from a task-based viewpoint to the big classes in China. The study suggests a realistic linear process in the task-based classroom on how to teach English writing based on a contrast between the conventional 3Ps (presentation, production, practice) method and the task-based approach. The results indicated that the task-based strategy was successful in teaching English writing to

populated classes as it improved the awareness of the task-based strategy of the students and enhanced different writing elements. In a similar line of studies, Ameri-Golestan and Nezakat-Alhossaini (2017) compared the long-term impacts of individual and collaborative task designing on the writing performance of Iranian English language students, using the rating scale of Brown and Bailey (1985). The findings showed that time and group, as the two essential factors had a role in the treatments' effectiveness. The study group participants had gone on to maintain the impacts of task preparation. The results provided further evidence for L2 production socio-cultural theories according to which learning can be interpersonally enhanced. Similarly, Abtahi et al. (2020) studied the writing accuracy, feedback amount, and comment type (global vs. local) of EFL learners practicing peer-peer feedback on their writing in a computer-oriented and CDW procedure. Learners in the computer-oriented group received the instruction through peer-peer feedback using word processor software, and in the handwritten group, the learners presented CD handwritten peer feedback to their peers. The findings showed the CD handwritten group's accuracy improved significantly. The qualitative findings showed that the feedback amount in the CD handwritten group was remarkably higher than the amount of feedback in the computer-based one. In another recent mixed-methods study, Anggraini et al. (2020) investigated the impacts of the CDW strategy on EFL students' writing proficiency and their teachers' perceptions of the strategy. The CDW strategy was implemented in the experimental class, and the conventional teaching strategy was used in the control class. Writing tests and interviews were employed to gather the data to examine the learners' writing proficiency and their teachers' perceptions towards CDW. The findings showed that the CDW strategy could aid learners in ideas generation and background knowledge activation on the assigned topics to develop their writing skills. The interview results also indicated that the learners adopted positive perceptions toward the CDW strategy. All in all, the results of studies mentioned above suggested that CD implementation could lead to positive impacts on learners' writing performance as well as their conception of CD usage itself.

Alongside these theoretical bases and the related literature, the language teaching trend has also witnessed pertinent methodological developments, mainly in the form of communicative perspectives and task-based orientations, the latter functioning as an advanced expansion of the strategy to the former (Ellis & Shintani, 2014). The ultimate goal of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is to promote communication skills for learners by involving them in meaning-focused communication. A review of the related literature revealed that most of the research studies on task-based CD investigated oral mode more than written one (Shehadeh, 2011), and also most of the studies in this field were conducted in English as a second language (ESL) contexts (e.g., Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007). The number of research studies on the effectiveness of task-based CDW in EFL setting is so scant. Not only is the incorporation of task-based instruction, collaborative dialogues, and the tenets of SCT a new approach to developing SLA but also their utilities as to each skill in general and writing skill, in particular, is still rather worthy of consideration. In the Iranian EFL setting, the progress of productive language skills has grown to be the main concern of academics due to rare

interaction opportunities and insufficient support (Rajablou & Shirvan, 2017; Shirbagi, 2010). In addition, there was no study in Iranian EFL contexts to explore the impact of task-based CD on the writing performance of Iranian EFL students, and no research to examine Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of task-based CD. To bridge this gap in the literature, this study aimed at synthesizing collaborative dialogue with TBLT in developing writing skills on the one hand and investigating the learners' perceptions of this initiative as to learning and developing Iranian EFL learners' writing skills. Solidly speaking, this study aims first to explore if there is any significant difference between the effects of incorporation of conventional and task-based collaborative dialogues (CD) in developing Iranian EFL learners' written modality of communication and second to investigate perceptions of the EFL teachers toward such a synthetic approach.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The first groups of participants were 100 B.A. students, 38 males and 62 females, who took the Advanced Writing Course. Their age range was 18-24. They were TEFL and translation students at Islamic Azad University, North and South Tehran branches. Convenience sampling was used to select the participants (Ary et al., 2019). To select a homogeneous sample in terms of their language proficiency levels, they took Oxford Placement Test (OPT) before the start of treatment sessions. The students whose scores ranged between 30-47, according to CEFR (Council of Europe, 2009), were included as intermediate-level learners. Because of the university regulations and the small population of the classes, no random selection was possible. Hence, intact classes were taken into consideration. However, the classes were randomly assigned to an experimental group (task-based collaborative dialogue in writing) and a control group (conventional instruction for writing). In addition, the second group of participants was ten EFL teachers, who were six men and four women, and participated in the qualitative phase of the study, and were selected based on their familiarity with collaborative dialogue instruction.

