

# Impact of Skill-Based Communicative Approach on Writing Skill of EFL Learners

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## Abstract

The present study examined the effect of a skill-based communicative approach on the development of four components of the learners' academic writing skill including organization, content, language use, and vocabulary. To this end, 45 junior B.A. students majoring in English Literature in Yazd University served as participants. They were provided with 13 experimental treatment sessions, each of which took about one hour during the course of advanced writing. The focus of treatment was on going through seven main stages of writing process including audience awareness, modeling (genre awareness), collaborative prewriting, drafting, peer feedback, revising, and conferencing with teacher, and finally editing while employing skill-based communicative approach. Eventually, four different writing tasks of students were collected and examined carefully by two raters. The results of study suggested that there was a significant difference in development of organization, content, language use and vocabulary of the students' academic writing from Time 1 to Time 4.

**Key words:** Academic writing, A skill-based communicative approach, Content, EFL learner, Language use

## INTRODUCTION

Language learning is a distinctive feature of human beings which distinguishes man from animal. It serves the needs of human communication. It is a tool for all humans to demonstrate their abilities to express not only their ideas and concepts but also their moods and feelings. Among all languages, English is spread out in international context. Hasman (2004) asserts that "the global spread of English over the last years is remarkable. It is unprecedented in several ways; by the increasing number of users of the language; by its depth of penetration into societies; and by its range of functions" (p.19).

Language as a powerful tool affords humans an opportunity to communicate with others through different language skills (Saadian & Bagheri, 2014). Coming to the nature of writing as one of the language skills, Nunan (1989) argues that "learning to write fluently and expressively is the most difficult of the macro skills for all language users regardless

of whether the language in question is a first, second, or foreign language" (p.35). Silva and Matsuda (2002) defines writing as a complex phenomenon because it requires students to gain knowledge on linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural factors and to be able to integrate these factors with one another to produce a communicative piece of discourse.

Regarding the academic context of Iran, what makes writing a very troublesome task for EFL learners is the absence of a good approach of teaching writing. In almost all writing classes, teachers choose a topic and ask students to write in limited amount of time. The focus is only on the final product and due to limitation of time there is no feedback and little attention is paid to the processes of writing. Students' attitudes and feelings toward writing are ignored.

Therefore, applying a good approach of teaching writing in classes can not only eliminate the influence of the previously mentioned problematic factors but also improve students' writing skill. The present study is carried out to adapt an approach to teach writing to learners of English as a foreign language. To this end, this study seeks to investigate the effect of a skill-based communicative approach of teaching writing on four factors (content, organization, language use, and vocabulary) of several writing performances of

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Iranian EFL learners. This approach is adapted with respect to two focuses.

The first focus is on applying a skill-based instruction which concentrates on a range of L2 skills while teaching writing as well as following principles of communicative approach. Since in English learning classes, teachers make their attempts to develop their students' language four skills and according to Harmer (1991), these four skills are not only closely interwoven but also each should be carried out with the other (cited in Saadian & Bagheri, 2014). In this regard, Hinkel (2006) points out teachers should use an integrated and multi-skill instruction which focuses on a range of L2 skills simultaneously. He believes that by applying integrated instruction which follows the principles of communicative approach, language learning can be realistic. The second focus is on finding the strength of existing approaches of teaching writing including product approach, process approach and genre-based approach while making all attempts to use advantageous features of previously introduced approaches.

The present investigation tried to address the following research questions:

- 1- How does a skill-based communicative approach affect the students' writing ability in terms of its content through different tasks of writing?
- 2- How does a skill-based communicative approach affect the students' writing ability in terms of its organization through different tasks of writing?
- 3- How does a skill-based communicative approach affect the students' writing ability in terms of its language use through different tasks of writing?
- 4- How does a skill-based communicative approach affect the students' writing ability in terms of its vocabulary through different tasks of writing?

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Lee and Lee (2013) conducted a case study to investigate the effect of a second language writing instructional model in blended learning on EFL pre-service teachers in Seoul, Korea. The participants, both undergraduate and graduate students, had to attend in required courses, "logical thinking and writing in English". Based on process-oriented approach, this model went through five stages of getting ready to write, drafting, revising, producing the final draft, and reviewing. It also combined the face-to-face instruction with computer-mediated instruction. In the first stage, students selected a topic and became ready for pre-writing in an off-line class. In second stage, they wrote their first draft through online web search and received online peer feedback. Their focus was on content and organization.

