

EFL Learners' Gender Differences in Learning Situation Attitude, Writing Self-Regulation, and Task Achievement

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ABSTRACT

The need to build language research on the socio-psychological plane on which attitude and behavior are tessellated is per se much felt. This cross-sectional quantitative study attempted to explore whether there are gender differences in attitudes toward the learning situation for writing self-regulation and task achievements of Iranian EFL learners. Data were quantitatively collected in a dual-phase process in the classroom in which the participants wrote an essay and whereupon promptly filled out the self-report surveys. An independent sample *t*-test was used for data analysis to ascertain the possible differences in Iranian EFL university learners. The findings showed that there was no mean difference in learners on self-efficacy, cognitive, meta-cognitive, and motivational strategies across genders. No significant mean difference was evidenced between both genders regarding their attitudes toward their teachers, likewise. However, this study denoted significant differences in attitudes toward writing courses, task achievement, and help-seeking of female and male students. Results are accompanied by pedagogical implications and applications for advancing EFL programs in domain-specific tasks of academic writing.

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Introduction

According to Erkan and Saban (2011), writing attitude and apprehension and self-efficacy are the germane factors in the success in the foreign language writing. Mantle-Bromley (1995) believes robustly that, students' attitudes should constitute an integral element of second language learning pedagogy. Variations in the attitude and motivation influence the achievement (Gardner, 1985). Leable (2014) evidenced that the motivation and writing ability of the children as key determinant of their cognitive engagements are affected by their attitudes.

Writing research has commenced to examine the nexus of gender to writing from diverse hypothetical vistas, from cognitive psychology and socio-cultural to linguistic perspective (Neves et al., 2018). However, scholars bring dissonance to the way they study and hypothesize gender, particularly in case of writing performance (Neves et al., 2018). Studies continue to show that the girls who enjoy more positive writing attitude tend to exhibit more writing desire and to impute a high value to writing tasks in contrast to the boys considering writing assignments unsatisfactory, little pleasurable, and less invaluable (Hendley et al., 1995; Knudson, 1993; Meece et al., 2006).

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Nagasundram et al. (2021), in a systematic review study, found that the gender-based societal and environment factors as fed into the stereotypical gender roles have a significant role in the perception of ESL learners.

However, gender discrepancy has given inconsistent results. There are some studies that show that males and females have no differences in their writing performances (Klassen, 2002; Pajares & Johnson, 1998; Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990). Klassen (2002) found higher reports of writing confidence for the boys than the girls, while no difference in their performances on the writing expository tasks, corresponding with the former studies. Pajares and Johnson (1998) and Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) documented the higher confidence toward writing tasks of the school-age boys than their female peers in their studies, while no gender differences for the writing quality.

Some studies unravel the linkage of gender differences to the quality of writing. As Adams and Simmons (2019) documented, the girls had an advantage in the text composition while the boys outperformed the girls in the transcription skills and phonological skills. Meier et al. (1984) found that the females are significantly better than the males in writing skills. Male college students appear to be more nervous than females about their own writing (Daly & Miller, 1975). Teachers also rate girls as better writers than boys (Peterson, 2006). Girls, more than boys, incline to write (Malecki & Jewell, 2003; Swanson & Berninger, 1996). Camarata and Woodcock (2006) observed that females significantly scored higher in writing achievement.

Unal (2010) states that it is a common theme not only for American schools boys but also for learners all over the world to harbor negative attitudes toward writing. Scott (2012) noticed that the male students perceive writing as a negative thing for the stagnant nature of the writing process, their disinterests in topics, and their negative self-perceptions as a writer. Kotula et al. (2014) revealed that the female students both hold significantly more positive and consistent attitudes toward writing than the boys and were better writers, with statistically significant differences at the onset and the end of the educational year of the both fourth and fifth grades.

Research on elementary and middle school children demonstrates a higher report of writing self-efficacy for the girls compared to the boys (Pajares, 2002). In respect of self-efficacy, language learners exhibit variation based on their genders (Choi, 2004), whereas Meece et al. (2007) documented no significant gender differences in terms of self-efficacy. Tran and Duong (2013) found no significant gender differences among the 241 Vietnamese college non-English majors' attitudes toward language learning and writing self-regulation strategy uses. Galbraith (2014) documented that the girls scored higher on persuasive writing and had significantly higher self-efficacy beliefs.

