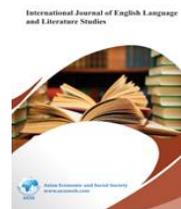




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### SELF-ESTEEM AND WRITING ACHIEVEMENTS OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS

**Ali Akbar Khansir**

*Bushehr University of Medical Sciences, Bushehr, Iran*

**Zahra Abdolahi**

*Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bushehr, Iran*

#### ABSTRACT

*Writing skill is one of the four language skills in learning English language in EFL setting. The role of self-esteem in learning second language as is one of the major important factors is very vital; because, success or failure of a learner depends mostly on the degree of ones' self-esteem. This research aimed at investigating the correlation between self-esteem and English writing achievement of Iranian EFL learners. The Iranian learners who participated in this research were sixty male and twenty female students from two English Language Institutes in Borazjan city in Bushehr State. The outcome of this research showed that the students' writing achievement was significantly affected by their self-esteem; that is, self-esteem as a psychological factor had a positive relationship with students' English writing. There was a significant correlation between self-esteem and English writing achievement.*

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**Keywords:** Self-esteem, Writing achievement, Language learning, EFL learner.

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The present study aimed at investigating the correlation between self-esteem and English writing achievement of Iranian EFL students. Self-esteem has always played a crucial role in learning language in general and in writing in particular. This study focused on English writing as one of the four language skills in EFL setting. Writing as skill is always considered in promoting knowledge of EFL learners in learning English language as a foreign language in Iranian language society. Writing is very difficult skill not only for foreign language learners but also for native language learners. Khansir (2012) argued that "writing plays an essential role in language learning.

Writing is defined as art of a writer" (p. 281). He added that learning of writing is one of the most important skills that second language learners need to develop their ability to communicate ideas and information effectively in target language. Writing can be recognized as an integral part of language learning process in ELT classroom (p.282). Trembley (1993) viewed writing as a hard and risky skill. Additionally, writing involves different aspects such as spelling, punctuation, organization...etc. Archibald (2004) mentioned that despite its complexity, writing is the major means of communication. It creates a communication channel between the writer and the reader. It is needed to transfer messages, letters, and knowledge, to take exams and to maintain learning.

However, proficiency in one's native language does not necessarily lead to proficiency in L2 writing (cited in (Khansir *et al.*, 2013)). Celce-Murcia (2001) indicated that many native speakers find difficulties in mastering the writing skill. Klassen (2002) argued that writing is a crucial skill that is poorly acquired; researches into writing problems seem to be behind those examining other language areas. Khansir (2013) argued that "Today, English language is used as a world language; it is used as language in international business, sciences and medicine. Even in countries where English is not first language, a number of English words are used (p.1141)". English is the most common language that is widely used, and it has a special place in the school curriculum in foreign countries. In Iran, English also used as foreign language, in Iranian school curriculum, English language used as general subject, every field uses English as a subject at school and university is that the Iranian students in their particular subject should pass English as general subject. Today, the role of English language is very important in Iranian scientific society in general and the role of English writing is very vital in written communication in particular. The factors such as motivation, attitudes, anxiety or self-esteem can be positive or negative factors (Branden, 1994; Apter, 1998; Brown, 2000). In recent years, the importance of affective factors like anxiety, inhibition, motivation and self-esteem has been of interest in the field of language learning because of their high effects on learning a foreign or a second language (Andres, 2002). Branden (2001) mentioned that self-esteem has two aspects: self-confidence which is the sense of efficacy and self-respect which is the sense of worthy. So, self-esteem reflects the student's feelings about one's self. Stevick (1990) stated that "learning is affected by how students feel about themselves" (p.25). Traditionally, self-esteem is frequently used in related literature synonymously with the terms "self-concept", "self-competence" and "self-efficacy" although they are different (Pajares and Johnson, 1993; Daniel and King, 1995). Self-esteem is a basic need in human life. Branden (2001) defined it as "the experience of being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and being worthy of happiness. It consists of self-efficacy....and self-respect" (p. 252). In discussion of statement of the problem is that the most Iranian students feel that English language is a difficult subject. Self-esteem can help the students to improve their language. The role of positive self-esteem is used among the students as an aspect of motivation helps them show their ability to write their papers. Students with a positive self-esteem have been shown to have higher levels of reading ability and reading skills, as well as a higher level of academic achievement. Students with low self-esteem face with many problems in their writing. After discussion of statement, the

researchers have to define some factors directly related to self-esteem: 1) 'Inhibition' is an affective factor which is clearly related to self-esteem. Individuals develop a set of defenses to protect themselves from either external or internal criticism (Brown, 2000). Inhibition prevents people from expressing themselves freely and comfortably. 2) 'Anxiety' is another factor which is clearly related to self-esteem. Scovel (1978) stated that "it is associated with feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension or worry" (cited in Brown, p.151). 3) 'Motivation' is one of the affective factors that have a strong impact on student's success or failure. Dornyei (2001) considered motivation a vague term and a broad umbrella that includes different meanings under it.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this research, many researches are concerned with self-esteem and English writing discussed below:

Grodnick (1996) examined the correlation between self-esteem and writing through fifty compositions of Union County College students. He used Coppersmith self-esteem Scale and writing course grades to determine the correlation. In addition, the participants of this study were American students, the research focused on self-esteem and writing achievement. The outcome of this study supported the hypothesis that students' self-esteem level did not show a significant correlation with proficiency level of writing. Hassan (2001) investigated the relation between two variables, writing apprehension and self-esteem. He tried to determine the quality and quantity of EFL students' writings based on writing apprehension and self-esteem. 32 Egyptian EFL students were participated in this research. The results of this study showed that writing apprehension of EFL students negatively correlated with their self-esteem. Low apprehensive students had higher self-esteem and high apprehensive students had lower self-esteem. Lower apprehensive students write better than high apprehensive students and vice versa. Wachholz and Etheridge (1996) investigated the difference in writing of writers based on self-efficacy between high-apprehensive and low-apprehensive of the writers. Two tests namely interviews and The Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Test was administered to 43 writers in three composition classes. Results of this paper showed that there was a relationship between self-efficacy and writing performance. The study revealed that teachers had a strong impact on students' performance through their actions and words. In addition, low apprehensive students showed positive and successful experiences compared with high-apprehensive students who showed failure and negative experiences.

Klassen (2002) considered sixty studies related the writing self-efficacy of sixth to tenth graders. Most of the studies found a significant role for self-efficacy in writing performance. Some of the studies examined 'gender' and made differentiate between males and females. In these studies, performance of males was better than females. Wilson *et al.* (1980) investigated twelve studies related to writing apprehension, self-esteem and personal characteristics. Self-esteem and personality were examined and the outcome of the studies showed that apprehension and anxiety were inversely related to self-esteem. When self-esteem increased, writing apprehension and anxiety decreased; and when self-esteem decreased, writing apprehension and anxiety increased.

D'Amico and Cardaci (2003) explored the correlation among self-efficacy, self-esteem and scholastic achievement. In this study, one hundred fifty students were participated.

Students' achievement scores were used; self-efficacy and self-esteem scales were administered to the participants. The results of this research determined that self-efficacy scores had correlation with achievement while self-esteem scores had not correlation with achievement. Thus, this study made differentiate between self-efficacy and self-esteem; although, it emphasized the correspondence between them. However, some researchers such as Pullmann and Allik (2008) found that high self-esteem facilitates academic achievements. According to them, low general self-esteem does not necessarily signal a poor academic achievement. Their result showed that low (not high) general self-esteem is a significant predictor of superior school performance. In addition, Marsh and O'Mara (2008) suggested that prior self-esteem has small positive effect on subsequent educational attainment.

### **3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

Therefore, the purpose of the research was to cover the following areas:

- a. To measure the correlation between self-esteem and writing achievement of Iranian EFL school students.
- b. To measure the correlation between self-esteem and the writing achievements of Iranian male and female students separately.

### **4. QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY**

The present study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a significant correlation between self-esteem and writing achievement of Iranian EFL students?
2. Is there a significant correlation between self-esteem and writing achievement of Iranian male and female students separately?

### **5. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY**

The following hypotheses are formulated:

1. There is a significant correlation between self-esteem and writing achievement of Iranian EFL students.
2. There is a significant correlation between self-esteem and the writing achievements of male and female students separately.

## **6. METHOD**

### **6.1. Participants**

The participants of the present study were 60 Iranian EFL male and 20 female students in the age range of 16 to 30 of two English language Institutes in Borazjan city in Bushehr state in Iran. In this study, the two language institutes namely Peyk Zaban and Hafez English Language Institutes

selected to collect data from the learners studying English language in the two language institutes. The students were intermediate in English language and all of them were required to take part to answer to two tests (writing achievement test and self-esteem).

## **6.2. Instrument**

In this study, the instruments used such as Self-esteem questionnaire (QSE) and Writing achievement test (EWAT) developed to collect data. Rosenberg's standardized questionnaire of self-esteem was used to evaluate individual self-esteem, thus it was investigated through using item response theory. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale consisted of 10 questions and each question contained 4 choices, all of which were presented in Persian language to avoid any confusion for the Iranian learners; hence the results showed high reliability. The English Writing Achievement Test included background information about the participants; name, gender, age and nationality and the second part of the test was divided into two parts; each part has one specific topic. Part one, was expository; students gave information, facts and examples, explaining something in their own language. Part two was descriptive; students described and gave features of something in order to have readers picture it in their minds. Students should choose one of the topics and write about it. Some key words were given to the students in order to help them to write. The test was constructed to assess students' writings in English. The students should write about eight sentences on every given topic.

