

A Comparison of the Effects of Task Repetition and Elicitation Techniques on EFL Learners' Expository and Descriptive Writing¹

Zahra Asadi Vahdat²
Kobra Tavassoli*³

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Abstract

Due to the significance of the methods and techniques teachers use to engage learners in the learning process, many studies have been conducted on them. Accordingly, this study aimed at finding out the impact of two techniques, task repetition and elicitation, on EFL learners' expository and descriptive writing ability. For this purpose, seventy 10th-grade female students in four intact classes were selected based on convenience sampling. First, Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was used to check their homogeneity and 56 who were in the acceptable range were selected. The classes were then randomly divided into two experimental groups, task repetition group (TG) and elicitation techniques group (EG), each comprising two classes. To measure the learners' writing ability, two pretests of expository and descriptive writing were administered to both groups.

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² MA Graduate, ELT Department, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran; zavahdat95@gmail.com

³ Assistant Professor, ELT Department, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran, (Corresponding author); kobra.tavassoli@kiaiu.ac.ir

During the study, TG received expository and descriptive topics to write about and one week later, the same topics were offered to be written about again. In EG, each session the participants received a writing task and the teacher used question and answer about the topics before learners were assigned to write about them. These were done several times during the study in each group. At the end, two posttests of expository and descriptive writing similar to the pretests were administered. The results of repeated-measures two-way ANOVA and MANOVA showed that both task repetition and elicitation techniques had positive effects on expository and descriptive writing of EFL learners; however, TG outperformed EG in their expository writing. Further conclusions are discussed.

Keywords: Descriptive writing, Elicitation techniques, Expository writing, Task repetition, Writing

Introduction

In the evolution of human life, writing as the symbol of literacy (Harmer, 2007) turned into a necessity for all people especially in academic contexts. Writing as one of the main skills of language learning is a unique skill that has its own features and conventions. It is also known as the most demanding skill in educational contexts for both teachers and learners (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). Despite the fact that second or foreign language learners try to improve themselves in different aspects of the new language, they mostly have problems with the writing skill. These learners usually have difficulty in writing down whatever information they have or want to share with others through using appropriate style, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and so on. According to Uso-Juan, Martinez-Flor, and Palmer-Silveira (2006), the aim of writing is communication and the learners' awareness of the linguistic, pragmatic, intercultural, and strategic competences facilitate this endeavor to create an appropriate piece of writing. That is why throughout the years, different tasks, methods, and techniques were implemented to improve the writing ability of language learners by reducing the sense of difficulty about its demanding processes. Using a variety of techniques by teachers in classroom contexts can promote the second or foreign language learners' writing ability. Two techniques that may promote the writing ability are task repetition and elicitation, which were selected to be further investigated in this study.

The growing interest in task-based language teaching (TBLT) and the fact that appropriate tasks encourage students to develop their writing skill in the target language (Panavelil, 2015) directed many studies towards task implementation and also task repetition. Task repetition gives the learners the opportunity of reproducing and reworking the language in the second time of exposure (Bygate & Samuda, 2005). On the other hand, focusing on classroom discourse and the interactions between teachers and students occurring in the classroom makes teachers' elicitation techniques an important technique to activate the learners' prior knowledge and understanding to improve their learning.

The purpose of this study was, therefore, to investigate the impact of these two techniques, task repetition and elicitation, on enhancing EFL learners' writing ability. Out of the different types of writing, descriptive and expository writing as two popular and widely-used types of writing were selected to be studied and compared in this research.

Since task-repetition and elicitation techniques were mostly used and studied in oral production and showed positive effects on the speaking skill, incorporating these techniques in the instructional process may also improve the learners' writing ability by involving them in class activities and learning processes. Moreover, these techniques may lead to efficient interaction between learners themselves and teachers/learners and make learners more autonomous and help fade away their writing deficiencies besides reducing the teacher's talking time in the classroom.

Review of the Related Literature

Elicitation Techniques

Various techniques have been examined in the field of language teaching by teachers to see their effect on students' learning processes. One of the commonest techniques is elicitation. Elicitation techniques are strategies used by teachers to help learners to respond (Walsh, 2013). They involve learners in presenting answers, suggestions, and ideas to learn the new materials (Doff, 1988). These techniques differ based on the teachers' pedagogical goals. Thus, the teachers' role is really prominent in classroom discourse and presenting and eliciting the ideas. Noticing the teachers' role in the context of the classroom and activating the learners' prior and related knowledge to an idea cannot be obtained except through doing some special and creative activities that elicit the learners' knowledge. Nunan (1991) who considered the teacher in charge of managing the classroom, put emphasis on teacher talk that provides the learners with the essential input, and the amount of teacher-talk, speech modification, types of questions, and effective feedback that lead to appropriate output. Walsh (2002) stated that there is an equal importance attached to the teachers' ability in controlling language use and appropriate techniques they use. Walsh (2006) also emphasized the teachers' responsibility in making interaction-centered classes that are done by controlling patterns of communication, using elicitation techniques, repair strategies, and modifying speech to learners.