### **Materials and Instruments**

#### ***Oxford Placement Test (OPT)***

The pencil-and-paper Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was employed in the present study. It is composed of grammar, vocabulary, and writings subtests. Moreover, Wistner et al. (2009) reported the OPT reliability index of .80. In addition, they confirmed the construct validity of this test. In this study, the learners whose scores ranged between 30-47 were included as intermediate-level learners.

#### ***Writing Pretest and Posttest***

To measure the writing skill of the participants, the writing general module task 2 of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam was used as the pretest and posttest of the study, and they scored based on the IELTS analytic scoring system developed by British Council. To ensure the validity of the tests, two experts in the field reviewed and confirmed them. Their inter-rater

reliability indices were estimated through the Pearson correlation, and the results showed the raters' significant agreements on the pretest ( $r(48) = .730$  representing a large effect size,  $p = .000$ ) and posttest ( $r(48) = .636$  representing a large effect size,  $p = .000$ ) of writing.

### ***Semi-Structured Interview***

After administering the posttest, the first author of the study conducted semi-structured individual interviews with ten teachers. The purpose of the interview was to gain more comprehensive data on teachers' perceptions of implementing CD in advanced writing classes. The interview sessions were held face-to-face, and the language of the interviews was English. They were conducted within one month, and each session took about 30 minutes. The questions of the interview were made by the researchers. Then, to ensure the interview questions' content validity, they were reviewed and confirmed by two experts in the field. With the participants' permission, the interviews were recorded and then transcribed.

### **Procedure**

Regarding the essence of the questions of the study, an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design was employed; therefore, the present research was first run based on a quantitative approach followed by a supportive qualitative one (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

### ***Quantitative Phase***

First, the OPT test was administered to four intact classes of 110 EFL students, based on which 100 students whose scores, according to CEFR (Council of Europe, 2009), fell one standard deviation above or below the mean were considered as the participants. They were then divided into two groups, namely, control and experimental groups. Next, writing general module task 2 of the IELTS exam was administered to two groups as the pretest. The writing test was rated based on the IELTS writing band score descriptors.

The notion of the task-based collaborative dialogue was explained to the experimental group, and during the 16 classroom sessions of 90 minutes, collaborative dialogue writing tasks were employed for the writing skill instruction. Jigsaw and dictogloss tasks were applied, selected from Swain and Lapkin's (2001) research, and two experts in the field confirmed them to implement in the study. Regarding the jigsaw tasks, the learners should hold, request, and supply the required information to fulfill the task (Yilmaz, 2008). The learners have different parts of a puzzle, and merely by mixing these parts, they could accomplish the task. Through the other parts of information each learner receives, the two-way exchange is ensured. It is maintained that applying this task type could present all the essential situations that allow learners to discuss mutual comprehension of peers' message meaning (Ellis, 2003). Regarding dictogloss tasks, the teacher reads a short text to students at a normal rate, and as they listen, they should write down notes. Afterward, they collaborate in small groups to rebuild their version of the primary text. Dictogloss tasks could be efficient in leading students to notice their language production as they get involved in constructing a text meaning (Ellis, 2003). These

two tasks, applied in the present study, were regarded as two-way convergent tasks in which requiring the learners to exchange the necessary information to complete tasks successfully.

The teachers divided the learners into small groups to implement the collaborative dialogue tasks. Considering both of these tasks, the students worked in small groups and discussed the subject. In doing the Jigsaw task, the teachers chose some images related to students' course book. The images were divided into two parts, in which each part worked as a complement to another one. The learners of each group were encouraged to share their knowledge to recognize what the context was about. In dictogloss tasks, the instructors read the text aloud twice. Simultaneously, the learners were allowed to jot down the text that they had heard. To reconstruct the text, the learners of each group should work together. The learners were explained the purpose of collaborative dialogue, which is modifying learners' output to be more comprehensible in terms of grammatical and morpho-syntactic aspects and also providing additional information in response to the interlocutor's feedback on the incomprehensibility or incompleteness of the original utterance (Poupore, 2004). Consequently, they modified their written production where needed to ease the process of comprehension and discussion.

