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Abstract: Nowadays, writing is considered a challenging task in many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educational contexts. The purpose of the current study is to investigate Iranian EFL teachers’ perceptions towards Cooperative Learning (CL) and their instructional practices regarding CL implementation in the Iranian higher educational context. To this aim, through mixed-method, the researchers used stratified random sampling and 30 English language teachers in Islamic Azad University (IAU) of Tehran were selected as the participants of the study. In order to gain general insight of teachers towards CL implementation in university context, they were asked to respond to a CL assessment questionnaire. Furthermore, a sample of six writing classes were observed to investigate CL implementation in the English classes. Finally, in order to gain a better insight regarding teachers’ problems about CL implementation in the university context, especially in writing classes, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 teachers. Results of the quantitative phase show that most of teachers considered CL as an effective strategy for language instruction. Additionally, they considered Promotive Interaction (PI) as their most favorable CL instruction principle. Furthermore, related classes were observed at three stages of writing. Result of the qualitative phase

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT
Nowadays, in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educational contexts, writing is considered a challenging task, which is not easy to achieve without the social support of the writing teachers. Teachers’ perceptions and their instructional practices in classrooms is crucial to attain educational objectives. Thus, it is important to identify teachers’ viewpoints and their tentative challenges. In this study, the researchers attempted to investigate teachers’ perceptions towards Cooperative Learning (CL) in the Iranian higher educational context. Findings of the study indicated that most of the instructors favored CL in language teaching and they practiced CL in their classes. Furthermore, teachers reflected their positive perceptions towards CL principles in the writing classes which can create a supportive learning environment.

Additionally, results of the study are useful for language practitioners, university teachers, and educational administrators, who can benefit their educational programs.
through classroom observation and semi-structured interviews revealed that teachers of IAU preferred to practice cooperative tasks in their writing classes.

Subjects: Educational Research; Language Teaching & Learning

Keywords: cooperative learning; English language teaching and learning; teachers' perceptions; instructional practices

1. Introduction
Cooperative Learning (CL) as a pedagogical model focuses on small group work and learners' collaboration, where learners shape their knowledge for a shared objective (D. Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Regardless of being an instructional practice which originated in the 1980s, it is reflected as one of the most ground-breaking approaches in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) educational settings (Surian & Damini, 2014). The theoretical foundation of CL refers to neo-Piagetian and neo-Vygotskian perspectives. Based on this insight, three significant theories should be used: socio cognitive conflict theory, inter subjectivity theory and distributed cognition theory, which are manifestation of the socio-constructivist in several educational contexts (Roselli, 2007). Among these theories, sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1978) was applied in the current investigation. According to the studies, which were conducted in Iran, this theory seems to be appropriate and useful in the Iranian EFL setting. As an example, Zareian and Malahi (2016) conducted a study regarding the sociocultural theory and writing competence of the Iranian EFL learners. Findings of the study revealed a significant relationship between sociocultural strategy use of the students and their writing ability.

CL supports Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (1978) as a basis of scaffolding which transfers among group members through collaborative task implementation in academic settings (Storch, 2005). Bigdeli and Rahimi (2015) found the importance of ZPD and scaffolding in the Iranian EFL context. They found that scaffolding had a significant effect on complexity and accuracy of Iranian EFL learners' writing performance. Additionally, their findings revealed that students who experienced different kinds of scaffolding, namely expert scaffolding, reciprocal scaffolding, and self-scaffolding, had better performance.

Consequently, by considering the importance of the Vygotsky's outlook (1978), socio cultural theory, learners’ ZPD, and scaffolding, the researchers of the current investigation took the initiative to use these theories in the Iranian EFL context to see their effects on the writing proficiency of English learners.

Instructors' outlook is crucial for a proper employment of CL and its effectiveness (Hijzen et al., 2007; Webb, 2009). Only instructors who assume a positive outlook can endorse and use CL in their classes (Dweck, 2012). According to Kiany and Shayestefar (2010) Iran is one of those countries in which EFL teachers have a dominant role in English classes. In Iranian EFL context, teachers still practice traditional teaching methods and conduct teacher-centered classes which ignore providing opportunities for students to take part in cooperative tasks (Karimnia & Salehi, 2007). By reducing the amount of teacher-centered activities through CL application, students’ class participation increases, and their language acquisition would be improved (Kagan, 1995). According to Farzaneh and Najadansari (2014), teacher-centered tactics are usually applied in Iranian EFL classes. In this context, teachers are basis of knowledge, and learners are passive receivers of knowledge.

The significant factor of enhancing interaction and generation of ideas reflected the practicality of CL cooperation in EFL writing classes (Ahmadi et al., 2014; Shi, 1998; Yumi & Erina, 2015). According to Hirst and Slavik (2005), active participation and interaction of students in discussing ideas about a topic in writing classes could be activated by using the CL approach in English
classes. Writing could be a spot for increasing students’ cooperative skills (Storch, 2005; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009; Yong Mei, 2010). Compared to individual writing process, CL is one of the best methods in enhancing students’ writing performance. It promotes cooperation among students and reduces peer competition, as well as endorses academic achievement and positive relationships (Slavin, 2011). Kagan and High (2002) support the advantages of CL as a constructive compared to individualistic task implementation in improving students’ writing skills. Based on the outcome of some related studies, (e.g., Dobao, 2012; Franken & Haslett, 2002; HajjAlili & Shahrokh, 2017) group writing tasks resulted in longer texts, higher linguistic accuracy, higher complexity, and fluent texts.