Question and answer as a classroom routine is the most prevalent elicitation technique used by teachers to elicit the students' responses. It is focused by many scholars and different classifications and types of questions are offered by them. To point out, Walsh (2013) demonstrated two different types of questions as display questions (those questions whose answers the teacher already knows) and referential ones (those questions whose answers the teacher does not know) as the major techniques used by teachers to control the classroom discourse and to involve the students in the process of language production. He

stated that display questions have mostly short answers, while referential ones that start with “wh” are more open to long answers.

Farahian and Rezaee (2012) conducted a study on elicitation techniques by using three important types of questions by teachers in the classroom for the negotiation of meaning, including yes/no questions, display and closed questions, and open and referential questions. The results showed that the low proficiency of teachers and their less experience in making effective questions resulted in using more display and yes/no questions.

In another study, Alsubaie (2015) used the aforementioned types of questions to investigate the extent each type produced students' interaction and concluded that the three types of questions were responded differently by the learners. Open referential questions were more helpful for this aim but not all referential questions created enough interaction. It was depicted that skillful teachers asked the questions in a way that made the students not to respond with only short answers.

Moreover, Wright (2016) examined the effects of display and referential questions on students' responses and the quantity of their output based on the length and complex units; the results revealed the superiority of referential questions on display ones which further engaged learners in the process of communication and negotiation by using lengthier and more complex sentences.

Task and Task Repetition

The tendency to model authentic activities based on real life with more attention to meaning than form led to a focus on tasks in language classes (Nunan, 2004; Rubdy, 1998). Numerous definitions have been offered for task. One of the earliest definitions of task was offered by Long (1985) as any free or rewarded work that people carry out every day such as painting a fence. Nunan (2004) defined pedagogical tasks as those classroom activities that engage learners in the process of comprehension, manipulation, production, and interaction to convey meaning to achieve a communicative purpose. Nunan emphasized the interrelation of meaning and form.

Task and repetition may separately remind us of two different things. Tasks became prominent in communicative and task-based viewpoints while repetition became important in the behavioristic viewpoint. Since repetition brings about more encounter and contact with the language that makes remembrance easier, nowadays repeating tasks is more focused to be effective in the process of learning a language. While the combination of these two concepts led to a new conceptualization known as task repetition, it should be remembered that task repetition refers to the repetition of both form and content (Bygate, 2006). Harmer (2007) stated that conscious repeating is vital in the process of fixing the language in mind.

According to Bygate and Samuda (2005), task repetition is somehow two different kinds of exploration. Through doing a task for the first time, a new experience accompanied by creativity and novelty is encountered in that task, while in the second/repeated task, the participant has already achieved experience and feels less pressure to face it and is able to produce more new vocabulary and grammar and actually sophisticated output.

Different studies have shown the positive effect of task repetition on language learning. For example, Ahmadian and Tavakoli (2011) by simultaneously investigating the use of task repetition and careful online planning found the positive effect of task repetition on complexity and fluency of learners' oral production. Baleghizadeh and Derakhshesh (2012) focused on teaching grammar to EFL learners by examining the effect of task repetition along with reactive focus on form in the learners' subsequent accurate output. In this study, the participants recorded their presentation and then the teacher transcribed the voices and corrected their mistakes, and again the participants had the opportunity of recording their voices for the second time. Comparing the two tasks, positive effects were reported on the second performance of the learners' oral production. In another study, Baleghizadeh and Asadi (2013) compared the effect of task repetition and task recycling on EFL learners' speaking and found the significant effect of task repetition on complexity, accuracy, and fluency of the learners' oral production, while task recycling just had a positive effect on fluency. Mojavezi (2013) investigated the correlation between task repetition and language proficiency and through repetition of narrative task twice with a one-week interval, found that complexity, accuracy, and fluency of learners of higher L2 proficiency were more significantly improved in their second performance on the same task. Finally, Ahmadi, Ghaemi, and Birjandi (2016) investigated the effects of different output-based task repetition conditions on EFL learners' speech act production. Surprisingly, the conclusion was that output-based task repetition was not effective on increasing the production ability of learners' speech act.

Writing

Writing is one of the main skills of language. According to Hedge (2005), the writing skill can be used for different purposes, but what is common in all is communicating a message to an audience. Students should be trained to change the viewpoint that they write just for one reader, their teacher. Williams (2003) stated that to make writing meaningful, it is worthy to consider it as a social action which is related to the real world, and the students should consider themselves as writers rather than students. According to Richards and Schmidt (2010), there are four main modes of writing: descriptive, narrative, expository, and argumentative. Out of these, descriptive and expository writing were selected to be studied in this research because they are two basic and common types of writing that can be performed more easily with limited language knowledge of intermediate-level learners.

Descriptive Writing

According to Kane (1988), description deals with perception through sensory experience mostly a visual one. To generate descriptive writing, the writer uses seeing, hearing, and touching senses (Kane, 1988). Generally, descriptive writing is a kind of writing through which the author brings a mental picture about a subject, place, or person to readers by using various senses that give them a sense of self-experience (Sinaga, 2017).

Sinaga (2017) studied the effectiveness of roundtable and clustering teaching techniques on the descriptive writing ability of learners and the results showed the positive effect of roundtable and clustering teaching on students' descriptive writing. At the same time, the participants' introversion and extroversion showed a significant difference as the introvert participants showed a higher level of improvement in descriptive writing. In a local study, Iranmehr, Salehi, and Rezaie (2017) studied the effect of critical writing on descriptive and narrative writing ability of learners and found no significant effect for critical writing on descriptive writing, whereas it affected narrative writing positively.