In the control group, the conventional type of teaching writing instruction based on the syllabus was practiced. The teachers introduced the lesson topic, and the students discussed and wrote about the topic individually. The students' errors were corrected by the teachers, and they received the required feedback from the teachers on their performance individually. There was no collaboration in the instructions of the control group. At the end of the term, another writing test of IELTS, was run as a posttest and scored based on the IELTS rubrics.

### ***Qualitative Phase***

The semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with ten teachers. Before undertaking the interview sessions, the participants were informed about the goal and the time of the interview. The interview sessions were conducted by the first author of the study. Each interview took about 30 minutes, and all interviews were recorded and then transcribed with the participants' permission. They were held at the English department of Islamic Azad University, North and South Tehran branches.

### **Data Analysis**

To analyze the data, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. To analyze the quantitative data, analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was implemented, and SPSS version 22 was employed. The skewness and kurtosis indices and their ratios over standard errors were applied to probe the normality of the present data. The homogeneity of variances was checked using Levene's test of homogeneity of variances. The descriptive qualitative content analysis technique (Creswell, 2012) was used to analyze the qualitative data.

## Results

### Addressing the First Research Question

The first research question addressed “the differential effects of incorporation of conventional and task-based collaborative dialogues on developing Iranian EFL learners’ writing skills”, and to answer it, parametric statistical analysis (ANCOVA) was employed. Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics of the two groups on the writing posttest after controlling the pretests effects. The results showed that the experimental group, after receiving task-based collaborative dialogues, had a higher mean than the control group on the posttest of writing ( $M = 5.59$  vs.  $M = 5.10$ ).

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics; Posttest of Writing by Groups with Pretests*

Group	Posttests	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Experimental	Writing	5.592	.088	5.414	5.770
Control	Writing	5.108	.088	4.930	5.286

Based on table 1, the task-based collaborative dialogue group ( $M = 5.59$ ) significantly outperformed the control group ( $M = 5.10$ ) on the posttest of writing after controlling for the effect of the pretest (Mean Difference = .484,  $p = .000$ , 95 % CI [.229, .740]). As Table 2 shows, the experimental group had a significantly higher mean on the writing posttest (Mean Difference = .580,  $p = .000$ , 95 % CI [.360, .801]).

**Table 2**

*Simple Effect Analysis; Posttests of Writing Between Groups with Pretest*

Group	(I) Skills	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Experimental	Writing	.580*	.110	.000	.360	.801
Control	Writing	.420*	.110	.000	.200	.641

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

### Addressing the Second Research Question

The second research question addressed the perceptions of Iranian EFL teachers towards incorporating task-based CD in developing their writing skills, and to answer this question, the semi-structured interview was applied. A descriptive qualitative content analysis technique (Creswell, 2012) was used to analyze the data. The transcripts of the interviews were reviewed many times and then coded to



investigate the categories and sub-categories. The categories and sub-categories were reread several times and classified into the main themes, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*The Categories, Sub-Categories, and the Main Themes of the Teachers' Interviews*

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Sub-categories</b>	<b>Main Themes</b>
Collaborative dialogues' effects on learners	-Peer learning -Learner's responsibility -Self-development -Reflective learners -Learners' affective factors -Learner's adaptation	-Self-development -Reflectivity -Learners affective factors
Improving the effective factors of the collaborative dialogue	-Individual differences -Community Structure -Teacher' roles -Learners' rapport	-Individual differences -Teachers' roles
Collaborative dialogue and teachers' performance	-Teaching process -Content-based teaching -Class presentation -Establishing rapport -Information sharing -Individual differences	-Facilitating teaching process -Construing a learner-based instruction methodology -Playing an effective role model for learners
Theoretical understanding of the collaborative dialogue	-Established theories -Implementation evidence -Implementation environment -Implementation frequency / uses -Current theories -Literature	-Literature-based -Evidence-based
The potentiality of the collaborative dialogue implementation	-Place conditions -Number of students / learners' time and needs -Level of the students -Course objectives -Teacher abilities or skills -Teacher or institution management	-Controlling variables of a place of implementation -Course management and objectives -Teacher / learner prerequisite participation
Learners' attitudes toward collaborative dialogue	-Safety / feeling -Happiness / fun -Shyness -Knowledge facilitation -Knowledge transformation -Self-confidence -Group learning	-Affective filters -Information processing
Learners' learning success	-Learners' rapport -Peer corrective feedback -Simplicity of new information -Cooperative task-based learning -Learners' responsibility	-Learners' process of learning -Learners' cognitive processes
Collaborative dialogue and use of learning materials	-Simplicity of the contents -Levels of the materials -Content comprehension	-Comprehensibility -Material adjustment
Assessment of collaborative dialogue	-Assessment as learning -Assessment of learning	-Diagnostic assessment -Achievement assessment