Nowadays, writing has an active role in schooling and English language development (Steinlen, 2018). According to Koppel et al.’s (2005a), syntactic features are dominant characteristics of native writers. Thus, native language writing tends to be more accurate compared to non-native writing. Based on Chen et al. (2017) not only syntactic features but semantic features will reveal native writing style.

Concerning writing classes in EFL context, usually students face some problems with writing tasks and the aim of the EFL learners is to become more proficient writers and to write close to error-free texts in foreign language (Meyls, 2002). EFL writers have limited vocabulary and have difficulty in expressing their ideas, so they can be given the chance to pool ideas together in preparation for writing (Pendergast & Hayne, 1999; Reid, 1993; Storch, 2005). Many students, especially in the EFL settings, find it challenging to deal with the writing tasks. Students usually complain about the way of expressing their thoughts in writing classes or choosing appropriate words, terms, or expressions for their scripts. Many university students complain about the absence of ideas, knowledge, and strategies. Several studies were conducted among the EFL teachers regarding their perceptions about the CL application in their classes (Almulia, 2016; Celik et al., 2013) but few studies were conducted to compare teachers’ perceptions and their instructional practices (Moges, 2019). It should be noted that in the current study, the concept of perception refers to teachers’ thoughts, beliefs, thinking, and understanding manner, and their past experiences regarding CL and its implementation in academic contexts (Alias et al., 2018; Ghaith, 2018; Prieto Saborit et al., 2016).

2. Literature review
The dominant outlook of the knowledge construction is social constructivism (Palinscar, 1998). Based on this perspective, a learner constructs his/her own networks of knowledge by cooperating with others and they link new information to their current knowledge. This viewpoint highlights group activities as a venue for peer interaction. Based on this perspective, learning is a social activity and it occurs through interaction with others (Dewey, 1938). According to Vygotsky (1978) individual learners’ cognitive progress works based on learners’ social interactions which occur through guided learning within learners’ Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) once learners and their partners co-construct knowledge. Based on Vygotsky (1978), every function in the learners’ cultural development, first of all appears on the social level and then on the individual level. Based on social constructivism, learning is a cooperative practice and knowledge progresses through learners’ interaction with culture and society. Vygotsky’s social constructivism focuses on social interaction in learning and development. In this regard, the quality of teacher–learner interaction is realized fundamental in education when scaffolding learners’ education (Bodrova & Leong, 1996).

CL is based on the Social Constructivism theory, which highlights the requirements of the teachers and students’ involvement in the teaching and learning process. Based on this perspective, CL results in co-construction and collaboration over communication (Storch, 2005). Teachers experience CL implementation where students are encouraged to discover learning context themselves. Some researchers specified progressive effects of using CL activities in EFL settings like Iran as a change towards student-centered instruction (Ahangari & Samadian, 2014; Marashi &
Baygzadeh, 2010). On the other hand, some research reflected instructors’ negative perception towards CL as an obstacle of its perfect implementation (Gillies, 2014; Roseth et al., 2008; Slavin et al., 2013). Consequently, it looks crucial for instructors to distinguish how to apply CL in their classes.

CL was investigated at various stages of teaching, from the Iranian university context (Khodareza & Taheri, 2015; MemariHanjani & Li, 2017; Namazidust et al., 2019) to the Iranian secondary schools (Azizinezhad et al., 2013). Once positive outcomes were reflected in all of the related studies, each one signified specific elements, which hindered suitable application of this method.

Ghaith (2018) investigated perceptions of a group of EFL teachers in this regard. Findings revealed that teachers tended to notice the Jigsaw activities (information gap activities that work best when used with the whole class) as a consistent strategy in their classes. Likewise, the study showed that despite the challenges associated with teacher knowledge, all CL strategies were valued over the English classes. Similarly, Celik et al. (2013) investigated the attitudes of Turkish EFL teachers towards CL implementation in the Turkish educational context. Researchers employed two focus group interviews. Results of their study showed that teachers believed in efficacy of group learning but they reported that standardized EFL curriculum and students’ attitudes toward CL caused difficulties in using this approach in Turkey. Ishtiq, and Hussain (2017) investigated teachers’ perceptions and their instructional practices of CL in Saudi Arabia’s EFL university context. The findings revealed that teachers faced some practical barriers for CL implementation in university context. The obstacles were primarily due to the wrong learning habits of the learners and lack of support in CL administration in university setting. Additionally, the findings revealed positive attitudes of the teachers towards CL as a beneficial strategy for the adult EFL learners. Concerning Iranian EFL context, Fatehriad et al. (2017) assumed a sociocultural outlook in their study and investigated the attitudes of teachers and learners towards the effectiveness of cooperation and participatory approach in academic context. Finding revealed that both students and teachers had positive attitudes towards applying the participatory approach and they attempted to use this approach in their courses.