Expository Writing

Expository writing provides information, explanation, instruction, clarification, and definition through logical analysis (Tseng, 2001). According to Elbow (1988), it goes beyond the experience of sight, sound, smell, and taste; it is, in fact, the experience of the writer's thought. Mostly, this type of writing is used in academic writing, at high-school, university, or other pedagogical settings.

Burke, Poll, and Fiene (2017) investigated the effectiveness of the writing strategy, plan and write, on the expository writing ability of the students. The results indicated that while the plan strategy had a positive effect on all students, the write strategy just showed a positive effect on half of the students. In another study, Rahman and Ambreen (2018) studied the impact of concept mapping on EFL learners' expository writing and found its positive effect on the learners' expository writing skill at the intermediate level.

Method

To achieve the objectives of this study, the following research questions were posed:

1. Does task repetition have any significant impact on the expository writing ability of Iranian EFL learners?
2. Does task repetition have any significant impact on the descriptive writing ability of Iranian EFL learners?
3. Do elicitation techniques have any significant impact on the expository writing ability of Iranian EFL learners?

4. Do elicitation techniques have any significant impact on the descriptive writing ability of Iranian EFL learners?
5. Is there any significant difference between the effect of task repetition or elicitation techniques on the expository and descriptive writing ability of Iranian EFL learners?

Participants

In order to investigate the effectiveness of task repetition and elicitation techniques on expository and descriptive writing ability of EFL learners, 70 10th-grade students in four intact classes in a public high-school were selected based on availability sampling, out of which 56 were finally chosen based on their performance on the proficiency test. They formed the two experimental groups of this study, each group comprising two classes. They were all female and about 16 years old. Since the study was conducted in the last month of their educational period, they underwent an intensive instructional treatment. It is worth mentioning that in this high-school, English was also offered as an extra-curricular course and therefore the students had a somehow higher level of English language ability in comparison to other high-school students.

Instruments

Oxford Placement Test (OPT)

OPT (Edwards, 2007) was administered among 70 participants in four intact classes to assure that they were at the same level of English language proficiency. This test included a cloze test and multiple-choice items measuring grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing. OPT was selected since it provides a reliable and efficient means of placing students according to their proficiency levels. Finally, 56 learners whose scores fell within one standard deviation above and below the mean score were selected as the participants of the study.

Pretest and Posttest of Writing

To determine the learners' writing ability, two pretests of expository and descriptive writing were administered to both task repetition and elicitation techniques groups. In fact, the learners were assigned two separate topics to write about. The topics were selected from the Book *501 Writing Prompts* (LLC Learning Express, 2014) and the Internet, and the students were given 20 minutes to write about each topic.

When the treatment sessions were over, two other topics, similar to those in the pretests, were given to the students of both experimental groups to write about as the posttests. The topics were selected from the same book and the allocated time for each topic was 20 minutes. It should be mentioned that it was attempted to select some of the most appropriate topics to the students' level and culture from the above-mentioned book. The pretests and posttests were

rated by two raters and their inter-rater reliability were checked and is reported in the Results section.

Writing Scale

To ensure the inter-rater reliability of the writing scores, two experienced raters assessed both pretests and posttests of expository and descriptive writing based on the composition grading scale developed by Brown and Bailey (1984). Accordingly, the raters rated the writing compositions separately and followed the analytic scale of the writing based on five different categories: organization; logical development of ideas; grammar; punctuation, spelling, and mechanics; and style and quality of expression. The points for each category ranged from 0 to 20. This scale was selected as it covered the main components of writing and was practical for the raters to use.

Procedure

This study was conducted in a public high-school. As it was mentioned earlier, 70 female EFL learners in four intact classes were selected based on availability sampling. They took an OPT to assure their homogeneity. Then, a homogeneous sample of 56 participants whose scores fell between one standard deviation above and below the mean score on the test was selected. The four classes were randomly divided into two experimental groups, each including two classes. One group was selected as the task repetition group (TG) and the other one as the elicitation techniques group (EG).

In both experimental groups (TG & EG), two pretests of writing which included expository and descriptive topics were administered to measure the learners' writing ability. After accomplishing the pretest, the treatment was presented. In both groups, expository and descriptive writing were taught throughout the semester.

In the TG, the activity which was the repetition of the same task was performed in a one-week interval. In other words, at the beginning of the week, a topic was posed and the learners were assigned to write about it as an expository writing assignment and the same task was repeated one week later. To fulfill teaching the descriptive writing, they were given a photo and were supposed to write a passage about it. The same task was repeated one week later with the same picture. In brief, the order in which TG received the writing tasks was as follows: First, the expository writing topic was posed to write about; three days later, the descriptive writing task that involved writing about a picture was offered; with a one-week interval, the same expository writing topic was repeated; and three days later, that of the descriptive writing task was performed.