Peterson (2006) notes that studies suggest that girls are better writers in their written products, their writing processes through strategies, their confidence as writers, and their opinions about the value and satisfaction gleaned from writing. Girls generate more descriptive written products, better apply the writing conventions, and enjoy a more formal, reflective approach to writing when they plan, revise, and redact their writing. Studies proved that females report more positive writing attitude than males (Riffe & Stacks, 1992; Knudson, 1993; Graham et al., 2007; Graham et al., 2012; Lee, 2013). Fung et al. (2019) found that girls show better

behavioral self-regulation and socio-emotional skills while boys more social mastery interactions.

Noviansyah and Anam (2019) found significant gender difference in writing achievement of narrative text. Tetering et al. (2020) evinced that adolescent female learners reported higher self-regulation than their male counterparts. Female university learners compared to male had higher level of writing achievement. Al-Saadi (2020) divulged female learners' outperformance in writing fluency and text quality than males. Sabiq et al. (2021) found that Indonesian female state junior high school students scored higher on the constructs of motivation and attitudes toward English Learning; namely, interest in English, motivational intensity, and desire to learn, surveyed on Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery.

Nonexistence of the research on the cognitive and meta-cognitive self-regulation across gender continues to outcrop (Leutwyler & Merki, 2009). However, there is a scarcity of studies systematically scrutinizing gender variance over self-regulation features (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990), or by family characteristics such as socio-economic background. Based on the scope retrieved from the studies and the literature provided and reviewed, this study aimed to uncover differences in male and female learners' attitudes toward the learning situation, writing self-regulation, and task achievements as to address the gap in Iranian context where few studies have been done. This study aimed to establish that there are differences in male and female learners' attitudes toward the learning situation, writing self-regulation, and task achievements. The study proceeded on the assumption that male and female learners in the Iranian EFL context may differ in their attitudes towards the learning situation, writing self-regulation, and task achievements. Thus, the following research questions as parts of this study were put forward to be answered:

RQ1: Is there any significant difference in Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward the learning situation across gender?

RQ2: Is there any significant discrepancy in writing self-regulation based on Iranian EFL learners' gender?

RQ3: Is there any significant disparity in Iranian male and female EFL learners' task achievement?

Literature Review

Cultural background, home language, achievement, age, school type, and gender (Baker, 1985), and geographical area where second language is learnt (Navarro-villarroel, 2011), affect attitude toward language. The characteristics of the classroom environment have impact on students' attitude towards learning (Fabunmi & Isaiah, 2007). Parents and peers' attitudes as parts of social context mold a person's attitudes from early childhood (Brown, 2000). Gardner (1985) considers teacher significant in molding of the attitudes of learners. However, there is an interrelationship between the levels of interaction with teacher, attitude development, and achievement (Yunus et al., 2011).

Gender differences are established by the first grade (Graham et al., 2007; Graham et al., 2012), up to middle (Lee, 2013) and high school (Knudson, 1993), and till undergraduate years

(Riffe & Stacks, 1992). Graham et al. (2007) tested unidirectional influences of writing attitudes on writing performance through a three-way structural modeling. The study unveiled a statistically significant direct path for attitude and achievement with the best model fit for the predictive effect of writing attitude on writing achievement. The younger and older learners reported no statistical difference in writing attitude, although third graders proved to be better writers than first ones. In addition, there was no statistical difference in writing achievement between the sexes, although girls stayed more positive about writing than their counterparts (Graham et al., 2007).

Girls, particularly before and at the beginning of the school, can read social signals better than adults, act much lower impulsively, and are highly compliant (McCabe et al., 2007). Learners, exclusive of college (Bembenutty, 2007) and high school gifted students (Tang & Neber 2008), below eighteen years old, were recorded for differences in use of meta-cognitive self-regulation tactics (Dresel & Haugwitz, 2005; Vukman & Licardo, 2010). Female learners are reported to be more frequent users in note-taking as cognitive tactics (Dresel & Haugwitz, 2005), learning material organization and dry-run (Bembenutty, 2007), and copying skills (Tang & Neber, 2008). Martínez and Gil (2019), through interviewing a sample of high school students, documented that girls are more orderly, calm, attentive, and predisposed to participate than boys.