Ahmadi et al. (2014) investigated the effect of CL on Iranian EFL intermediate learners’ writing achievement in university context. 83 university students participated in their study. Findings of the study revealed a significant difference between CL group and control group performance regarding their writing ability. Accordingly, findings revealed that cooperative group had a better performance in writing tasks. Although some investigations reflected the practicality of CL over writing instruction, more investigations are required to address CL in writing classes (e.g., AbdelWahab, 2014; Ahangari & Samadian, 2014; Ahmadi et al., 2014; MemariHanjani, 2018; Mohamed & Mahmoud, 2014; Savasci & Kaygisiz, 2019).

Based on the researchers’ knowledge, most of the studies in the Iranian EFL context focused on students’ perspectives towards CL implementation and evaluating teachers’ attitudes towards CL. Consequently, teachers’ educational practices were rarely considered in the Iranian EFL context (Shahvand & Rezvani, 2016; Tavakoli & Ketabi, 2016). Inspired by the gap in the literature and the prominent role of CL in academic context, to accomplish the purpose of the study, the following research questions have been posed by the researchers.

2.1. Research questions
RQ1. What are teachers’ perception towards CL implementation in the Iranian EFL setting?
RQ2. How do teachers practice CL for writing instruction in the Iranian EFL setting?
RQ3. What is the difference between teachers’ perceptions and their instructional practices of CL use in the Iranian EFL writing classes?
3. Methods
In the current investigation, the researchers used the mixed-method approach to gather the required data. By using the triangulation approach, the researchers examined the convergence of evidences from different methods through using more than one particular approach of data collection and data analysis (Wilson, 2014). To this aim, by using triangulation approach, the researchers tried to collect, examine, and merge the required data.

Morgan’s (2005) CL assessment questionnaire was used in this study. The items of the questionnaire were on a five-point Likert scale format, with the choices ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” and “rarely to “usually.” The options were given values from 1 to 5 accordingly. Additionally, the classroom observation scheme was used to investigate cooperative task implementation at three stages of writing. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were conducted to shed light on instructors’ viewpoints towards cooperative task implementation in the higher educational contexts.

In this study, the researchers followed a sequential explanatory design in which the required data were collected over two successive phases. Firstly, quantitative data were collected and then participants of the study were asked to participate in the qualitative phase (Creswell, 2008). Quantitative data were collected through the CL assessment questionnaire and then qualitative data was collected through classroom observation and semi-structured interviews to see whether they confirm the quantitative findings or not.

3.1. Participants
In order to collect the required data for the quantitative portion, stratified random sampling was used in the current investigation. Strata include a number of sub-groups that vary in their characteristics like their age, gender, and social status. Strata is essential for a type of probability sampling named stratified sampling (Ary et al., 2010). The first criterion for selecting the sample is related to the teaching experiences of the teachers. Second criterion related to the teachers’ major of the study. Finally, the third criterion is related to their occupational career.

As a result, 30 English language teachers from two branches of IAU in Tehran were selected for the quantitative part (questionnaire) as well as the qualitative part (semi-structured interviews). Teachers who participated in this study were firstly asked to participate in the quantitative portion and then they were asked to participate in the semi-structured interviews. Then, a sub-sample of six teachers’ classes were selected for observation based on the convenience sampling. All participants of the study had 5 to 15 years experience of English language instruction in Islamic Azad University, Iran. Fourteen of them held a Ph.D. degree, and sixteen of them were Ph.D. candidates in English language teaching.

3.2. Materials and instruments
In the current investigation, the researchers used three instruments, namely the CL assessment questionnaire, observation scheme, and a semi-structured interview. The first instrument of this investigation was the CL assessment questionnaire (Morgan, 2005). It was used to assess teachers’ perceptions regarding CL practice in university context. The second instrument was observation scheme which was adapted by the researchers. The third instrument was a semi-structured interview tables 2–8. The observation in the present investigation was developed from the unpublished dissertation Megnafi (2016). In the original observation scheme, the researcher used three main steps of writing, namely pre-writing, while-writing and post-writing stages. In order to make the observation scheme applicable in the Iranian EFL context, the observation scheme was adapted based on the language teaching context of Iran tables 9–14.

3.2.1. Reliability of the instruments
Before the administration of the CL assessment questionnaires, its reliability and validity was examined. In order to determine the reliability and validity of the instructors’ CL assessment
questionnaire, in a pilot study, the researchers first adapted the questionnaire and then randomized the items. The pilot study executed among 30 EFL teachers, the sampling procedure of the pilot study, was similar to the target population of the main study. After collecting the data, the researcher directed data analysis to compute reliability and validity coefficients in terms of factor analysis. The Overall Cronbach's Alpha reliability was 0.94 which was above 0.7 and acceptable. Dornyei and Taguchi (2010) claimed that the reliability index below 0.60 is weak and above it is a satisfactory measure.

Regarding the reliability of the observation scheme, the researchers applied inter-coder reliability analysis. To this aim, two encoders who were adequately proficient in collaborative task accompanied the researchers. A team of observers observed the classes at the same time and the correlation of their performance was calculated as inter-coder reliability. Inter-coder reliability was 0.94, which was acceptable. Additionally, the total number of six classes was observed by the researchers.