In the EG, the activities differed each session. The teacher used questions and answers to elicit the learners' knowledge on different topics to activate their minds and to involve them in class activities. Once the learners had ques-

tion and answer sessions about a topic in the classroom, the teacher posed some referential questions about the topic and then the learners were asked to write about it (for expository writing). The next session, the teacher combined asking questions with a picture and then asked the learners to write about that picture (for descriptive writing). The following session, they were given a conversation and after having a discussion through some referential questions, the learners were assigned to write about it (for expository writing). Next, a passage was given to the learners and after questioning and answering about the content of the text, the learners were assigned to have a written task with the same topic of the text (for descriptive writing). The next session, the learners worked in a group of four to write about a topic and through scrambling the sentences of their writing, they made a game to interact with other groups; they were supposed to arrange the scrambled sentences in the right order based on the instruction. Of course, during the entire process, the teacher through verbal and nonverbal actions accompanied the learners into the process of writing by confirming their answers and assisting them in going through their tasks which they were assigned in the classroom.

After about 10 sessions of treatment, two posttests similar to the pretests were administered to both groups with expository and descriptive topics. In order to check the comparative effect of TG and EG on the participants' expository and descriptive writing, the tests were scored by two raters based on Brown and Bailey's (1984) analytic scoring rubrics and the results were compared at the end of the study.

The topics for expository and descriptive writing used in pretests and posttests as well as during the semester were selected from the Book *501 Writing Prompts* (LLC Learning Express, 2014) and the Internet. A sample of these writing topics is presented in the appendix. The design of this study was pretest posttest quasi-experimental with non-random sampling of the participants.

Results and Discussion

In this study, to investigate the effect of task repetition and elicitation techniques on EFL learners' expository and descriptive writing ability, the researchers used some statistical techniques to answer the research questions.

First of all, normality of the data was checked and is presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3. Second, the inter-rater reliability of the writing tests in pretests and posttests was investigated, and the results are presented in Tables 4 and 5. Third, homogeneity of the two groups was checked through descriptive statistics and an independent-samples t-test. Finally, to answer the research questions, two repeated-measures two-way ANOVAs and a MANOVA were carried out.

Table 3.

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of the Pretest and Posttest Scores of Expository and Descriptive Writing of EG

		Exp pretest EG	Des pretest EG	Exp posttest EG	Des posttest EG
N		29	29	29	29
Normal Parameters	Mean	7.80	8.02	13.96	13.89
	SD	2.73	2.95	1.49	1.57
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.26	.62	.73	.77

As for the ET group, all the data were normally distributed since their sig. values were all higher than the standard .05 level of significance. That is, the sig. value of the expository writing of the pretest was .26, descriptive writing of the pretest was .62, expository writing of the posttest was .73, and descriptive writing of the posttest was .77. As a result, because the data collected on the pretest and posttest of both groups were normal and the number of the sample was large enough, the best method to analyze the pretest and posttest data was determined to be parametric tests (Pallant, 2005).

Reliability of the Writing Tests

Reliability was the next statistics checked to make the researchers certain about the instruments used in the study. As there were two raters in the present study, the appropriate way for checking the inter-rater reliability of the writing tests was using correlation. In addition, due to the fact that the data were normal, the suitable kind of correlation was Pearson correlation. The results of the correlation between the two raters' scores are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4.

Inter-Rater Reliability of the Pretest and Posttest Scores of Expository and Descriptive Writing of TG

		Exp pre- test TG 2 nd rater	Exp post- test TG 2 nd rater	Des pre- test TG 2 nd rater	Des post- test TG 2 nd rater
Exp pretest TG 1 st rater	Pearson correlation	.96			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00**			
Exp posttest TG 1 st rater	Pearson correlation	.90			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00**			
Des pretest TG 1 st rater	Pearson correlation	.94			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00**			
Des posttest TG 1 st rater	Pearson correlation	.90			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00**			

To decide whether the value of the reliability index is high or not, the researchers used Muijs' (2004) categories which are as follows: $< \pm 1$ weak, $< \pm 3$ modest, $< \pm 5$ moderate, $< \pm 8$ strong, and $\geq \pm 8$ very strong. The closer the values to ± 1 , the stronger the reliability and the closer to 0, the weaker the reliability.

Based on Muijs's categories, the researchers concluded that there is a high correlation between all sets of scores given by the two raters on each writing of the TG. In other words, the correlation of the expository writing in the pretest of the TG, that of the expository writing in the posttest of this group, that of the descriptive writing in the pretest of this group, and that of the descriptive writing in the posttest of this group were .96, .90, .94, and .90, respectively, all above .8 and showing a high degree of inter-rater reliability on the writing scores given to the TG.

Table 5 below also presents the inter-reliability of the scores given to the EG through Pearson correlation.

Table 5.
Inter-Rater Reliability of the Pretest and Posttest Scores of Expository and Descriptive Writing of EG

		Exp pre- test EG 2 nd rater	Exp post- test EG 2 nd rater	Des pre- test EG 2 nd rater	Des post- test EG 2 nd rater
Exp pretest EG 1 st rater	Pearson correlation	.99			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00**			
Exp posttest EG 1 st rater	Pearson correlation		.91		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.00**		
Des pretest EG 1 st rater	Pearson correlation			.98	
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.00**	
Des posttest EG 1 st rater	Pearson correlation				.75
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.00**

Upon checking Table 5, it is concluded that all the sets of scores given by the two raters on each writing of the EG have high inter-rater reliability since the R value reported for the correlation of the expository writing in the pretest of this group (.99), that of the expository writing in the posttest (.91), and that of the descriptive writing in the pretest of this group (.98) are all above .8 and show a high degree of inter-rater reliability on the writing scores given to the EG. The only exception is the correlation of the descriptive writing in the posttest of the EG which is .75 and is not as high as the others, which may be due to the raters' less attention to the writing scales or to the nature of descriptive writing which is more bound to tastes. Therefore, the results of the study have to be generalized with caution.