According to Table 3, the results of teachers' interviews analysis showed that self-development (including learners' responsibility, and peer learning), reflectivity (including learner's adaptation), and learners' affective variables were explored to be the facets that can be potentially positive effects of the "CD" on EFL students from teachers' views. Mohammad, one of the proficient EFL instructors in this respect, noted,

*##One of the main features of task-based CD is improving students' self-development in which they could foster their learning through interaction with their classmates in a friendly context, which would result in self-reflection since they try to adapt themselves to the current situation of the learning context.*

In this regard, Narges pointed out, "I believe that task-based CD can remove the affective filters of the learners, and consequently, it could increase their motivation to participate in the task fulfillment cycle. Accordingly, learning takes place in a non-threatening environment".

In terms of the improvement of the positive influential factors of the CD on learners from teachers' perspective, the results of the interviews revealed that the variables of individual differences as well as teacher' roles could be used as the effective factors, and the teachers believed that CD could improve teacher performances through facilitating teaching process (e.g., content-based teaching, class presentation). Arman, who is an experienced teacher in using the TBLT approach, criticized the conventional method of teaching and praised the task-based CD,

*##In traditional language teaching methods, individual differences are mostly ignored, but in the TBLT and, especially task-based CD, individual differences play an important role in the learning process. For example, I try to arrange groups in task-based CDs according to extroversion and introversion dichotomy. Therefore, reserved students could find opportunities to participate in class activities through interaction with extroverted peers.*

Most teachers argued that applying a student-centered methodology, including establishing rapport, sharing information, and engaging learners, could play an effective role model for learners in and out of the classroom. Maryam mentioned, "one of the main characteristics of the CD is engaging the whole students in the class activities; as a consequence, they can share their ideas within and across groups." Mohsen maintained,

*##One of the hot topics in the SLA field is teacher-learner rapport. In task-based CD, rapport can be easily established in a friendly environment, and the students could have a close relationship with their teacher. Consequently, it could enhance their motivation to take part in class activities.*

The results also revealed that CD could be used effectively through controlling variables, including place of implementation, course management, course objectives, and teacher / learner participation. Arman stated,

*##Implementing CD in the Iranian EFL context can be challenging if the teacher is not familiar with the principles and prerequisites of CD. Besides, there are many factors, such as course objectives and place of implementation, that play a critical role in using the CD.*

Some teachers argued that EFL learners accept or reject CD due to either affective filters or information processing. Accordingly, the analysis demonstrated that learners' success acceptability could be justified in terms of their learning and cognitive functions. Ali, one of the expert EFL teachers in this respect, noted,

*##I applied task-based CD in my classes, and I found that the students may adopt different reactions and views toward implementing CD based on the type of the task. In other words, task type could have an essential role in learning.*

Sara argued, "Regarding the use of task-based CD in a classroom setting, EFL teachers should consider the cognitive and affective aspects of tasks, and definitely, it requires a great deal of expertise."

In addition, the results showed that CD might facilitate the effective implementation of learning materials through comprehensibility and material adjustment. Mohammad noted,

*##By applying CD, a teacher could adjust the instructional materials to meet the emerging needs of the learners. When I use the task-based CDs in my class, I mostly employ audio-visual materials to teach the new language items.*

Students' performance could also be assessed in terms of formative assessment and achievement assessment (summative assessment). Sara, in this respect, maintained that "I can assess my students during the task completion, and it is very helpful since I could find the extent of learners' uptake in the learning process." Another factor that many teachers noted during interviews was the learner's self-assessment. They firmly believed that applying task-based CD could enhance the self-assessment ability of EFL students through constant interaction with their peers. Maryam pointed out, "Using CD could enhance the students' self-reflection, and as a result, they gradually acquire the ability to assess their performance." They also believed that task-based CD could develop the metacognition and metacognitive abilities of EFL learners through participation in groups.

The results showed that the teachers adopted positive views towards implementing CD in the class, and the results of the quantitative and qualitative data complemented each other.