### 3.2.2. Validity of the instruments

The KMO of the factor analysis of the instructors’ CL questionnaires was 0.68, which was above 0.5 and acceptable. Bartlett’s test of Sphericity yielded significant (p = .000 < .05). Likewise, the KMO measure, which should be above 0.6, was significant (Pallant, 2007). In this research, face validity for the interview questions and observation scheme were examined in the pilot study. In this study, five Ph.D. professors assessed face validity of instructors’ interview questions and classroom observation scheme. The validity of the observation scheme from the viewpoint of five academic experts was 82.6%, and the validity of the interview questions was 83%, which was acceptable.

### 3.2.3. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an alternative notion of ‘validity’ and “reliability” in the quantitative research and crucial feature of qualitative investigations (Merriam, 1998). Based on Lincoln and Guba (1985), four criteria of “credibility,” “transferability,” “dependability,” and “conformability” were tracked in this study. Concerning the credibility, triangulation and member checking (Creswell, 2012) were implemented. The qualitative data, which were collected by semi-structured interviews, were used to support the quantitative findings.

The “prolonged engagement” tactic recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985), was applied in this investigation. To this aim, the researchers and contributors of the study were thoroughly collaborated for better thoughtfulness of the setting.

Regarding the transferability and using the results of this study in other contexts, this study offers adequate circumstantial information for the readers to replicate. To guarantee the dependability of the investigation, the researchers transcribed the recorded interviews, their themes, categories and sub-categories, and checked them with experts. The other guide for dependability was to develop a thorough understanding of the methods and their effectiveness (Shenton, 2004), which was done in this study.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), conformability is usually attained over audit trail, reflexive journal, and triangulation. To this aim, the researchers implemented triangulation approach to ensure the transparent procedures of data collection and data interpretation. Furthermore, consistency of the data with the previous investigations was investigated.

### 3.3. Data collection procedures

This study investigated perceptions and instructional practices of Iranian EFL teachers towards CL implementation in the Iranian university context. To this aim, 30 teachers participated in the current investigation. All of the participants were asked to fill out the questionnaire. Then, a sample of writing classes was observed to investigate instructional practices of teachers in writing classrooms. Students in these classes experienced freewriting tasks such as narrative, analytical, expository, persuasive, and argumentative. Many researchers believe that by thinking
and writing in a group, learners can develop their creativity (John & Meera, 2014; Marashi & Khatami, 2017). Elbow (1973) mentioned, “Two heads are better than one because two heads can make conflicting material integrate better than one head.” That is why brainstorming, which is a cooperative task, works better than individual tasks in writing classes (Shiri Aminloo, 2013).

In the current investigation, the researchers used brainstorming as a cooperative technique at the pre-writing stage. Finally, 30 teachers were interviewed to gain better insight regarding unsolved problems, challenges, and detailed investigation about CL implementation.

3.4. Data analysis
The quantitative data were investigated statistically by SPSS program version 22, and descriptive analyses, namely frequency, percentage, means, standard deviation, and t-test, were run. Regarding qualitative data, the researcher applied thematic analysis to categorize themes with data. Based on Ezzy (2002), coding refers to the process of “disassembling and reassembling the data” (p. 94).

Based on the related literature, Johnson et al. (2008) proposed the following classification regarding the CL principles. Consequently, the categorization of the questionnaire items was implemented based on these components. The definitions regarding each component are presented in the following table 1

4. Results
In this part results of the study regarding the quantitative and qualitative phases are presented in separate sub-sections.

| Table 1. Components of Cooperative Learning |
| --- |
| **Components** | **Description of Components** |
| Positive interdependence | In CL contexts, students have to acquire the allocated material and guarantee that all associates of the group learn the given material (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). |
| Group processing | Students group and face each other, in order to have interaction to accomplish the task. |
| Individual and group accountability | Each student should admit the accountability for accomplishing the role and help the team gain objectives. |
| Interpersonal and small group skills | Engaging unskilled students in a group tasks did not assure that they can do so successfully (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). Students must be educated overtly on how to collaborate with others. |
| Promotive interaction | Students must know that they are working cooperatively, so the teachers should allow them to be aware that they must support and encourage each other (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). |

| Table 2. Categorization of the questionnaire items based on the related components |
| --- |
| **Components** | **Questionnaire items** |
| Positive interdependence | 14,15,22,24,25,26,29 |
| Group processing | 18,23 |
| Individual and group accountability | 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12 |
| Interpersonal and small group skills | 13,16,17,21,27,28 |
| Promotive interaction | 19,20,30 |
4.1. Results of quantitative phase

4.1.1. Questionnaire results
This section provides results of the study which were obtained from analyzing teachers’ answers to the CL questionnaire. The first section reports results of the CL components. The second section deals with the participants’ perspectives related to each CL component. The researchers used CL questionnaire to know teachers’ outlooks towards CL application in the Iranian universities. Result of the study based on the CL principles are presented below.