Homogeneity of the Groups

As there were two groups in the present study and the researchers used an OPT to check their homogeneity, an independent-samples t-test was run to see whether they were homogenous or not. Tables 6 and 7 show the related results. First, the descriptive statistics of the scores of the two groups on OPT is reported in Table 6.

Table 6.
Descriptive Statistics of the OPT of the Two Groups

	N	Mean	SD
TG	27	43.74	3.68
EG	29	42.90	4.18

Comparing the mean score of the TG which is 43.74 with that of the EG which is 42.90 makes the researchers regard the two groups' performance close to each other at the beginning of the study. However, to statistically investigate whether the two groups are homogenous or not, an independent-samples t-test was run on the two groups' scores on OPT, the results of which are presented in Table 7.

Table 7.
Independent-Samples T-Test on the OPT Proficiency Test of the TG and EG

		Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
OPT	Equal variances assumed	1.17	.28	.79	54	.42

According to the results reported in Table 7, the two groups had equal variances because the sig. value reported for the Levene's test for equality of variances was .28; therefore, the t value corresponding to equal variances assumed should be reported. The corresponding sig. value for t-test was .42 and larger than the standard .05 level of significance, meaning that the performance of the two groups did not differ significantly at the beginning of the study. Hence, it was concluded that the two groups had the same level of English proficiency at the beginning of this research, and thus the results can be safely generalized.

Investigation of the Research Questions *Investigation of Research Questions 1 and 3*

Now, it is the time to answer the research questions. Since all the data were normal, the parametric formula were used to answer the research questions. To check whether task repetition and elicitation techniques have any significant effects on EFL learners' expository and descriptive writing ability, five research questions were posed. To answer the questions, the researchers ran two repeated-measures two-way ANOVAs; also a MANOVA was run to investigate the mixed effects of the variables (Hinton, Brownlow, McMurray, & Cozens, 2008; Pallant, 2005). It should be noted that in all the analyses on pretests and post-tests of both types of writings of both groups, the mean score of the two raters' scores on each writing was used.

Tables 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and Figures 1 and 2 present the results of the above-mentioned analyses. First, Table 8 shows the descriptive statistics of the expository and descriptive writing scores in the pretest and posttest of the task repetition and elicitation techniques groups.

Table 8.

Descriptive Statistics of the Expository and Descriptive Writing Scores in the Pretest and Posttest of the TG and EG

		Expository scores in pretest	Expository scores in posttest	Descriptive scores in pretest	Descriptive scores in posttest
TG (N=27)	Mean	5.52	13.40	5.60	12.42
	SD	1.19	1.76	1.85	1.83
EG (N=29)	Mean	7.80	13.96	8.02	13.89
	SD	2.73	1.49	2.95	1.57

Table 8 above shows the descriptive statistics of the two kinds of writings in the pretest as well as the posttest of the two groups. Comparing the mean scores reported for the pretest and posttest of the expository writing of the TG which were 5.52 and 13.40, respectively, makes it clear that the participants had a much better performance on the posttest. The same is true about the pretest and posttest of the descriptive writing of the TG which also showed a fair amount of development as there was a change from 5.60 to 12.42.

In addition, the EG had a considerable improvement as their mean score changed from 7.80 to 13.96 in expository writing from pretest to posttest. Further, the participants in the EG had a superior performance in descriptive writing from pretest to posttest as the mean scores showed a change from 8.02 to 13.89.

Moreover, the two groups' performance can be checked based on each kind of treatment, i.e. task repetition or elicitation techniques, to find out which one caused more improvement in the participants' performance. Checking the mean scores of the two groups' performance in the pretest of the expository kind of writing, which were 5.52 for TG and 7.80 for EG, it becomes clear that the EG had a better performance on the pretest. Upon comparing the posttest of the two groups on expository writing, i.e. 13.40 for TG and 13.96 for EG, with their pretest scores, a considerable improvement is observed in both groups. In other words, it seems that both kinds of treatments had a good effect on the learners' performance. However, considering the higher mean score of the EG in the pretest of expository writing, it can be said that the TG had a more considerable achievement. Exactly the same results were obtained through checking the pretest mean scores of the two groups on descriptive writing, 5.60 for TG and 8.02 for EG, with that of their posttest, 12.42 for TG and 13.89 for EG. Again, though EG had a higher mean score on the posttest, more considerable progress was observed in the TG from pretest to posttest. Therefore, it was concluded that task repetition and elicitation techniques both positively affected expository and descriptive kinds of writing. However, these differences should be statisti-

cally investigated through inferential statistics to see whether they are significant or not.

Table 9 below is an indication of the effect of the treatment the two groups received on expository writing checked through repeated-measures two-way ANOVA.