Revising stage was for receiving offline peer response. In the fourth stage, the students produced their final draft based on online feedback. Finally, they evaluated the final draft. Results showed that the participants received the model useful and helpful to improve writing skills because they had sufficient opportunities for writing practice. Although, they found it difficult to write multiple drafts and deal with some tasks, they found process-oriented approach beneficial. As this model focused on tools provided in online and offline environment, it was effective for the development of L2 writing skills.

Pasand and Haghi (2013) aimed to find the impact of a use of an incomplete model text in process-product approach to writing on EFL learners' accuracy in writing. In this study a six sessions writing classes were designed for two groups. In both groups the first four sessions were dedicated to instruction of processes involving in the process approach and the two final sessions to finding the influence of completing an incomplete model text on their writing accuracy. Twelve intermediate EFL learners firstly wrote about a topic of their interest according to process approach. Secondly, they were asked to complete an incomplete text on the same topic based on process-product approach after reading a model text on the same topic and class discussion on its organization, grammar, and lexical items. The results showed using a model text and asking the students to first analyze its organization, grammar, and lexical items and then continue it on their own language can improve the students' writing accuracy in some aspects such as: punctuation, capitalization, spelling, subject-verb agreement, tense, the use of connectors, using correct pronouns, and possessives of their writing. However, in some aspects such as inappropriate verb usage, using wrong negation, using preposition, and word order, the number of errors increased. Therefore, there was a significant difference in the writing performance of the students. The possible difference among Iranian EFL learner's writing ability in terms of three writing approaches of product, process, and post-process, was investigated in Hashemnezhad and Hashemnezhad (2012). To this end, 60 EFL sophomores were divided into three groups. All of them enrolled in writing course I and II. In first group, the students were encouraged to imitate a model based on product approach. They went through pre-writing and writing while experiencing four stages of familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing, and free writing. In second group, process writing, there were five stages including prewriting, composing/drafting, revising, editing, and providing feedback. In third group, students received post-process or genre approach. By emphasizing social context and achieving a purpose, students in this group followed five stages of collaborative learning, genre awareness, real purpose/needs analysis, socio-affective

strategies, and finally conferencing. The result of statistics confirmed that post- process approach didn't show any priorities over process approach, but they both have considerable priority over product approach.

Chow (2007) for his doctoral dissertation was eager to find the effect of the process-genre approach to writing instruction on the expository essays of ESL students in Malaysian secondary school. In order to reaching this goal, he designed two groups (the experimental one which was received process-genre writing instruction and the control one which received product centered writing instruction). Both groups had sixteen eighty-minute sessions of instruction. He provided students with three tests: before treatment, immediately after it and three months after the treatment period. He concluded that the students in experimental group communicated their ideas in writing more effectively than that of control group. Nevertheless, there weren't any promotion in the way of organizing ideas and controlling of language for students in experimental group. Totally, Process-genre instruction enhanced students overall writing proficiency. It promoted the students' awareness of conceptual writing strategies and willingness to apply them in writing.

Many L2 international students in South Australia are required to enroll in some courses prepared for new arrival for six months. As these L2 students still found writing problematic after studying in a mainstream school, Ahn (2012) tried genre approach as a writing instruction for supporting these students. The students went through three phases of teaching and learning cycle. The phases were modeling, joint negotiation of text, and independent construction of text while the focus of lessons was on reports and essays as two main genres. They attended a writing class for 20 hours. His observations and the final results showed that students progressed very well and their attitudes toward writing activities changed dramatically. They can be familiar with new cultures through this approach and integrate it by their own skills and strategies.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Participants

Since the purpose of the present study was to investigate the effect of a skill-based communicative approach on some components of writing ability of students, juniors who were doing a B.A. in English Literature were considered as the most appropriate participants. Such students had already passed two courses on writing including writing course I and writing course II. In this regard, they were familiar with the fundamental principles of writing. Therefore, the best time to conduct this study was at the beginning of

fall semester 2014, when the students had another course of writing on their syllabus which was advanced writing. A community of 30 juniors studying English Literature at Yazd University took a part in the study as the participants.