According to Pajares et al., (2000), girls report stronger self-regulatory efficacy. Gender differences also continue to be witnessed in females reporting the use of self-regulated tactics more often than their male counterparts (Ablard & Lipschultz, 1998; Pajares, 2002; Martin, 2004). Wolters (1999) identified that female learners compared to boys use more learning tactics. Bidjerano (2005) observed an over-report of dry-run, organization, meta-cognition, elaboration, and time management skills, and effort by female learners while no statistically significant gender differences in peer group study, help-seeking, and critical thinking skills. Pokay and Blumenfeld (1990) observed that high school girls vis-à-vis boys showed more effort and persistence and more frequently reported cognitive, meta-cognitive, and domain-specific strategy uses in certain subjects. Girls are witnessed to deliver more frequent reports of self-regulation strategy use in spite of feelings lower self-efficacy than boys (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990).

Ozsoy-Gunes et al. (2015) found out that girls significantly scored higher than their male peers in case of planning, aim, and determination. However, some studies established no gender differences across the levels of self-regulation (Cebesoy, 2013; Yukselturk & Bulut, 2007, 2009). Ho and Thanh (2015), in a survey and interview study on 93 first-year university students majoring in English (73 females & 20 males), from five classes, aged between 18 to 24, investigated the deployment of self-regulated strategies and the gender differences in using learners' writing processes unclocked that female students were able to re-concentrate on their task implementation faster than their male counterparts.

The reports of the study by Studenska (2011) showed that the female learners had less difficulty in self-regulation than the male students in respect of planning, organizing, motivational and emotional control, making changes, and implementing learning. Matthews et al., (2009), in a study of sex differences learners' self-regulation of working memory, attention and inhibitory controls, and changing established that girls outperformed boys on both measures of self-regulation. The study by Weis et al. (2013) on the German fifth graders showed that the

girls outperformed the boys on the measures of the behavioral self-regulation. Mahmud and Nur (2018) documented that the female learners more often employ cognitive, compensation, and affective strategy while the male students apply the memory, meta-cognitive, and social strategies.

Villalón et al. (2015) explored the interrelations of writing conceptions, writing self-efficacy, and performances of 111 tenth-grade public school students across gender in Madrid, hypothesizing that both gender differences would not exist in self-efficacy beliefs in writing and girls would outdo boys in writing tasks and differ in their writing conception. Girls outperformed boys in writing task. Greater sophistication was imbued by the girls. However, writing self-efficacy was not significant for gender differences. Williams and Takaku (2011), studying over an eight-year period 671 undergraduates enlisted at six classes with English as their second or third language, uncovered that females had higher grades than males. ESL learners significantly outperformed, showing higher self-efficacy, seeking more frequently after help, having better writing grades than indigenous ones. The findings divulged that the adaptive help seeking was positively affined to writing proficiency.

Pajares and Valiante (2001) explored the influence of beliefs on the development of writing opinions and self-opinions as writers among 497 public middle school students. Regression results showed that learner' gender orientations influenced both motivational and self-competence beliefs, as well as achievement outcomes and academic task performance. Femininity significantly explained variation in the motivational variables. The results indicated that the concept of femininity significantly influenced writing performance. The reports of the study by Studenska (2011) showed that females had less difficulty in self-regulation than males in terms of planning, organizing, motivational and emotional control, making changes, and implementing learning. Matthews et al. (2009), in a study of gender differences in kindergarten children's self-regulation of working memory, attentional and inhibitory control, and change, found that girls outperformed boys on both measures of self-regulation.

Mantle-Bromley (1995) stated that attitude towards language, instructor, classroom, culture, and speakers have been found to statistically significantly relate both to students' success and their tendency to carry on the language study, into the bargain. Upper levels of negative writing satisfaction and less writing enjoyment reported by males were observed by Hansen (2009). Results of the study done by Lee (2013) denoted gender as moderator of the relation of writing attitude to achievement. Even when reporting the same level of writing attitudes, females considerably scored higher in writing, and still outdoing boys though having negative attitudes.