Table 9.

Tests of Within and Between Subjects Effects of Expository Writing in the Pretest and Posttest of TG and EG

Effect		Value	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Time	Pillai's Trace	.88	425.17	.00*	.88
Group			14.13	.00*	.20
Time * Group	Pillai's Trace	.10	6.37	.01*	.10

The within subjects effect in Table 9 is represented by time which refers to the interval between the pretest and posttest scores of the expository writing. The sig. value reported for this factor is .00 and smaller than the standard .05 level, meaning that there was a significant difference between the participants' performance from pretest to posttest. The size of this effect is large as the value of the partial Eta squared is .88 because, as Pallant (2005) stated, the partial Eta squared is small if it is .01, moderate if it is .06, and considered large if it is .14.

The second row, named 'group', is devoted to the results of the between subjects effect. The sig. value of this factor is reported to be .00 which is again below the standard .05 level, showing that the performance of the two groups was significantly different from each other on pretest or posttest. The effect size was large as the partial Eta squared equaled .20.

The third and the most important row in Table 9 shows the interaction between time and group. The sig. value of this interaction is .01, smaller than the standard .05 level, meaning that here again there was a significant difference between the performances of the two groups from pretest to posttest, but the difference was not the same. That is, the two groups did not have the same progress from pretest to posttest. Nevertheless, the effect size reported in this row is .10 which is considered as moderate.

They researchers concluded based on the results in Tables 8 and 9 that the participants of the TG and EG had a considerable improvement in expository writing from pretest to posttest. However, the TG had a superior progress in comparison to the EG from pretest to posttest.

Figure 1 presents an image of what has been said about the differences between the performance of the two groups on expository writing from pretest to posttest.

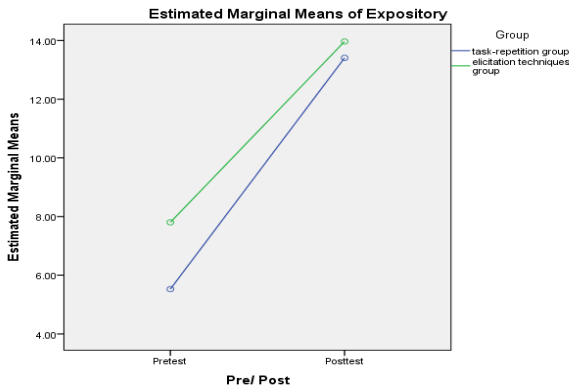


Figure 1. Differences between the pretest and posttest scores of expository writing of the two groups

It should be noted that the left line in Figure 1 is an indication of the EG and the right line shows the TG's performance on pretest and posttest of expository writing. The point to be made here is that although the two groups performed almost the same on the posttest, considering their performance on the pretest, it is concluded that task repetition had a more positive effect on the participants' performance, which reconfirms the data in Tables 8 and 9.

According to the results of Tables 8 and 9, and also Figure 1, the first and the third research questions were answered as follows: 'Task repetition has a significant positive impact on the expository writing ability of Iranian EFL learners'; also, 'Elicitation techniques have a significant positive impact on the expository writing ability of Iranian EFL learners'.

Investigation of Research Questions 2 and 4

Table 10 presents the results of repeated-measures two-way ANOVA on the descriptive writing of both groups from pretest to posttest.

Table 10.

Tests of Within and Between Subjects Effects of Descriptive Writing in the Pretest and Posttest of TG and EG

Effect		Value	F	Sig.	Partial Eta squared
Time	Pillai's trace	.84	295.49	.00*	.84
Group			20.01	.00*	.27
Time * group	Pillai's trace	.03	1.65	.20	.03

The first row in Table 10 shows the within subjects effect of the two groups on descriptive writing, which shows that the two groups had a significantly better performance on the posttest as the sig. value reported for time is .00 and

below the standard .05 level. The partial Eta squared of this factor is .84 which shows a large effect size.

The second row of Table 10 shows the differences between the performances of the two groups on either pretest or posttest, i.e. the between subjects effect. Similar to that of expository writing, the sig. value of this factor is .00 which is smaller than the standard .05 level, meaning that there was a significant difference between the performances of the two groups on pretest or posttest. In addition, the effect size of this factor is large according to the partial Eta squared which is .27.

The next important piece of information is the interaction of time and group which is presented in the last row. The sig. value of this interaction is .20 which is larger than the standard .05 level and therefore not significant. Therefore, it was concluded that there was no significant difference in the progress made by the two groups from pretest to posttest on descriptive writing. Moreover, the effect size of this interaction is small according to the partial Eta squared reported as .03.

Putting the results of Tables 8 and 10 together, it can be concluded that the performance of the two groups on descriptive writing improved significantly from pretest to posttest, while the difference in the progress they made from pretest to posttest was not significant.

Figure 2 illustrates the magnitude of the differences between the pretest and posttest scores of descriptive writing of the two groups.