### Instruments

#### Writing tasks

In order to find the effect of skill-based communicative approach on some aspects of participants' writing in advanced writing course, 12 tasks of writing were carried out by all students during the course. All the writings were collected as the required data from the participants. Finally, four tasks were selected. Each of the four students' writing were collected after two weeks of interval from the previous one and were scored by a rater. Moreover, one third of the students' writing were examined by an experienced raters for establishing the inter-rater reliability of the scores given to the students. students' written performances were scored using ESL composition profile by (Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel, and Hughey, 1981). (See Appendix). All raw data were coded into SPSS and also several statistical analyses were done for investigating participants' possible changes in their writing performances.

### Procedure

In fall semester 2014 Yazd University, 14 sessions were dedicated to advanced writing course. The total time of each session was one hour and a half. After talking to the professor of the course, he accepted that one hour of each session to be allocated to conducting this study. As materials provided for this study was related to this course and could directly affect the performance of students, more attention was paid to the purpose of the course. In this regard, the instructor of the course helped the researcher in designing the materials and in the way of teaching writing based on this approach.

For the first session, based on the suggestion made by language researchers Celce-Murcia (1995), Christie (1998), and Martin (1992) who emphasized the importance of knowledge of grammar and lexis in L2 writing, students were provided with two pamphlets. The first pamphlet contained the essential grammatical points with adequate supply of exercises. In the preparation process of this pamphlet, the instructor considered all related materials which have been covered in previous semesters and tried to bring the summary of all fundamental grammatical points. The second one contained a list of essential vocabularies which was more than 1000 words. Again, it was prepared to meet the needs of all students in the class.

Then, the instructor explained the key role of basic knowledge of language in L2 writing and encouraged students to improve their proficiency level. He mentioned

that the pamphlets were prepared for students' self-study due to limitation of time; however, he set a time for two exams of these materials and asked the students to spare time to study all the pamphlets before exams.

Moreover, in the first session the instructor of the course explained the syllabus of the course completely and introduced a book entitled *Paragraph Development* by Arnodet and Barret (1981) to the students. He mentioned that he would teach some chapters of this book, the other chapters would remain for students' self-study. The researcher chose this book because it began with the basic information about writing a paragraph for a given topic and extended students' knowledge of structures and words suitable for different types of paragraphs including compare and contrast, cause and effect, enumeration, narration, and so forth.

The instructor also introduced a computer website which was designed by one of the students. Based on his explanation, the students were asked to write their assignments during the term and upload them on the website for the instructor. In some spaces they should give comments on one of the writings selected by him. The changes in the syllabus would also be put on the website. Furthermore, the researcher got some benefit from this website which will be mentioned in the following.

In the second phase of this study, the focus was on applying a skill-based communicative approach in writing instruction. From the second session, the students were provided with 13 experimental treatment sessions each of which took about one hour. At the beginning of each session, the researcher presented the materials from *Paragraph Development* for 10 minutes. These materials posted on the designed website to be easily available for all students. However, the students' related questions and comments were welcomed. Furthermore, within two weeks, the first 10 minutes for each class was dedicated to researcher's feedback on students writing which will be discussed more in feedback stage. In the next 50 minutes, students began to write about a topic. Their writings in every session were collected as data for the study. In this regard, seven stages for treatment were designed for the students including audience awareness, modeling (genre awareness), collaborative pre-writing, drafting, peer feedback, revising, conferencing with teacher, and finally, editing. These stages are mentioned as seven subheadings below.

#### ***Audience awareness***

The first stage of the treatment was allocated to raising students' awareness about target audience. Every session, the researcher provided the students with a paper on

which there is a statement which contained the title of the writing task as well as some information about its audience. Then the researcher read the statement aloud and asked students to think as audiences who will read their writing. She helped them in finding the expectations and needs of their audiences and imagining their attitudes. Moreover, she put more emphasis on organization and development of writing which could be the exact sample of coherent reader-considerate texts.

#### ***Modeling (genre awareness)***

After setting a topic for students' writing task, the researcher brought an authentic model for students. This model which is related to some aspect of the topic was from a wide range of genres including narrative, exposition, or argumentation. In this stage the researcher attracted the students attention firstly, to particular grammar and lexis which were employed in authentic text and secondly, to the content and new information which was conveyed in it. The researcher used a model as a tool not only for providing students with some necessary input but also releasing them from writers' block phenomenon and stress of what to write. Furthermore, the models were selected in oral or written form. Reading a model before writing which has lot reputation today could prepare students for better writing, activate prior knowledge, build background, and draw the students attention to the point. Listening to a model which was read by the researcher and taking some notes were used in some sessions.