## **6.3. Procedure**

In order to achieve the aim of this study, the following procedures were used: Development of the questionnaire; Administration of the English writing test; Administration of self-esteem test and Analysis of collected data. All of the eighty learners participated in this research, before estimating the degree of self-esteem of the learners, English writing test administrated to the learners and then the Rosenberg's self-esteem questionnaire was given to the participants in order to measure their degree of self-esteem. All participants were required to complete Rosenberg's Questionnaire of Self-esteem (QSE). The QSE consisted of 10 items and each item had five points Likert scales. The total grade that each student received was considered as his/ her self-esteem score. Total self-esteem scores thus could be ranged from 0 to 30. Higher scores indicated higher self-esteem. Scores below 15 showed low self-esteem. Correlation coefficients between self-esteem and English language writing scores of the EFL learners were conducted by the use of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

## **7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this study, descriptive statistical is used for both Self-esteem and English Writing Achievement Test. Data analysis used based on the correlations between self-esteem and English Writing Achievement, in addition, Quantitative analysis is used to answer the research questions.

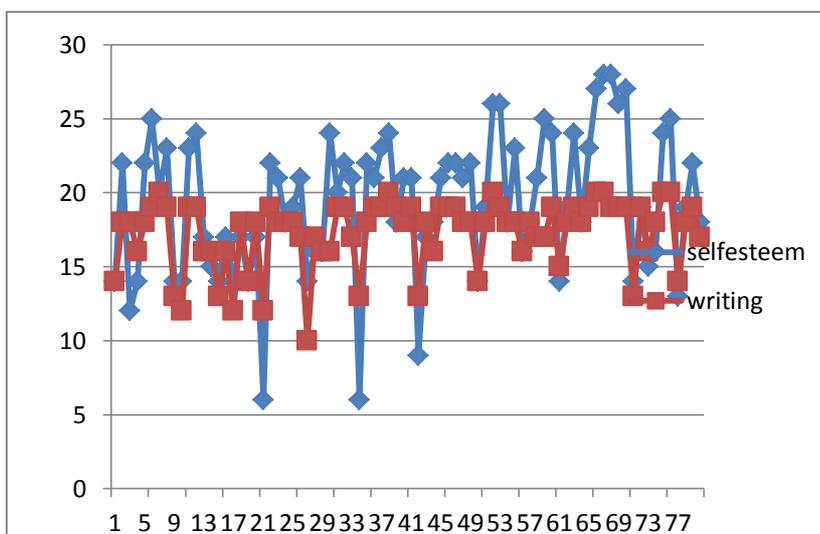
The descriptive statistics for self-esteem questionnaire (QSE) and English writing achievements test (EWAT) are reported in Table 1.

**Table-1.** The Mean and Standard Deviation of self-esteem questionnaire (QSE) and English writing achievements test (EWAT) based on descriptive statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
QSE	80	6	28	19.36	4.74
EWAT	80	10	20	17.29	2.31
Valid N	80				

The table 1 showed mean score obtained from QSE test is 19.36 and its standard deviation is 4.74 whereas the mean of EWAT is 17.29 and its standard deviation is 2.31.so, it revealed that there was significant relationship between the self-esteem questionnaire (QSE) and English writing achievements test (EWAT) in this research .

**Figure-1.** The results of self-esteem and writing achievement



The figure 1 showed the results of self-esteem and writing achievement in this paper.

**Table-2.** The Correlation between self-esteem questionnaire (QSE) and English writing achievements test (EWAT)

	QSE	EWAT
Pearson Correlation	1	.795
Sig.(2-tailed)		.000
N	80	80
Pearson Correlation	.795	1
Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	
N	80	80

According to Pearson Correlation, the correlation between self-esteem scores and writing achievement scores of EFL learners is .795. The result of the computed correlation coefficient showed that the positive relationship between the self-esteem questionnaire (QSE) and English writing achievements test (EWAT) was statistically significant.

**Table-3.** The mean and standard deviation of male and female's self-esteem and writing achievement

			Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Males	Writing	Achievement	17.05	2.36	60
scores					
Males Self-esteem			18.83	4.55	
Females	writing	achievement	18	2.02	20
scores					
Female Self-esteem			20.95	5.06	

The table 3 indicated the mean score of males' writing achievement is 17.05 and its standard deviation is 2.36 whereas the mean score of Females' writing achievement is 18 and its standard deviation is 2.02. So, this table revealed those females' learners got higher scores in their writing achievement test. The mean score of self-esteem test of males' learners is 18.83 and its standard deviation is 4.55 whereas the mean score of self-esteem test of females' learners is 20.95 and its standard deviation is 5.06. This table indicated a higher standard deviation of males' writing achievements scores than females' which justifies that the deviation of writing achievements scores in males are larger than that of females. In other words, females are more homogeneous. This table showed a higher standard deviation of female's self-esteem than males.