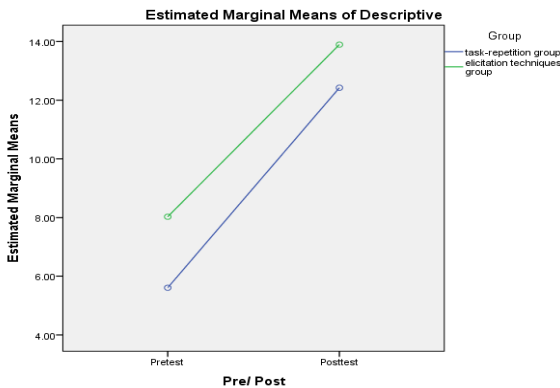


Figure 2. Differences between the pretest and posttest scores of descriptive writing of the two groups

Checking the lines corresponding to the performance of the two groups on the pretest and posttest of descriptive writing makes it clear that almost the same amount of difference between the two groups on pretest is also seen on their posttest, that is, the two groups had the same magnitude of improvement

from pretest to posttest of descriptive writing, which reconfirms the data in Tables 8 and 10.

Based on the information shown in Tables 8 and 10, and Figure 2, the second and fourth research questions were answered as follows: 'Task repetition has a significant positive impact on descriptive writing ability of Iranian EFL learners'; in addition, 'Elicitation techniques have a significant positive impact on the descriptive writing ability of Iranian EFL learners'.

Investigation of Research Question 5

As the researchers were also interested in checking the effect of the two independent variables (task repetition and elicitation techniques) on the two dependent variables (expository and descriptive writing) in combination, a MANOVA was run to find out any possible interaction (Hinton et al., 2008). The results of the related analysis are provided in Tables 11 and 12.

Table 11.

Multivariate Test of the Pretest and Posttest of Expository and Descriptive Writing of the Two Groups

Effect		F	Sig.	Partial Eta squared
Wilks' lambda test	Time	189.92	.00*	.78
	Group	11.60	.00*	.17
	Time * group	3.35	.03*	.05

The first row of Table 11 shows that the participants performed significantly differently on the posttest compared to the pretest as the sig. value of time (which refers to the interval between pretest and posttest) is .00, and the magnitude of this difference is large since the partial Eta squared is .78. It means that both treatments positively influenced the expository and descriptive writing of both groups.

The sig. value of the group factor in the second row is .00 which is less than the standard .05 level, meaning that there was a significant difference between the performance of the two groups in the two types of expository and descriptive writing. That is to say the participants of the two groups performed differently in expository and descriptive writing on pretest or posttest. The partial Eta squared reported as .17 shows a large effect size for the group factor.

The last and the most important piece of information is presented in the third row which is about the interaction of time and group. The sig. value reported in this row is .03 which is smaller than the standard .05 level, meaning that the participants of the two groups had different magnitudes of improvement from pretest to posttest in expository and descriptive writing using task repetition or elicitation techniques. As the partial Eta squared is .05, it shows that this effect size is relatively moderate.

To check whether the participants performed better in expository or descriptive writing using either task repetition or elicitation techniques, Table 12 below is provided.

Table 12.

MANOVA on the Pretest and Posttest of Expository and Descriptive Writing of the Two Groups

Source	Measure	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta squared
Time	Expository	1378.78	1	1378.78	381.95	.00*	.78
	Descriptive	1123.77	1	1123.77	247.37	.00*	.69
Group	Expository	56.21	1	56.21	15.57	.00*	.12
	Descriptive	105.74	1	105.74	23.27	.00*	.17
Time * group	Expository	20.66	1	20.66	5.72	.01*	.05
	Descriptive	6.27	1	6.27	1.38	.24	.01

The first point to be checked is the time from pretest to posttest for both expository and descriptive types of writing. The sig. value of both expository and descriptive types of writing is .00, meaning that there was a significant difference between the performance of the two groups in both expository and descriptive types of writing from pretest to posttest, and the effect size in both cases is large as their partial Eta squared values are .78 and .69, respectively. That is, both treatments caused a great improvement from pretest to posttest in both groups.

Also, Table 12 shows that there was a significant difference between the performances of the two groups on the expository type of writing on pretest or posttest since the sig. value is .00, and the effect size is moderate according to the partial Eta squared of .12. In addition, the sig. value of the descriptive writing due to group is also .00 which again shows a significant difference between the performances of the two groups on descriptive writing on pretest or posttest. However, this effect size is large based on the partial Eta squared of .17.

More importantly, according to the sig. value reported for the interaction of time and group in the case of expository writing which is .01, it is concluded that there was a significant difference in the progress of the two groups in expository writing from pretest to posttest. On the other hand, there was no significant difference in the progress of the two groups in descriptive writing from pretest to posttest as the corresponding sig. value is .24, which is larger than the .05 standard level. In terms of effect size, expository writing had an almost moderate effect according to the value of the partial Eta squared which is .05, while that of the descriptive writing was small because the partial Eta squared is .01. In other words, the task repetition and elicitation techniques had different amounts of effects on improvement in expository and descriptive types of writing from pretest to posttest.

The last research question was thus answered based on Tables 11 and 12, and Figures 1 and 2 as follows: 'There is a significant difference between using task repetition and elicitation techniques on improving the expository and de-

scriptive writing ability of Iranian EFL learners'. In other words, the participants of the TG performed significantly better on the posttest of expository writing, meaning that the task repetition treatment had more influence on expository writing. However, no significant difference was observed in the descriptive writing of the participants following either task repetition or elicitation techniques.