#### ***Collaborative pre-writing***

At the third stage, the researcher divided students into nine groups. The researcher asked students to negotiate meaning and provide each other with feedback. While discussing the content, language, and organization of writing materials, the students went through brainstorming and planning. This could help students to increase their interaction and meta-linguistic awareness and to understand the relation between form and meaning. Moreover, one student in each group managed the time and provided each student with necessary amount of time to speak in target language to talk about their own writing planning. The mutual interaction was considered very beneficial. The students could increase their autonomy and self-directed learning. In addition, they may feel less anxious and more confident when interacting with peers and getting some ideas for writing.

#### ***Drafting***

After receiving some assistance and input, it was time for students to write their first draft. The researcher explained that in this stage the focus was on fluency in writing, therefore the students began to write whatever they got in previous stage.

### Peer feedback

Due to the contributing role of feedback in writing, the students received feedback three times during the treatment sessions. The first time was after writing their first draft when the students worked in pair in their groups. They read their classmates draft and gave him/her some feedback. Since peers could provide useful feedback at various levels, the researcher tried to train students in peer response which could lead to better revision and overall improvements in writing quality. At this stage, the students communicated to each other mainly by concentrating on linguistic part of their writing including grammar, lexis, and structure. Here, there was a shift of concentration from fluency to accuracy. The students found an opportunity to use their other language skills (listening and speaking) in writing class to receive and to give some advice for preparing their writing texts.

### Revising

The students were required to write another draft based on feedbacks of previous stage. They should revise the problematic area of their writing. They were suggested to check all sentences for their meaning, relation to other sentences, grammatical aspects, and so forth.

### Conferencing with teacher

At this stage, a second time of receiving feedback, the researcher provided them with necessary guidelines. Due to the shortage of time, in each group just the writing of one member was selected and read by the researcher. In the researcher's feedback, there was no preference for structural or grammatical parts. She provided feedback on content, organization, language use, and vocabulary of students' writing texts. The correct aspects of the students' writing were highlighted to encourage them. The researcher would write her comments for other members of the group but brought them back another session. She tried to clarify the issue all in front of the students in the class by using power-point.

### Editing

In the last stage, all students checked their writings for any errors of spelling, punctuation, grammar, coherence, and so forth. They wrote the final version of their writing while they were sure that their writing was ready to be read by an audience. Those who received the researcher's feedback, tried to edit their texts along with other students. Roughly, the same treatment was altered in all sessions; however after two weeks interval 10 minutes was allocated to the provision of feedback to the students. As the third time of receiving feedback, the students drew their attention to the researcher presenting a summary of all erroneous points in writings and added her comments in 10 minutes. There were

various factors which were discussed in this step including teaching a problematic structure emphasizing on the use of collocations, explaining the difference between using different conjunctions, introducing some ways for having a coherent text, highlighting errors, and so forth. The students were recommended to take notes during this step.

## RESULTS

Four samples of writing task were collected after two weeks interval from the previous one and scored by two raters. To the aim of the study the effect of a skill-based communicative approach on four components of students' writing was investigated.

### First Research Question

The first research question sought to investigate the effect of a skill-based communicative approach affect the students' writing ability in terms of its content through different tasks of writing. One way repeated measure ANOVA was conducted. as Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics, the mean and standard deviation and the number of subjects for the content scores in four writing tasks, the lowest mean score was dedicated to the first writing's content (M = 20.90) and the highest belonged to fourth writing's content (M = 24.27) corroborating the effectiveness of the skill-based communicative approach on content of students writings.

The inferential results, as displayed in Table 2, indicated a significant effect of time [Wilks' Lambda = 0.096, F = 85.20, p = 0.00]. It suggests that there was a significant difference in content scores in the four different times. The partial eta-squared value is 0.904 indicating a large effect size.