Based on the table above, the most favorable CL component from the instructors’ viewpoint was promotive interaction (M = 2.55), followed by interpersonal and small group (M = 2.27), individual and group accountability (M = 2.14), positive interdependence (M = 2.08), and group communication procedure (M = 2.06). Based on the outcomes of the study the least favorable component relates to group processing which shows that group communication procedure is ignored in Iranian higher educational context. Moreover, Iranian EFL teachers hardly practice it in their class setting. This is due to the fact that Iranian teachers follow traditional way of teaching in their classes and teachers have dominant role (Kariminia & Salehi, 2007). Consequently, administrative executives and curriculum designers in the ministry of higher education of Iran should

| Components                              | Mean | Std Deviation * |
|-----------------------------------------|------|-----------------|
| 1. Promotive interaction                | 2.55 | .92             |
| 2. Interpersonal and small group skills | 2.27 | .77             |
| 3. Individual and group accountability  | 2.14 | .76             |
| 4. Positive Interdependence             | 2.08 | .90             |
| 5. Group processing                     | 2.06 | .84             |

* Standard Deviation

Table 4. Promotive interaction items

| F | P       | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---------|---|------|----------------|
| 19. One group member is selected to notice group task and to report group activities. | 17 | 48.4 | 30 | 2.50 | 1.10 |
| 20. Offer time to summarize activities and conduct debriefing sessions after group tasks are accomplished. | 21 | 67.8 | 30 | 3.00 | .87 |
| 30. I plan to use future occasions for extra teaching in CL. | 19 | 61.3 | 30 | 2.16 | .74 |
consider group processing and interactive situation in educational contexts and change the educational contents based on learners’ needs analysis.

According to table above, 67.8% of the participants believed in providing time for groups to summarize tasks and to hold debriefing meetings after the group projects. Furthermore, 61.3% of the participants believed in planning to make use of future chances for extra activities.

4.1.1.1. Results of interpersonal and small group skills. The following table shows result of “Teaching Interpersonal and Small Group Skills” based on the instructors’ perceptions towards CL

Concerning the application of CL in an educational context, 83.9% of the participants considered CL an effective instructional strategy in most content areas and 70.9% of instructors believed that using CL is an efficient teaching technique. 74.2% of them mentioned planning to increase the use of CL in their classes.

Based on the outcome of the study in this sub-section, the least favorable factor relates to monitoring and interfering in group tasks to inspire balanced contribution and cooperation. It shows that learners’ balanced contribution and cooperation during group task implementation is ignored in Iranian higher educational context and teachers rarely consider it in their classes. This is due to the fact that Iranian EFL context is exam-oriented and over emphasis is on product rather than process (Firoozi et al., 2019). Consequently, Iranian EFL teachers should consider individual

| Table 5. Teaching interpersonal and small group skills |
|-------------------------------------------------------|
| **Items** | **F** | **P** | **N** | **Mean** | **Std. Deviation** |
| 13. Provide the groups with limited resources to force learners sharing resources. | 17 | 54.9 | 30 | 2.76 | .77 |
| 16. Assign scores to individual group members according to enactment of the whole group. | 23 | 74.2 | 30 | 3.20 | .80 |
| 17. Monitor and interfere in group tasks to inspire balanced contribution and to inspire cooperation. | 10 | 32.2 | 30 | 2.30 | 1.23 |
| 21. I consider CL as an effective instructional practice in most contexts. | 26 | 83.9 | 30 | 1.66 | .71 |
| 27. I believe in using CL as an effective teaching practice. | 22 | 70.9 | 30 | 1.83 | .83 |
| 28. I schedule to enhance the practice of CL in class. | 23 | 74.2 | 30 | 1.90 | .75 |
learners’ balanced contribution and learners’ accountability during group task implementation in Iranian academic context.

4.1.1.2. Results of individual and group accountability. The following table presents the result of “Individual and Group Accountability” based on the instructors’ perceptions towards CL.

Regarding the CL implementation in classes, 93.6% believed in using group learning in reading classes and 83.9% of them believed in using group learning in speaking classes. Additionally, 70.9% of the instructors believed in using group learning through writing classes.

The result of this sub-section revealed that the least percentage relates to teachers’ experience of CL based on their participation in an after-school service program and workshop in academic context. Results of this part signify that teachers’ awareness of CL in an educational context is not properly focused in Iranian academic setting and it is usually ignored. Teachers rarely know about CL and apply it in their classes. This is due to the fact that Iranian EFL educational context ignores teachers’ training program. It seems crucial that Iranian EFL teachers understand CL and recognize learners’ need and engage them in new pedagogical techniques. It is important that administrators consider in-service training programs to enhance Iranian EFL teachers’ awareness of the new techniques (Nezakat Alhossaini & Ketabi, 2013). EFL teachers in Iran do not experience