Method

Study Design

Guided by the aims and the assumptions of the study, this cross-sectional quantitative study proceeded to identify the differences in the male and female learners' attitudes towards the learning situation, writing self-regulation, and task achievement. A one-off design was used in which writing samples were collected and a questionnaire was administered to discern the learners' learning situation attitudes, writing self-regulation, and writing performance across gender. The questionnaire contained the closed-ended items, which administered immediately after taking the learners' argumentative writing samples in the class.

Participants

A total of one hundred and sixteen second year learners (47 males & 69 females) with English as their major, based in different classrooms run with different teachers, taking essay writing course were recruited to partake in this study. They had already undertaken a tripartite of two-credit courses; videlicet, a paragraph writing course and two grammar ones. However, for ensuring the internal validity of the data and the homogeneity concern to dwindle variations for the consecutive analysis, Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) (2004) was given to the participants whose scores one standard deviation above and below the mean, stood them at intermediate level of English language proficiency.

Instruments

This study exploited a battery of questionnaires, including writing self-regulation inventory originated by Lichtinger et al. (2006), and a 47-item Attitude toward the Learning Situation scale, eliciting respondents' attitudes toward their course and teacher, designed by Gardner (2010). To determine the instruments' reliability characteristics for the Iranian context, Cronbach's alpha was set out to be computed in a pilot study sampling 15 university students was implemented. After making sure that the questionnaires enjoyed satisfactory reliability and construct validity, the researcher used them for the main study. Two raters holding Doctoral degree in Applied Linguistics evaluated the writing task achievements of the participants. The study sought to increase the reliability and validity of the findings through the application of an internationally recognized standardized grading scale. Thus, for guiding the assessment of the participants' task achievements, IELTS scoring profile was used to assaying the essays for the overall quality (Shaw & Falvey, 2008).

Procedure

A one-off design was utilized taking writing samples whereon the surveys were handed over to the participants. Accessibility of the population and availability of the classrooms were criterion for gathering the samples of writing and giving the surveys. Permissions from the head of the faculties were obtained before implementation of the research. The exact day and hour of the appointments for data collection were solicited from the teachers. The researcher was individually on the site informing the participants of the research objective and giving direction on the writing task and survey administration. After collecting the writing assignments and the questionnaires within the 90-min classroom time, two raters were asked to appraise the essays based on the rating rubric adopted for the evaluation of the essay tasks. All of the scores on the scales were transformed into SPSS software for quantitative analysis. Descriptive statistics was put to test to gain a grip of the learners' gender-based differences in attitude toward the learning situation, writing self-regulation, and achievement. *T*-test was computed to contrast learners' mean scores on the intended variables across gender.

Data Collection

Data collection covered a one-shot round of dual turns of taking in-class essay writing sample and administrating questionnaire. The researchers were personally in charge of data administration and collection within the classroom time. To make the respondents more confident and to spur their participations, the researchers informed them that their responses will be kept confidential, having not any effect or consequence on their final evaluations for the

semester. The researcher contacted the university teachers in the flesh to ask for their consents as to exploit the regular 90-min classrooms.

The timing of data collection was fixed to be after midterm as to ensure that the participants had adequately undergone instructions on essay writing, specifically on argumentative type, and ensuing practice, and had accommodated to their learning environments. Because it was impossible for the teachers to afford to provide more than one session of a whole semester for the research study, the researcher had to administer essay tasks and questionnaires to every class at one go. The researcher as prescheduled turned up in the site in time to join the teachers to be introduced to the classroom as to offer a pithy description of the purpose and value of the research regarding the process of essay assignment completion and following survey.

The participants were reminded that the essays should be segmented into at least five paragraphs of general opening, detailed body, and closing, with almost 200 word limits written on the theme. They were told that they have forty minutes to write their essays so as to immediately fill in surveys afterwards for the rest of their 90-min class session. The learners then were handed out the copies of questionnaires in follow-up upon their completion of their essay assignments. Finally, the researcher in person gathered all the data.

Data Analysis

A dual-phase process was mobilized for the data analysis. The data analysis for the study was implemented through SPSS program 22 version. IELTS scoring profile was used for rating the essays regarding the overall quality (Shaw & Falvey, 2008). Through application of an internationally recognized standardized grading scale like the IELTS, the study sought to increase reliability and validity of findings. The scores on the attitudes and self-regulation of writing were quantitatively computed for mean and standard deviations. Reliability measure was also taken to grip internal consistency of the scales. Independent sample *t-test* was, likewise, computed to contrast learners' responses to writing attitude, self-regulatory scales, and achievements across gender.