Furthermore, to attain inter-rater reliability a bivariate correlation was conducted. The result indicated that there was a high degree of correlation among the judges of students' content scores in Time 1 ( $r = 0.74$ ,  $n = 10$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). Similarly, the degree of correlation in Time 2 was  $r = 0.76$ ,  $n = 10$ ,  $p = 0.01$ . For Time 3 the degree of correlation was  $r = 0.87$ ,  $n = 10$ ,  $p = 0.00$ . Finally, in Time 4, the result manifested a high degree of correlation ( $r = 0.88$ ,  $n = 10$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). The relationship between two raters'

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics of content score**

	Mean	Standard deviations	N
Content 1	20.90	3.478	30
Content 2	22.10	3.133	30
Content 3	23.17	2.878	30
Content 4	24.27	2.852	30

**Table 2: Multivariate tests of content scores**

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Significant	Partial Eta Squared
Wilks' Lambda	0.096	85.206	3000	27000	0.000	0.904

judges was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation. The results showed that there was 54% of shared variance between the two raters' judges for content scores in Time 1. This per cent for other three times were orderly 57%, 75%, and 77%. As the square of  $r$  value in all times was more than 0.25, the effect size was considered as sufficient and a large one.

### Second Research Question

The second research question, investigated the effect of a skill-based communicative approach on organization of writing of students. To this end, one-way repeated measure ANOVA was conducted in which students' score in Time 1 to 4 were taken as within subject variables. Table 3 provides the descriptive statistics, for the organization scores in four writing tasks. The lowest mean score was dedicated to the first writing's organization ( $M = 15.37$ ) and the highest belonged to fourth writing's organization ( $M = 17.93$ ) corroborating the effectiveness of the skill-based communicative approach on organization of students' writings.

The inferential results, as displayed in Table 4, indicated a significant effect of time [Wilks' Lambda = 0.131,  $F = 59.47$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ]. This suggests that there was a significant difference in organization scores in the four different times. The partial eta-squared value is 0.869 indicating a large effect size.

Furthermore, to calculate inter-rater reliability, a bivariate correlation was conducted. The results indicated that there was a high degree of correlation among the judges of students' organization score in Time 1 ( $r = 0.81$ ,  $n = 10$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). Similarly, there was a high degree of correlation among the judges of students' organization score in Time 2 ( $r = 0.85$ ,  $n = 10$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). The results indicated that there was a high degree of correlation among the judges of students' organization score in Time 3 ( $r = 0.91$ ,  $n = 10$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). Moreover, there was a high degree of correlation among the judges of students' content score in Time 4 ( $r = 0.80$ ,  $n = 10$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). The relationship between two raters' judges was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation. The results showed that there was 65% of shared variance between the two raters' judges for organization scores in Time 1. This per cent for other three times were orderly 72%, 82%, and 64%. As the square of  $r$  value in all times was more than 0.25, the effect size was considered as sufficient and a large one.

**Table 3: Descriptive statistics of organization scores**

	Mean	Standard deviations	N
Organization 1	15.37	2.385	30
Organization 2	16.30	2.037	30
Organization 3	17.07	1.818	30
Organization 4	17.93	1.552	30

### Research Question 3

Addressing research question 3, one-way repeated ANOVA was conducted to find the effect of a skill-based communicative approach on language use of writings of students in which again students' score in Time 1 to 4 were taken as within subject variables. Table 5 provides the descriptive statistics for the language use scores in four writing tasks. The lowest mean score was dedicated to the first writing's language use ( $M = 17.00$ ) and the highest belonged to fourth writing's language use ( $M = 19.43$ ) confirming the effectiveness of the skill-based communicative approach on content of students writings.

The inferential results, as displayed in Table 6, indicated a significant effect of time [Wilks' Lambda = 0.119,  $F = 66.71$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ]. It suggests that there was a significant difference in language use scores in the four different times. The partial eta-squared value is 0.88 indicating a large effect size.

Furthermore, in order to obtain inter-rater reliability a bivariate correlation was conducted. The results indicated that there was a high degree of correlation among the judges of students' language use scores in Time 1 ( $r = 0.91$ ,  $n = 10$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). The results indicated that there was also a high degree of correlation among the judges of students' language use scores in Time 2 ( $r = 0.94$ ,  $n = 10$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). There was a high degree of correlation among the judges of students' language use score in Time 3 ( $r = 0.93$ ,  $n = 10$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). The results also indicated that there was a high degree of correlation among the judges of students' language use score in Time 4 ( $r = 0.74$ ,  $n = 10$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). The relationship between two raters' judges was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation. The results showed that there was 82% of shared variance between the two raters' judges for content scores in Time 1. This per cent for other three times were orderly 88%, 86%, and 54%. As the square of  $r$  value in all times was more than 0.25, the effect size was considered as sufficient and a large one.