| Items                                                                 | F   | P    | N   | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|-----|------|----------------|
| 1. Experience CL through interaction with other teachers.             | 12  | 38.7 | 30  | 2.20 | 1.42           |
| 3. Experience CL through participation in an after school service program. | 5   | 16.1 | 30  | 1.50 | 1.13           |
| 4. Experience CL through CL workshop participation.                   | 3   | 9.7  | 30  | 1.30 | .91            |
| 2. Experience CL through reading CL articles.                         | 10  | 32.3 | 30  | 2.13 | 1.38           |
| 5. Using CL groups in reading classes.                                | 29  | 93.6 | 30  | 2.83 | .83            |
| 7. Using CL groups in speaking classes.                               | 26  | 83.9 | 30  | 2.83 | 1.05           |
| 6. Using CL groups in writing classes.                                | 22  | 70.9 | 30  | 2.20 | .88            |
| 8. Using CL groups in listening classes.                              | 18  | 58.1 | 30  | 1.86 | .81            |
Table 6 (Continued)

| Items                                                                 | F    | P      | N    | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------|------|------|----------------|
| 9. More than 50% of class time during a week dedicates to CL tasks.  | 28   | 90.1   | 30   | 2.20 | .96            |
| 10. Usually use small group size of CL in my classroom.              | 16   | 51.6   | 30   | 2.46 | .99            |
| 11. Usually determine group size based on task at hand.              | 4    | 12.9   | 30   | 1.86 | 1.12           |
| 12. Usually use big group size for CL in my classes.                 | 10   | 32.3   | 30   | 2.40 | .95            |

innovative methods and assessment approaches in their teacher education, so teachers should experience new techniques like CL in Iranian academic context.

4.1.3. Results of positive interdependence. The following table indicates results of “positive interdependence” based on the instructors’ perceptions towards CL.

Based on the participants’ point of view, 87.1% believed that CL increases the presentation of low-ability students. Based on the outcome of the study in this sub-section, the least favorable factor relates to teachers’ attitudes towards CL as a means of developing the presentation of high ability learners. It shows that the effective role of CL is ignored in enhancing skilled learners in Iran higher educational context. This is due to the fact that Iranian higher educational setting has classes with different language proficiency level of students. Teachers should know how to deal with mixed-ability students in their classes and how to apply appropriate strategies. Large-sized classes with thirty to thirty-five students is the other challenge in this regard (Naddafi et al., 2019). In sum, in Iranian context, EFL teachers should consider CL to enhance mixed-ability learners’ performance and engage skilled learners through group task implementation in academic settings.

4.1.4. Results of quality of group processing. The following table presents the results of “Quality of Group Communication Procedure” based on the instructors’ perceptions towards CL.

Most of participants (87.1%) believed that CL improves student communication and decision-making. Based on the outcome of the study, the least favorable factor relates to suggesting groups with feedback on group performance. It shows that the effective role of teachers’ verbal feedback was ignored in academic contexts and Iranian EFL teachers rarely consider it in their classes. This is due to the fact that in Iranian setting, classes are crowded and the time for practicing educational subject matters are limited in English courses (Salehi, 2019). Thus, Iranian EFL syllabus designers should consider more opportunities for classroom practices of the learners to promote teachers’ verbal and written feedback.

4.1.2. Results of qualitative phase (Observation and interview results)

After reviewing the related literature, a classroom observation scheme was designed based on the CL components. The purpose was to examine to what extent and how instructors employed collaborative tasks and process writing in their writing classes. Additionally, field notes were
used to record how instructors followed three stages of writing and the way of applying cooperative strategies during the writing tasks. The data gathered through observation schemes were examined descriptively to identify the extent of significance placed on each stage of writing instruction. Each observation was conducted during a 90-min instructional period at the IAU North and Southeast branches, which are located in Tehran, Iran. The students in both universities studied English language translation.

The observers were three English instructors from IAU North Tehran branch. In order to observe classes in each university, the researchers were accompanied by two experienced instructors. Regarding the confidentiality of respondents, the instructors’ real names were not reported in

| Items                                                                 | F  | P     | N  | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-------|----|------|----------------|
| 14. Offer group members special resources to force them find an effective way to complete group work tasks. | 18 | 58.1  | 30 | 2.76 | .97            |
| 15. Assign distinctive roles to certain group members to guarantee that all students must work together to create a final outcome. | 25 | 80.6  | 30 | 3.23 | .72            |
| 22. I believe that CL boosts learner contribution in learning activities. | 29 | 93.6  | 30 | 1.53 | .57            |
| 24. I believe that CL develops presentation of high ability learners.   | 17 | 54.8  | 30 | 2.26 | 1.04           |
| 25. I believe that CL develops presentation of average-ability learners. | 23 | 74.2  | 30 | 1.83 | .79            |
| 26. I believe that CL develops presentation of low-ability learners.    | 27 | 87.1  | 30 | 1.63 | .66            |
| 29. Rewarding group members enactment based on group success is a reasonable technique of grading. | 22 | 70.9  | 30 | 1.96 | .76            |
Table 8. Quality of group processing

| Items                                                                 | F  | P   | N  | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----|----|------|----------------|
| 18. Usually offer groups with feedbacks on my observations of group performance and using the cooperative skills. | 17 | 54.8| 30 | 2.63 | .88            |
| 23. I believe that CL develops learner communication and decision-making skills. | 27 | 87.1| 30 | 3.23 | .72            |

the present study. To this aim, some codes were used instead of the participants' names such as (Prof. 1NB, Prof.3 SE ...). From now on, NB stands for “North Branch” and SEB stands for “South east” Branch of the Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran. Six instructors’ classes were observed. The classes were observed over four weeks, two times. The observation over four weeks was scheduled as it was with the intent to decrease the observant effect that could affect teachers' instructional practices. The researchers tried to make the participants feel comfortable and perform naturally in the classroom. Throughout the observation, the classes were recorded and observers used the field notes. The analysis included three steps, namely topic identification, category identification, and theme identification. Researchers identified three major themes. The first theme referred to the “pre-writing stage,” the second theme entitled “while writing stage,” and the final theme was labeled “post-writing stage.” In this section, results of each construct (theme) is presented in separate sub-sections.