**Table-4.** The results of t-test of writing achievements (WA) and self-esteem (SE) scores between male and female learners

WA	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	
Males	60	17.05	2.368	
Females	20	18.00	2.026	0.950
SE		Sig=0.112		
Males	60	18.8333	4.55165	2.11667
Females	20	20.9500	5.06250	
		Sig=0.84		

In order to answer the question that is there a significant correlation between the self-esteem and writing achievements of male and female students, P value was calculated. Table 4 showed no significant difference between male and female students' writing scores. According to t-test, the sig of the p-value of writing achievement test between male and female students is .0112 and it is lower than %5 so, the difference is not significant. In self-esteem test, the sig of the p-value between male and female is .084 and it is lower than %5 so there is no significant difference between self-esteem scores of male and female students. In other words, there is a significant correlation between self-esteem and the writing achievements of male and female students separately.

In the discussion of the study, in this paper, the relationship between self-esteem and writing achievements of Iranian male and female students was analyzed. This study indicated that there is the relationship between self-esteem and writing achievements of Iranian male and female students. The statistical analysis of the collected data revealed that there is significant relationship between self-esteem and writing achievement.

For the first hypothesis in this study, the correlation of writing achievements and self-esteem of students was calculated and it revealed that there is significant correlation between these two variables. The correlation coefficient between self-esteem and EFL students' English language writing achievements for the whole sample was 0.79, and thus; it can be said that there was a significant positive relationship between the two factors. This showed that there was a correlation between the two variables. When the learners' self-esteem was increased, their achievement in English writing was increased. In light of this result, the first hypothesis was accepted. Learners with higher levels of self-esteem had higher writing, but learners of low self-esteem had lower writing achievements scores. To answer the second research hypothesis, first the correlation of male and females' writing and self-esteem was computed separately then, t-test was run. As the P-value of the male and female's self-esteem and writing was lower than %5 so, it reveals that there is meaningful relationship between self-esteem and writing achievement of male and female learners. It can be inferred that self-esteem correlated (positively) with the writing scores of female and males, but self-esteem correlated higher with writing achievement of females than those of males. This can be attributed to the fact that females are more precocious than males in emotional development.

## **8. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The results showed that self-esteem has important role in Iranian EFL learners' writings. It can be used as one of the educational factors in order to help students in promoting their knowledge in learning target language. Thus, this study recommended many factors are very important for EFL learners in general and Iranian EFL learners in Particular as follows:

- 1 Positive learning environment can be used for students' feelings and needs should be provided in EFL classroom in order to reinforce self-esteem.
2. EFL students should be encouraged by the support of teachers in order to help them to promote their English knowledge in EFL classroom.
3. EFL students should be involved in leadership tasks and meaningful participation. They should be provided with opportunities in order to enable their capabilities to learn more target language.
4. Self-esteem should be taken into consideration as a serious issue when planning English lessons.
5. EFL teachers should listen to students as they express their needs, beliefs and interests.
6. EFL teachers should take into consideration the individual differences among students and the different environments they come from.
7. EFL students who have low self-esteem should be trained to overcome their negative feelings about themselves and look positively at their EFL learning capabilities.
8. EFL teachers should help students to appreciate their performance and be proud of their achievement.

9. EFL teachers should accept students' mistakes as a natural part of learning and encourage trying and risk-taking in English learning.
10. EFL teachers should reduce threatening learning environment and promote self-confidence through adapting and adopting different teaching strategies.
11. EFL teachers should verify techniques to assess students' achievement in order to show them their abilities.
12. Poor levels of English writing achievement of Iranian students should be given a serious consideration and remedy.

## 9. CONCLUSION

Self-esteem is directly related to psychological and personality of learners in classroom environment. According to [Mortahan and Khan \(2003\)](#) self-esteem can be used as the ration of one's competencies or successes to one's pretentions, that is, the value that one place, on success within each competence domain. In Iranian EFL setting, writing has important role in learning English language, is that, the learners face problems how to write essay or every piece of writing in target language (English), they are needed to have a good self-esteem to overcome their writing problems in English writing and however, self-esteem seems to be used an a psychological factor in EFL classroom. The result of the test showed that there was significant relationship between Self-esteem and Writing achievements of Iranian EFL learners. Outcome of this research indicated that there is a significant correlation between self-esteem and the writing achievements of male and female students separately.]

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