**Table 4: Multivariate tests of organization scores**

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Significant	Partial Eta Squared
Wilks' Lambda	0.131	59.472	3000	27000	0.000	0.869

**Table 5: Descriptive statistics of language use scores**

	Mean	Standard deviations	N
Language use 1	17.00	3.886	30
Language use 2	17.90	3.745	30
Language use 3	18.67	3.585	30
Language use 4	19.43	3.617	30

**Table 6: Multivariate tests of language use scores**

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Significant	Partial Eta Squared
Wilks' Lambda	0.119	66.719	3000	27000	0.000	0.881

**Research Question 4**

Addressing the last research question, i.e. the effect of a skill-based communicative approach on vocabulary of writing of students, one-way repeated measure ANOVA was conducted in which students' score in Time1 to4 were taken as within subject variables. Table 7 provides the descriptive statistics for the vocabulary scores in four writing tasks. The lowest mean score was dedicated to the first writing's vocabulary ( $M = 14.53$ ) and the highest belonged to fourth writing's vocabulary ( $M = 17.03$ ) corroborating the effectiveness of the skill-based communicative approach on vocabulary of students' writings.

The inferential results, as displayed in Table 8, indicated a significant effect of time [Wilks' Lambda = 0.096,  $F = 84.45$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ]. It suggests that there was a significant difference in vocabulary scores in the four different times. The partial eta-squared value is 0.904 indicating a large effect size.

Furthermore, to calculate inter-rater reliability a bivariate correlation was conducted. The results indicated that there was a high degree of correlation among the judges of students' vocabulary score in Time 1 ( $r = 0.93$ ,  $n = 10$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). The results indicated that there was a high degree of correlation among the judges of students' vocabulary score in Time 2 ( $r = 0.95$ ,  $n = 10$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ).

Results indicated that there was a high degree of correlation among the judges of students' vocabulary score in Time 3 ( $r = 0.93$ ,  $n = 10$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). The results indicated that there was a high degree of correlation among the judges of students' vocabulary scores in Time 4 ( $r = 0.90$ ,  $n = 10$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ).

**Table 7: Descriptive statistics of vocabulary scores**

	Mean	Standard deviations	N
Vocabulary 1	14.53	2.751	30
Vocabulary 2	15.60	2.647	30
Vocabulary 3	16.33	2.482	30
Vocabulary 4	17.03	2.385	30

The relationship between two raters' judges was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation. The results showed that there was 86% of shared variance between the two raters' judges for vocabulary scores in Time 1. This per cent for other three times were orderly 90%, 86%, and 81%. As the square of  $r$  value in all times was more than 0.25, the effect size was considered as sufficient and a large one.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of using a skill-based communicative approach on content, organization, language use, and vocabulary of writing performances of EFL learners. The results obtained from this study support the idea that adapting an approach based on integrating language skills and following the communicative principles could help students in improving their writing skill.

Krashen in his input hypotheses (1985), Long in his interactional modification (1989), and Swain in his negotiation of meaning (1995) put a lot of emphasis on the role of input and interaction in learning a language. The important but often neglected issue is that, in language classes, students are different in their amount of knowledge about a specific topic, a particular genre,

**Table 8: Multivariate tests of language use scores**

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Significant	Partial Eta Squared
Wilks' Lambda	0.096	84.454	3000	27000	0.000	0.904

and so forth. Although, some of them may know a lot about a topic or a genre, there are some students who have a little or no knowledge which needs assistance with more efficient input. This input can be provided by the teacher, the textbook or even through the interaction with classmates.

As mentioned earlier, the quality content of a piece of writing should be improved by possessing knowledge-based, substantive, and relevant points developing the main tenets of a topic. In this approach, in modeling stage in which students were provided with an oral or written text pertinent to the topic and also, in collaborative pre-writing stage in which students interacted about the topic, students had the opportunity to seek more information about the topic, developing the topic thoroughly, and bringing materials directly pertinent to the topic. In this case, the students got a better score for their content of writings. On the other hand, in other approaches, students are expected to start their writing immediately after being informed about the topic. There is no place for providing a model and attracting attentions to its content, instead the grammatical points are concentrated on.