4.1.2.1. Analysis of the observation scheme. The following table shows instructors’ instructional practices during the three stages of writing through application of collaborative tasks.

According to the findings of the current study, instructional practices of the instructors were in line with three stages of writing based on the cooperative strategies. The writing stage that received the highest rank among the three stages of writing related to the post-writing stage (M = 2.86). The second highest mean index related to the while-writing stage (M = 2.69). Finally, the pre-writing stage (M = 2.53) received the lowest mean index among the three stages of writing.

The following tables show descriptive statistics for the observation of writing classes.

4.1.2.2. Pre-writing stage. Based on the table above, most of the participants (66.7%) clarified cooperative task objectives by providing guidelines, promoting decision making, and supporting learners' ideas before writing tasks.

Table 9. Mean Index of the instructors' instructional practices

| Writing Stages   | Mean |
|------------------|------|
| Post-writing stage| 2.86 |
| While-writing stage| 2.69 |
| Pre-writing stage | 2.53 |
| Items                                                                 | VM+M | A   | Al + L |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-----|--------|
|                                                                     | F    | P   | F      | P   | F    | P   |
| 1. Clarification of tasks objectives through providing cooperative  | 4    | 66.7% | 2      | 33.3% |      |     |
| task guideline and decision making strategy and supporting ideas    |      |      |        |      |      |     |
| before writing task.                                                |      |      |        |      |      |     |
| 2. Encouraging group dynamic and establishing team goals through    |      |      |        |      |      |     |
| assigning responsibility and defining members' roles.               |      |      |        |      |      |     |
| 3. Motivating students for further participation by means of group  | 3    | 50%  | 3      | 50%  |      |     |
| brainstorming (e.g., mind map, Charett method, think pair share    |      |      |        |      |      |     |
| and clustering techniques.)                                         |      |      |        |      |      |     |
| 4. Use of authentic educational resources such as textbook or other | 5    | 83.3% | 1      | 16.7% |      |     |
| realia.                                                             |      |      |        |      |      |     |
| 5. Awareness raising of learners' ideas and encouraging organization| 4    | 66.7% | 2      | 33.3% |      |     |
| of ideas by providing several opportunities for group practices      |      |      |        |      |      |     |
| through planning on how to deal with writing problems.              |      |      |        |      |      |     |
In line with the results of the observation, all of the interviewees (100%) believed in advantages of group work in the academic context.

As an example, Prof 1 from NB believed that, “Group work can be an effective method to stimulate students, encourage learning, and improve communication. However, without planning, group work can frustrate students.”

Regarding Item 2 of the observation, 50% of instructors encouraged students' interaction and group dynamic, established team goals through assigning responsibility, and defined roles before writing tasks in moderation. In the present study, such cooperative procedures in writing classes occurred through group members’ feedback, where students negotiated with their group members as contributors and receivers of feedback, during which joint problem solving was established.

Prof 3 from SEB established team goals by explaining the group behavior. At first, she talked about common group goals for five minutes, then she divided the class into groups. After that, the students were assigned to work in groups. She asked one of the students in each group to report activity, and the other one to share ideas for ten minutes at the pre-writing stage. After sharing the ideas, the instructor asked the reporter of each group to report back what each member talked about. The instructor determined students' roles and asked each student to follow a specific task. She motivated students for further participation in sharing new ideas. She talked with all groups in the class and praised their interaction through expressive words such as “thank you” and “Excellent.” Finally, the instructor wrote all related ideas on the board.

In line with the results of observation, most of the interviewees (90%) believed in group work as an effective method to motivate students and decision-making skills. Additionally, in line with observation findings, most of the interviewees (80%) highlighted the dominant role of interactive-based classes through group discussion.

As an example, Prof 3 from SEB reflected that, “Group activities is a basic portion of every class and enhances mutual interaction among peers and inspires students for class participation and decision-making skills.”

Regarding Item 3 of observation, 50% of the participants used group brainstorming techniques (e.g., mind mapping, Charette method, idea sharing, and clustering) more than the other instructors.

For example, Prof 4 from NB used group brainstorming, mind mapping, and clustering as warm-up activities and cooperative pre-writing tasks for 15 minutes. She discussed with students before the writing task for ten minutes and used the Charette method of brainstorming. First, she introduced the topic and wrote it on the board. Then she asked students to think about the topic individually for five minutes. Then she asked students to share ideas with their group members. After 15 minutes, all group members shared ideas with their instructor. Then, the instructor drew a mind map on the board. Finally, she asked students to look at the board and review all related ideas and write about the related topic individually.