Results

Prior to answering the research hypotheses, internal consistency estimates of both the independent and dependent variables were determined to ensure they have satisfactory reliability and validity. Then inferential statistics were performed through independent sample *t-tests* techniques.

Validity and reliability of the instruments

Validity of the attitude scale has been corroborated in some studies (Gardner, 2005; Atay & Kurt, 2010; Alavi Shoshtari, 2004). The validity of the writing self-regulation scale designed by Lichtinger et al. (2006) established by correlating against the well-established self-regulated learning measure developed by Pintrich et al. (1993) and by its administration to an independent high school student sample. Lichtinger et al. (2006) adapted academic efficacy and goal subscales adapted from Patterns of Adaptive Learning survey originated by Midgley et al. (2000). The systematic relations found in this study between learners' goal orientations and their self-reported uses of writing self-regulation were deemed as a confirmation of the validity of

their responses to the questionnaire. Cronbach’s alpha was set out to be computed to determine the reliability of the questionnaires to ensure that the questionnaires enjoy satisfactory internal consistency. Table 1 exhibits the results.

Table 1

Internal consistency and reliability of the variables

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach’s Alpha of items
Attitude toward the learning situation	47	.959
Self-regulation in writing	83	.944

As noted in Table 1, a significant internal consistency for attitude questionnaire ($\alpha = .959$) was reported, which provided psychometric property of a high value of internal consistency as to use the scale for further analysis. Coefficient alpha reported for writing self-regulation instrument was ($\alpha = .944$), proving a high value of internal consistency, likewise.

Testing out hypotheses

In order to find answers to the research questions, addressing whether there are differences in the male and female learners’ attitudes toward course and teacher, writing self-regulation strategies, and task achievements, independent sample *t*-tests were computed. Table 2 illustrates the results.

Table 2

Results of t-test on attitude, writing self-regulation, & task achievement across gender

	Female	Male	F	SD	t	P	MD	std.
Course attitude	112.6774	124.8222	1.772	.186	-2.501	.01**	-12.14480	4.85523
Teacher attitude	114.0492	119.8810	.337	.563	-1.199	.23	-5.83177	4.86364
Meta-cognition	113.2841	116.7925	.676	.412	-.892	.37	-3.50896	3.93258
Help-seeking	19.7444	17.3621	.375	.541	2.144	.03*	2.38238	1.11104
Motivation	40.2841	40.0345	.804	.371	.154	.87	.24961	1.62578
Efficacy	25.0000	26.6964	.106	.745	-1.599	.11	-1.69643	1.06116
Cognition	38.4651	39.9138	.298	.586	-.738	.46	-1.44868	1.96250
SRW	389.4348	388.1702	.839	.362	.020	.98	.26457	13.15838
Task achievement	6.0232	6.5060	.041	.840	-1.914	.05*	-.48274	.25217

Note. SRW= writing self-regulation, * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$.

To address the first research question, it was hypothesized that there are differences in the male and female learners' attitudes toward the learning situation. Table 2 evinces mean, standard deviations, and variance for measuring the attitudes toward course and teacher. This study found significant mean difference (-12) between the female and male students regarding their impressions of their English writing course ($t = -2.501, r = .186, p < .01$). However, no significant mean difference (-5) was observed for the female and male learners ($t = -1.199, r = .563, p < .233$) in the attitude toward their English teacher. As for the second research question, the research hypothesis two was formed to establish that there are differences in the male and female learners' writing self-regulation strategies. However, the findings depicted that no mean difference exists in the male and female learners on efficacy, cognitive, meta-cognitive, and motivational strategies. From among writing self-regulatory strategies, only mean difference for behavioral strategy of help-seeking was recorded ($t = 2.144, r = .541, p < .03$) to be significant. To find answer to the third research question, the research hypothesis three was formed to establish that there are differences in the male and female learners' task achievement. According to Table 2, task achievement was reported a significant mean difference ($t = -1.914, r = .840, p < .05$).