## **Discussion**

The present study aimed to investigate the effects of task-based collaborative dialogue on the writing performance of Iranian EFL learners and to explore the Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of task-based collaborative dialogue. Regarding the first research question, the results revealed that task-based collaborative dialogue affected EFL learners' writing performance. To understand the finding, one explanation why task-based teaching created these

results may be the fact that the students reviewed their knowledge for doing the tasks more thoroughly before completing them. This is especially true when the learners participated in collaborative task planning since they got more chances to brainstorm before writing (through spoken engagement). The participants' grasp of the subject was likely deepened by collaboration, and they had additional opportunities and viewpoints to take into account the new language items (Swain & Watanabe, 2013). In general, the findings can be addressed in relation to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural conceptions of L2 development (Lantolf, 2000). According to the sociocultural theory of L2 development, communication with other community members helps L2 learners' linguistic development (e.g., classroom). It could provide the student with the proper amounts of scaffolding, or support. The widespread consensus is that when students collaborate in pairs or groups, considerable assistance occurs in classes (e.g., Donato, 1994; Kim & McDonough, 2008; Nassaji & Tian, 2010; Swain & Lapkin, 2002). It is believed that the study participants benefited from this assistance in their language classroom.

The results of the present study are in line with the findings of many studies (e.g., Abtahi et al., 2020; Alegria de la Colina & Garcia Mayo, 2007; Ameri-Golestan & Nezakat-Alhossaini, 2017; Angraini et al., 2020; Dobao, 2012; Hani-Yan, 2014) in which their results showed that task-based collaborative dialogue affected the EFL / ESL learners' writing performance significantly.

Regarding the second research question, the findings revealed the positive effective factors of the collaborative dialogue on learners from teachers' perspective. It was found that self-development (including learners' responsibility, peer learning), reflectivity (including learners' adaptation), and learners' affective factors could be potential. Learners' responsibility is one of the important factors in the learning process. Learners should take responsibility for their learning and try to be active learners. This responsibility can be extended to students' working in groups and make it more effective. This finding is in agreement with the finding of Conzemius and O'neill (2001), who believed that there should be shared responsibility in learning in groups so that learners can attain their utmost achievements. Furthermore, peers learning was found to be another influencing factor. It is justifiable as learners can learn from their more proficient peer and take advantage of their knowledge to reach the same level. Hence, it can be stated that learners can reach achievements using peer learning and collaborative dialogues. Watanabe and Swain (2007) investigated that learners can learn new things from their peers and work in groups. Furthermore, Zeng and Takatsuka (2009) studied text-based peer-peer collaborative dialogue in a computer-mediated learning environment in the EFL context and found its effectiveness. Other studies (Dobao, 2012; Swain et al., 2002) were done to approve the effectiveness of peer learning and collaborative dialogue. Reflection and adaptation were found to be other affecting factors regarding collaborative dialogue. It can be stated that learners need to reflect on their performance and dialogue and the performance of their peers to adapt their type of dialogue with them. It needs to be comprehensible and sufficient. This finding is in harmony with those of Adamson et al. (2014), who found similar

results regarding the importance of reflection and adaptation in a collaborative dialogue process.

In terms of the improvement of the positive effective factors of the collaborative dialogue on learners' performance from teachers' perspective, the study showed that the variables of individual differences as well as teachers' roles could be used as the effective factors. Individual differences should be considered while using collaborative dialogue to make the process more effective. Considering the importance of the teachers' role, it should be stated that the teachers who introduced the curriculum have played a significant role in the growth of skills for the students. First, they had a positive attitude toward TBLT and were excited to teach in compliance with TBLT practices and values. Willis (1996) and Carless (2004) highlighted the teachers' role in promoting student learning through TBLT. The results of teachers' interviews revealed that collaborative dialogues could improve teacher performances through facilitating the teaching process (e.g., content-based teaching, class presentation), construing a learner-based instruction methodology, including establishing rapport, information sharing, and individual differences, and playing an effective role model for learners in and out of the classroom. These could be accepted because, through collaborative dialogues, teachers can get aware of learners' strengths and weaknesses and provide feedback. Furthermore, using this kind of dialogue increases the rapport between teacher and students, which in turn may ease the process of teaching and learning (Khodamoradi et al., 2013). Furthermore, Groenke (2007) studied the role of collaborative dialogue in a synchronous CMC environment while examining English teachers' strategies. He found that teachers make rapport through dialogue. The results of the interviews indicated that collaborative dialogue could be implemented effectively through controlling variables of a place of implementation, course management and objectives, and teacher / learner prerequisite participation. As every method of teaching, this method requires some preparations, too. In this regard, time, place, teacher, and learner participation are required. Wasting time and difficulty in getting cooperation can be pinpointed in applying collaborative dialogue in language classrooms. Once the teacher is aware that the problem occurred, he / she can handle it immediately. This idea is in line with Brooks and Ammons (2003). They recommended that having multiple peer evaluations during the project reduced social loafing. Finally, teachers need to take the size and group composition, as well as the scope of the project, into careful consideration. The results also revealed that learners accepted or rejected collaborative dialogue because of either affective filters or information processing. According to Swain and Watanabe (2013), cognition and emotions are two inseparable parts of language learning. Hence, without emotions or affective factors like interest and motivation, it is impossible to convince learners to do the tasks or use collaborative dialogue. Other studies have shown the importance of emotions and affective factors in language learning (e.g., MacIntyre, 2002; Pishghadam et al., 2013). Another factor was information processing. McLaughlin et al. (1983) provided a model for information processing in language learning. In their model, sufficient input should be processed in the mind to be changed to the output. Using collaborative dialogue, learners can modify input to be more comprehensible for their peers and learn better. Webb (2013) also provides an information-