This is while, a writing syllabus with no great amount of input and interaction make students lose their interest in writing. As long as, they have no or little information about the topic, they cannot produce a piece of writing with a good quality content.

Regarding the organization score, the results showed that as long as the students' attention were attracted to the logical sequence of sentences of provided models and they had the opportunity to receive feedback on their arrangement of sentences, their ability in producing a piece of writing with good organization increased.

Concerning the language use aspect of writing the result showed that motivating students in learning grammatical points, providing them with essential grammar rules, dedicating a part of feedback to language of written text were really beneficial and helpful.

Similarly, for the vocabulary aspect of writing, results show that students could enhance their knowledge of vocabulary when their attentions were attracted to the collocations in models. Moreover, it was really beneficial when the instructor provided them with applicable words and idioms.

Overall, Since in this study, the students first of all were provided with more seemingly necessary amount of input in modeling stage and then, were encouraged to grasp all the planned opportunity for interaction in collaborative pre-writing stage, peer feedback stage, and conferencing with the teacher stage, their results showed that their level of ability in writing skill was gradually improved in all components of writing including content, organization, language use, and vocabulary.

The results confirmed the findings of Mackey's (1999) research which showed that conversational interaction could facilitate second language learning and lead to development and more active involvement. Furthermore, Lyster and Ranta (1997) believe that interaction leads students to pay attention implicitly or explicitly to some aspects of the target language such as grammatical forms. It confirms the results of the present study in terms of students' interest in language use. Also, the improvement of students in language component of their writing through stages of interaction which was obvious from their effective use of simple and complex constructions, few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order, articles, and so forth was similar to the result of a study carried out by Kuiken and Vedder (2002). They based their study on Skehan's information processing model and came to this conclusion that interaction and noticing a linguistic form in the input positively affect learning of grammar specifically learning of passive forms.

Moreover, providing students with a grammar pamphlet with clear and simple examples of the points and offering feedback on problematic areas appeared to be helpful. The Students were encouraged to decrease their grammatical errors as well as to summarize grammatical rules in their feedback times.

Since writing is considered as an essential skill for university students and some courses in the curriculum are dedicated to it, it is better to select a writing instruction with more cautious. It is necessary to revive the importance of writing skill as a Cinderella skill in language classes. This attempt should begin by applying a sound approach of writing instruction.

As all language skills are integrated and not separated, the first step in teaching writing is to apply a multi-skill approach. As long as the students have the opportunity to use all of their language skills interactively, more senses are involved



which lead to more improvement. Integrating the skills is what people really do in their everyday use of language. So, a writing class should follow communicative principles. To this end, students should be provided with as many as possible opportunities for interacting with classmates or teachers. Similar to this approach, in collaborative pre-writing stage, peer feedback stage, and conferencing with the teacher, students involve with interactions and discussions. These stages help students gather information about the topic, realize their errors, reduce their stress, and feel free for writing. Furthermore, more attention should be paid to the processes of writing not to its final product. Designing some stages for students, familiarizing them with each stage and its goal, and asking them to concentrate on one stage at a time can develop their writing skill. In any writing instruction process one or two stages should deal with feedback. Whenever, students recognize their weak points in every session of writing, they will be motivated to work on them and seek improvement. It is better to first have a peer feedback then at the end a conferencing stage with teacher. Peer feedbacks on various drafts enhance the students' writing performances. Students thoroughly welcome the peer feedback, since it gives them a better feeling and confidence.

Moreover, conferencing with teacher increases students' self-esteem and leads to building a communication bridge between students and teachers.

### Implications of the Study

Writing is almost ignored skill in language learning. Although, its necessity and importance in students' educational periods and success are proven. To enable EFL learners first of all to demonstrate a high ability in writing and then benefit from it, a very special attention should be paid to the nature of writing as well as applying the best ways of teaching it and finding some ways for facilitating its learning by language policy makers, material designers, teachers, and students.

Curriculum planners might find it necessary to see how the skill-based and communicative nature of this approach could be planned and made fit into our educational system. Moreover, course writers and task designers might call for different orientations and new approach in the planning of the course work as well as designing workable tasks.