Discussion

Independent sample *t*-tests were performed to examine the potential variances in EFL learners' attitudes, self-regulation in writing, and task achievements with respect to gender. The outcomes of the independent samples *t*-tests demonstrated that there were no significant differences in learners' scores regarding their attitude toward the teacher, efficacy, cognitive, meta-cognitive, and motivational strategies based on gender. Regarding the research queries, the outcomes indicated noteworthy dissimilarities between the male and female students with regard to seeking assistance, course demeanor, and task accomplishments.

As for the first research question, it was hypothesized that there were differences in the male and female learners' attitude toward the learning situation. Based on the findings, statistically significant differences were identified in the mean scores for attitude toward course. Thus, the hypothesis one is accepted. Likewise, the male compared to the female learners reported significantly higher mean scores for course attitude. The outcomes of the present study were inconsistent with some studies documenting more positive attitude towards writing for females than males (Graham et al., 2007; Graham et al., 2012; Knudson, 1993; Lee, 2013; Riffe & Stacks, 1992). However, attitude as a socially molded and adopted trait is a culture-specific attribute (Riemer et al., 2014).

However, statistically significant differences were spotted in the mean scores of the female and male learners for attitude toward course. However, Yıldız and Kaman (2016) discovered that gender did not significantly explain the differences in the school students' writing attitudes. Graham et al. (2007) recorded that more positive attitudes towards writing were reported by girls than boys with gender not significantly determinant of writing achievement. Results substantiate the study done by Skar et al. (2023), evidencing that Norwegian female learners versus their male counterparts sound more positive when it comes to writing.

The notable result was that no gender discrepancies were found in this study regarding attitude toward teacher, absolving the transactional controversies disputed for coeducation system. Writing achievement was verified to have no statistical difference over gender in the

study done by Graham et al. (2007), although the girls reported to be more positive than the boys about writing. However, the students with more positive attitudes towards writing are probable to put to paper more often and invest more effort, which as a result culminating in individual differences in writing achievement (ibid).

With respect to the gender parity in terms of opinions towards teachers, the research refutes the debatable concerns around coeducational settings regarding students' attitudes towards teachers of the opposite gender. However, gender differences were not found across levels of self-regulation in some studies (Cebesoy, 2013; Yukselturk & Bulut, 2007, 2009). In a similar vein, Al-Jawarneh and Ababneh (2014) provided evidence that the attitudes of Jordanian learners towards their English teacher were not significantly influenced by their gender, although they had a preference to be taught by the opposite.

Regarding the second research question, the present study aimed to find out whether there were any significant differences in the mean scores of male and female respondents on the writing self-regulation. Thus, this hypothesis was formed that there were differences in writing self-regulation based on gender. The outcomes disclosed that there was no significant difference between mean scores of the female and male learners on writing self-regulation. However, significant difference was disclosed in the mean scores for help-seeking on the basis of gender. This finding connotes the need for gender-sensitive approaches taken by teachers designing and pushing the development of writing self-regulation and take supportive measures for the improvement of EFL writing program.

Conversely, the findings of this research portrayed that there were no substantial gender disparities amongst the students' ratings on self-efficacy, cognitive, meta-cognitive, and motivational approaches, concerning the second research question. The findings on self-efficacy is corroborated by the study done by Pajares and Valiante (1999) denoting that writing self-efficacy was not significant across genders, notwithstanding girls had put higher superiority air in writing ability as confirmed by boys. The results also support Tran and Duong's (2013) study, indicating no notable variations in the views on English language learning and application of self-regulated learning tactics among Vietnamese college students of diverse genders.

Consistently, Pajares et al. (1999) unclocked no gender-based differences in writing self-efficacy and perceptions of the EFL learners towards the usefulness of writing. Higher level of negative writing satisfaction and low level of enjoyment for boys than girls were observed by Hansen (2001). The upshots of the present study substantiated by the research carried out by Leutwyler and Merki (2009), proving no gender differences over self-efficacy and persistence. Pajares et al. (2000) registered stronger self-regulatory efficacy for girls, into the bargain. In contrast to the findings of the present study, Galbraith (2014) recorded significant effect of gender in the prediction of writing self-efficacy and higher scores for girls on persuasive writing. Contrarily, girls have shown to be more self-regulatory strategy users and higher achievers (Bouffard-Bouchard et al., 1991). Research on elementary and middle school children demonstrates a higher report of writing self-efficacy for girls in contrast to boys (Pajares, 2002).