The results of this study are in agreement with other studies on students' writing ability. For example, Ahmed and Bidin (2016) found the positive effect of task-based language teaching on writing ability of the learners since it was a more learner-centered and interesting approach that motivated the learners to use their own linguistic resources fluently and more confidently both inside and outside the classroom. Moreover, Sinaga (2017) conducted a study on the effectiveness of roundtable and clustering teaching techniques on the students' descriptive writing ability and found the positive effect of these teaching techniques on students' descriptive writing. Moreover, Burke, Poll, and Fiene (2017) investigated the effectiveness of the writing strategy, plan and write, on expository writing ability of the participants, and the results indicated that the plan strategy had a positive effect on all students, whereas the write strategy just revealed a positive effect on some students. In addition, Ardin (2018) conducted a research on the effectiveness of diagnostic and dynamic assessment on EFL learners' descriptive writing ability, and the results depicted the significant effect of both treatments on the improvement in participants' descriptive writing ability. It seems that if appropriate techniques and strategies are used by teachers to improve the students' writing ability in general or a specific type of writing in the classroom context, they can be effective.

Regarding elicitation techniques, although it showed less impact than task repetition in this study, its impact was considerable in the present study. The results are also in line with similar studies on elicitation techniques. Based on Doff (1988) and Satiawatia (2017), such techniques are used by teachers in the classroom context to elicit the known and unknown information of the learners with the aim of engaging them in the process of learning and reducing the teacher talk time in the classroom context. Many studies were conducted with a focus on question and answer as the most common elicitation technique. In this respect, Wright (2016) conducted a study on two types of questions as display and referential ones to notice their effect on the quantity of output in terms of length and complexity, and found that the referential questions were more effective in producing lengthier and more complex sentences. The findings of previous research along with those of the present study show the significant influence of elicitation techniques on improving different aspects of EFL learners' language knowledge.

Considering task repetition as the more effective variable in this study on the writing ability of the students, the results of numerous studies on this technique are very similar to those of the present study. For example, Gass, Mackey, Fernandez-Garcia, and Alvarez-Torres (1999) found the positive effect of task repetition on L2 Spanish learners. Moreover, Bygate and Samuda (2005) de-

pected the positive effect of task repetition on language performance of learners and stated the main reason as the opportunity that is given to the learners to reproduce the language. Similarly, Ahmadian and Tavakoli (2011) found the positive effects of task repetition on the complexity and fluency of L2 speech. Hawkes (2011) also reported that task repetition is useful for directing L2 learners' attention towards form. More recently, Bozorgian and Kananian (2017) investigated the effectiveness of task repetition on fluency and accuracy of EFL learners and the results showed the positive effect of task repetition on the learners' fluency and accuracy. In addition, Kang (2017) found the positive effect of task repetition on the accuracy learners' formulaic sequences in their writing production. In fact, it has been indicated by different researchers that repeating a task increases students' knowledge and improves their performance (Ellis, 2003; Nazemi, & Rezvani, 2019). Also, task repetition contributes to the learners' use of language resources for having an effective communication (Ellis, 2005). The results of this study and similar ones show that, most probably, because of the familiarity of the learners with the task, they are more capable to use more accurate vocabulary and form in their second performance. The underlying assumption is that task repetition provides the opportunity to focus on syntax in the second performance opposite to the detailed content and semantic features in the first performance (Ellis, 2003).

The results of this study revealed that task repetition and elicitation techniques are useful in improving EFL learners' expository and descriptive writing. Therefore, teachers should be trained in using a variety of techniques to help EFL learners develop their writing skill in general and different types of writing in particular.

Conclusion

Overall, based on the results of this study, task repetition and elicitation techniques are two important variables that can engage learners' in the learning process to accomplish a writing task successfully.

The findings of the present study have some pedagogical implications for EFL teachers, learners, and materials developers. Engaging the learners in the process of learning through different techniques and tasks and preparing them in advance with some information about the writing topics is useful in improving their writing ability. In this way, teachers can increase the effectiveness of their teaching and reduce their own burden as the sole person responsible for teaching writing. Furthermore, the prior knowledge of students can be activated by teachers and managed in a way to generate fruitful writings. Additionally, by noticing the students' strong and weak points through tests, teachers can offer more techniques and tasks to improve the learners' writing ability. Knowing the effectiveness of task repetition and elicitation techniques, learners are encouraged to involve themselves in the process of writing more enthusiastically to develop their writing ability. They should pay attention to receive the essential information they may need in their writing assignments. Also, materi-

als designers should include elicitation techniques and task repetition in writing textbooks for developing the writing skill of the learners. They can also plan the courses for teachers to provide them with various tasks, techniques, and procedures that are applicable for improving the learners' writing.

Further studies on other types of tasks and techniques, other modes of writing, and other skills and subskills are suggested. Also, the impact of teachers' familiarity with different tasks and techniques on the language skills of EFL learners can be investigated.

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Appendix

A Sample of Topics Used for Expository Writing

Explain the reasons you like your school.

Explain the current reasons of environmental pollution.

Explain why you like your bedroom.

A Sample of Topics Used for Descriptive Writing

Describe your favorite friend.

Describe the most effective teacher you ever had.

Describe what you see in the following picture.