processing approaches to collaborative learning in which the input is modified through collaborative dialogue. Learners' success acceptability could be explained in terms of their process of learning and cognitive processes. The learning process and strategies used by the learners are important factors in the use of collaborative dialogue. Watanabe and Swain (2007) showed that learners with different processing capacities and different proficiency levels react to collaborative dialogue differently. Hence, using collaborative dialogue, learners' cognitive abilities should be considered. The results also showed that learners' and teachers' techniques could impede learning success from teachers' perspectives.

### **Conclusion**

One important conclusion of the present study is that the theoretical significance of collaborative dialogue, which arises from the unanimity in SLA research studies on a focus on form plus a focus on meaning, is advantageous for second language learning. As collaborative dialogue is in line with the focus on form view (Doughty & Williams, 1998), it captures different methods that students to draw each other's attention to linguistic form to meet the needs that arise in the course of the meaningful task (Yilmaz, 2008). Based on the results, it can be concluded that a more social method, such as collaborative dialogues, in the language learning and teaching setting could benefit the learners' interaction and writing skills. The collaborative learning context enables the students to build their ZPD collaboratively by cooperating with their peers at the same proficiency level and conceptual comprehension. This active construction of the learning context by the learners also effectively impacts the development of speaking and writing proficiency (Ahmadian et al., 2014). As Shehadeh (2011) and Doboia (2012) stated, collaboration is essential in most EFL settings; as a result, the focus is on the instruction in which collaborative pair and group work is pivotal to L2 classes (e.g., Bygate et al., 2001; Lantolf, 2000), mainly influenced by the Vygotsky's (1978) SCT of language learning.

These findings can have pedagogical implications for applying collaborative dialogue techniques in EFL classrooms, proposing that students could remove linguistic issues more efficiently while they get help from their classmates rather than working alone (Swain, 1997, 2001). This could help EFL instructors to handle populated language classrooms. In such classes, pair or group work could be a remedy for the students in developing second language learning, specifically productive skills, and for EFL instructors in class handling (Ahmadian et al., 2014). From a pedagogical standpoint, task planning implementation offers EFL instructors and students useful perspectives. The results of the current study could aid in improving understanding of the writing process, particularly when it comes to viewing writing as a process and not a product. Indeed, from a pedagogical perspective, the study's findings offer more empirical support for the value of task planning in EFL writing classes. It could be used as a teaching tool, namely, to encourage student cooperation and create a supportive social environment in EFL lessons (Swain & Lapkin, 2002). The relationship between task planning and the acquisition and instruction of writing abilities in EFL settings is another potential pedagogical implication of the current research (Ellis, 2003). This can be significant

since most studies on task planning in a second language concentrated on L2. This study may render implications for different stakeholders like material developers. Based on the findings, the material developers could include writing CD tasks in EFL coursebooks to encourage EFL learners' collaborative dialogue so that they can take advantage of practicing this kind of dialogue in their language classrooms.

The present study had some limitations. Regarding the sample of the study, the findings have been affected as the participants cannot be representative of Iranian EFL teachers and learners. In addition, due to the regulations of the universities, the randomization of the learners was not possible. Consequently, further studies could be undertaken by applying a random sample of EFL teachers and learners. Generalizations of the results of the present study to other contexts, such as language institutes, should be made with caution. Thus, future studies could replicate this study in different contexts, such as language institutes.

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