Notably, the findings showed that there were not any significant differences in the Iranian male and female learners on motivation. Gender has shown to effect variances more in motivation than cognition domain of self-regulation by dint of discrepancy in the enjoyment of

the learning task and the variations in response to reward contingencies (Ryan, Mims, & Koestner, 1983) and self-esteem and achievement (Leutwyler & Merki, 2009), a claim based on the fact that these differences can be found to be in all learners apart from their gender and cannot be directly ascribed to individual's sex (Friedrich & Mandl, 2006), could be; nevertheless, the subject of further inquiry in Iranian EFL context.

Another noteworthy finding relates to help-seeking which is a behavior culturally indoctrinated, infiltrated, and shaped with the society, parents, peers, and classmates from the early age (Nadler, 1983). It is influenced by the belief systems the individual holds. As stated by Wolters (2010), help-seeking conforms to the attitudinal dimension of self-regulation in writing in which learners work in harness with teachers, parents, peers and others in social attitude to manage their learning. Asking for help questions the pride when prejudged lest it stands for lack of knowledge in some cultures. However, high scores for Iranian EFL learners were approximately made on help-seeking versus other tactics, where promoting more of this strategy by teachers help learners advance their learning achievements to a fare-thee-well. However, it is worthy to note that task and classroom variables influence variances for the records of these strategies.

Compared to the male learners, the female, however, showed more alacrity for help-seeking than their male counterparts. In fact, the mean score was higher for the female learners than the male respondents. The higher score on the behavioral scale indicated a higher level of help-seeking behavior for the female compared to male learners. Help-seeking is prone to gender differences so long as masculinity continues to culturally dominate the boys as it does not meet for a man to ask for help from peers or teachers, especially making them deign asking for help from an opposite sex. In terms of mean difference found for course attitude, socio-cultural conventions force boys to be more taciturn and girls to be more expressive, especially in respect of disclosure of their feelings. In contrast to the findings, Bidjerano (2005) observed no statistically significant gender differences in peer group study and help-seeking.

The study by Weis et al. (2013) on German fifth graders showed that girls outperformed boys on measures of behavioral self-regulation. Help-seeking is prone to gender differences so long as this stereotype that patronizing is a barometer of masculinity continues to dominate to the extent that it does not meet for a man to ask for help especially from an opposite sex, making boys deign asking for help from their same sex peers let alone their opposite gender. In terms of mean difference found for course attitude, socio-cultural conventions that force boys to be more taciturn and girls to be more expressive especially in respect of disclosure of their feelings compel both genders to be more divided in their inclinations to contingent skill. Females are more probable to ask for help than their male counterparts (Morgan et al., 2003; Ryan et al., 1998).

Concerning the third research question, the formulated hypothesis was that there would be gender-based differences in the task achievements. This hypothesis was tested out by computing independent sample *t*-test. The findings displayed that there were statistically significantly differences in the mean scores of Iranian EFL learners' task achievement regarding their genders, confirming the set hypothesis for this study. Conversely, Moghimi and Mirzaei (2024) found no significant differences in 84 Iranian intermediate-level EFL learners', aged 15 to 21, online and in-person writing performances across gender.

Females had head start over males in text composition according to national grades (Gelati, 2012). The result of the present study also corroborates the study carried out by Camarata and Woodcock (2006). Contrarily, the findings from this study did not support the study done by Graham et al. (2007), recording no significant difference in writing achievement across gender.

The taking from the outcomes is that Iranian EFL learners set a significant store by attitude when it comes to task achievement. Regarding differences on task achievement across gender, the results of the present study is consistent with the findings from the study by Camarata and Woodcock (2006). However, this symptom can be put to the discrepancies in the lifestyle than physical endowment, like to task responsiveness and attentiveness affecting attainment, which are more accompanied by girls than boys. However, socio-cultural environments, either workplace or education sectors, allocated with unequal roles to individuals based on their gender bring about consequences however amenable to evidential inconsistency across cultures. Just to name one of the determinant factors, Iranian context, in which boys more than girls are much futuristically financially responsible for running the life, depletes learners of more attention span and level of learning investment. Attitude as a socially molded and adopted trait is a culture-specific attribute (Riemer et al., 2014).