The textbook publishers might publish new course books and encourage the writing of books that employ the skill-based communicative approach in the writing skill development. There might be the need to dedicate some parts of textbooks to introducing the audience, bringing suitable models in different genres, and providing some opportunities for discussion.

Using the findings of this study may encourage the teachers to hold a creative and a different writing class by applying this approach. The integration of all four skills and the several communication opportunities could help them in setting an enjoyable and friendly scene for students who could interact and write without losing self-confidence.

### Limitations and Suggestion for Further Study

Conducting any study in real context is naturally followed by some unavoidable problems, difficulties, and limitations. The limitation was that the participants in this study were only a sample of junior students of English Literature studying in Yazd University who cannot be claimed to be representative of whole population of learners. As it was not possible to hold another advanced writing class due to the limitation of time and place, this research conducted as a time series one instead of having an experimental and a control group. In fact, if we had access to a control group the comparison of results would be more reasonable and more accurate.

More studies can be carried out with some modifications of the present study. For instance, it sounds good if in a future survey a researcher includes some very advanced students to check the efficacy of this approach on higher level students. Furthermore, the researcher can form a control group which will not receive the treatment during the study and also, administer parallel tests before and after the treatment and compare the result of experimental group with that of the control group. Also, they may use another rating scale for evaluating students' writings.

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## APPENDIX

<b>ESL COMPOSITION PROFILE</b>				
	STUDENT	DATE	TOPIC	
	SCORE	LEVEL	CRITERIA	COMMENTS
<b>CONTENT</b>	30-27		<b>EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD:</b> knowledgeable • substantive • thorough development of thesis • relevant to assigned topic	
	26-22		<b>GOOD TO AVERAGE:</b> some knowledge of subject • adequate range • limited development of thesis • mostly relevant to topic, but lacks detail	
	21-17		<b>FAIR TO POOR:</b> limited knowledge of subject • little substance • inadequate development of topic	
	16-13		<b>VERY POOR:</b> does not show knowledge of subject • non-substantive • not pertinent • OR not enough to evaluate	
<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	20-18		<b>EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD:</b> fluent expression • ideas clearly stated/ supported • succinct • well-organized • logical sequencing • cohesive	
	17-14		<b>GOOD TO AVERAGE:</b> somewhat choppy • loosely organized but main ideas stand out • limited support • logical but incomplete sequencing	
	13-10		<b>FAIR TO POOR:</b> non-fluent • ideas confused or disconnected • lacks logical sequencing and development	
	9-7		<b>VERY POOR:</b> does not communicate • no organization • OR not enough to evaluate	
<b>VOCABULARY</b>	20-18		<b>EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD:</b> sophisticated range • effective word/idiom choice and usage • word form mastery • appropriate register	
	17-14		<b>GOOD TO AVERAGE:</b> adequate range • occasional errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage <i>but meaning not obscured</i>	
	13-10		<b>FAIR TO POOR:</b> limited range • frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage • <i>meaning confused or obscured</i>	
	9-7		<b>VERY POOR:</b> essentially translation • little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms, word form • OR not enough to evaluate	
<b>LANGUAGE USE</b>	25-22		<b>EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD:</b> effective complex constructions • few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions	
	21-18		<b>GOOD TO AVERAGE:</b> effective but simple constructions • minor problems in complex constructions • several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions <i>but meaning seldom obscured</i>	
	17-11		<b>FAIR TO POOR:</b> major problems in simple/complex constructions • frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions and/or fragments, run-ons, deletions • <i>meaning confused or obscured</i>	
	10-5		<b>VERY POOR:</b> virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules • dominated by errors • does not communicate • OR not enough to evaluate	
<b>MECHANICS</b>	5		<b>EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD:</b> demonstrates mastery of conventions • few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing	
	4		<b>GOOD TO AVERAGE:</b> occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing <i>but meaning not obscured</i>	
	3		<b>FAIR TO POOR:</b> frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing • poor handwriting • <i>meaning confused or obscured</i>	
	2		<b>VERY POOR:</b> no mastery of conventions • dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing • handwriting illegible • OR not enough to evaluate	
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>		<b>READER</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>	

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