The results indicate that it is crucial for teachers, as primary conductors and agents of classroom instruction, to create optimal conditions that promote positive attitudes in learners. This positively impacts task achievement across genders. Data analysis also guides decision-making for curriculum design and development, emphasizing preferences over rigid schedules and teacher assignments. Developing an environment that facilitates responsive teaching and learning enables curriculum developers to provide a high-quality education, allowing students to engage with tasks out of a sense of duty and without hesitation. Ultimately, prioritizing the creation of a supportive environment that fosters promptness and cooperation is critical for improving task achievement.

Hinged upon the findings of this study, revealing no significant gender differences in learners' scores on attitude toward teacher, efficacy, writing, meta-cognitive, and motivational strategies, education policymakers are encouraged to reconsider single-sex schooling in academic contexts and examine the effectiveness of coeducation in Iran given that reactions to opposite-sex teachers with respect to task response have been reported to be consistent. Belaid and Sarnou (2019), examining 40 Algerian EFL, suggested solution to teachers' impediments to receiving a positive feedback from learners is to separate males from females for removing anxiety to ask questions to help males become motivated to perform better in foreign language learning and enhance their achievement. Overall, these findings suggest that, in terms of gender, curriculum policy-makers in traditional classroom-based colleges ought to redesign their programs to include students in co-educational programs in order to enhance their self-actualization in line with current developments in education and automatically improve learners' attitudes towards gender inequality, thereby enhancing task achievement.

To sum up, the attitude toward teacher as an agentive entity affecting learners' self-help-seeking and task achievement was hypothetically noticeable. This study established that attitude toward teacher contributed in explaining variance in learners' behavioral strategy of help-seeking, suggesting that the learners' attitudes can be harnessed by understanding the culture of

the learning situation to make it propitious for learners to feel comfort as to dare communicate their voice, thought, and concerns and outreach for help to build up their writing achievement. All told, all the properties of the learning situation need to be tapped for an effective teaching and learning to occur. In fine, cultivation of a supportive milieu which promotes constructive interaction and cooperation is overemphasized for reinforcing task achievement.

Conclusion

This study intended to discern EFL learners' gender-based differences in their attitudes toward the learning situation, writing self-regulation, and task achievements. The results of this study uncovered that there were no significant gender-based discrepancies in learners' scores on attitude toward teacher, efficacy, writing, meta-cognitive, and motivational strategies. However, there were differences between the male and female learners in their course attitudes, help-seeking, and task achievements.

The outcome of the present study relieves the gender bias overshadowing the educational program in the studied cultural context and obviates the controversy over coeducation system in terms of students' attitude toward opposite-sex teacher. Every learning situation needs to be uniquely considered for its own culture affecting learning and teaching variables. The findings delineate the specificity of meso-system of the learning situation in Iranian context in which learners' behavioral learning strategies are affected by macro socio-cultural system. All told, other properties of the learning and teaching environment need to be tapped from socio-cultural panorama for an effective teaching and learning to occur. In fine, cultivation of a supportive milieu which promotes constructive competitions and cooperation is overemphasized for reinforcing goal orientations.

However, for the correlational motif of the current investigation, definitive instructional implications for language educators are difficult to warrant. Adding developmental process strata can more substantiate the results of the current research and engender more insightful implications. Data collection can be carried out with other protocols like structured interviews or observation. So, future research would do well to deploy fuller longitudinal design. Data collection applied throughout this study makes a reason for taking cautious measures when rendering causal results. As the study was done in its own kind through a cross-sectional design, the inferences cannot make clear the direction of causality. Accordingly, the survey-based nature of this study makes it harder to draw definitive instructional implications.

Another limitation harks back to the possible existence of shared method variance as data was gleaned from self-reports. A multi-informant approach can prevent this problem. Attitude was weighted in self-report forms making responses liable to vulnerability and momentary lapses. Because the correlational study was conducted throughout the data analysis, it may be more valuable to glean longitudinal data and to utilize cross-lagged analyses in future studies. Case studies are called for because of the individualistic function of writing self-regulation. Likewise, the sampling was limited to almost one hundred contributors only.

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