In line with the results of observation, most of the interviewees (75%) believed in brainstorming and clustering and they summarized the dominant cooperative tasks in writing classes.

For example, Prof 4 from NB mentioned that, “Brainstorming is a collaborative activity which inspires creative thinking and helps students in developing ideas.”

Regarding Item 4 of observation about the application of authentic educational resources, the majority of instructors (83.3%) mentioned that they use authentic resources in their classes while 16.7% of the instructors used modified text related to the topic of writing as a warm-up activity.
Regarding this issue, Prof 5 from SEB used a textbook for her instruction. She asked one of the students to read the text on “Leisure Time.” Then, she asked students to share their ideas regarding the text and to summarize the main concepts. Then, they shared their ideas for five minutes and they wrote about their free time for thirty minutes.

Concerning Item 5 of observation, the majority of the instructors (66.7%) encouraged organization of ideas and individual learners’ accountability, while the minority of the instructors (33.3%) hardly ever applied this strategy.

For example, Prof 3 from SEB provided several opportunities for students to practice planning on their writing tasks to deal with their writing problems. She asked students to think of a storm and then explained that the storm refers to drops of rain, all coming down together. Now, imagine thousands of thoughts “raining down” on your paper. She emphasized that when brainstorming, write down thoughts that come to your mind. She elaborated not to worry if the ideas were excellent or not. Then, she asked students to work together in groups of five and gather as many ideas as they could.

In line with the results of observation, 30% of interviewees considered encouraging personal accountability by providing mixed skill groups to enhance students’ motivation in writing classes.

For example, Prof 3 from SEB reflected that, “Although group learning creates a positive viewpoint towards learning, students should practice taking responsibility during group task implementation.”

The result of this sub-section revealed that the least percentage concerning teachers’ educational practice relates to awareness raising of learners and encouraging organization of ideas via providing opportunities for group practice through planning to deal with learners’ writing problems. It shows that in Iranian EFL context, teachers have dominant role in their classes and students rarely take part in cooperative task implementation. Students’ cooperation based on teacher-students and students-students interaction is not appropriately focused in this EFL context (Nazari, 2015). This is due to the fact that Iranian EFL educational setting is teacher-centered. It seems crucial that Iranian EFL teachers change their traditional beliefs of knowledge transmission and encourage students to work in groups. Additionally, EFL teachers in Iran rarely practice CL in their writing classes and it is important to experience new instructional practices like CL in their classes.

4.1.2.3. While-writing stage. The following table shows descriptive statistics for the observation regarding the while-writing stage.

Concerning Item 6 of the observation scheme, 50% of the instructors considered students’ interest and provided opportunities for discussion through mutual and active interaction. Additionally, 50% of the participants applied this strategy in moderation.

Regarding Item 7 of observation, the majority of instructors (66.7%) inspired learners to rely on others’ ideas and take responsibility for peer assessment.

For example, Prof 6 from NB considered peer feedback through learners’ contributions to the process of the group work. She asked students to listen to their group members’ ideas and be sensitive to the needs and difficulties of their peers. She asked group heads to keep students on target during group tasks. Sometimes she called some students’ names and provided personalized feedback. The instructor added comments on student notes and asked them to edit drafts of written ideas and to deal with writing paragraphs based on the main ideas. In line with the results of observation, most of the interviewees (75%) believed in group work for better correction and recall.
Table 11. Descriptive Statistics for the observation at the stage of while writing

| Items                                                                 | VM+M   |      | A     |      | Al + L |      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|
|                                                                     | F      | P    | F      | P    | F      | P    |
| 6. Considering students’ interest and providing opportunity for    | 3      | 50%  | 3      | 50%  |        |      |
| cooperative discussion in mutual interaction and monitoring group  |        |      |        |      |        |      |
| discussion.                                                         |        |      |        |      |        |      |
| 7. Inspiring learners rely on others’ ideas and take responsibility | 4      | 66.7%|        |      | 2      | 33.3%|
| for assessment and considering peer feedback through learners’    |        |      |        |      |        |      |
| group work.                                                        |        |      |        |      |        |      |
| 8. Considering gap between students’ and learners’ ability for    | 1      | 16.7%| 1      | 16.7%| 4      | 66.7%|
| communication, and considering time limitations for each task.    |        |      |        |      |        |      |
| 9. Cultivating open communication and keeping students on target   | 2      | 33.3%| 2      | 33.3%| 2      | 33.3%|
| by specifying how learners deal with their writing issues.        |        |      |        |      |        |      |
| 10. Removing the scaffolding, phase by phase and planning the     | 3      | 50%  | 1      | 16.7%| 2      | 33.3%|
| writing task.                                                      |        |      |        |      |        |      |
For example, Prof 6 from NB mentioned that, “Through the pooling of abilities when students work together and by peer assessment, they recall more.”

Prof 20 from SEB echoed that, “Through students' verbal interaction, intellectual skills, peer feedback, and peer assessment learning and recalling were improved.”

Regarding Item 8, the majority of participants (66.7%) faced minimal challenges regarding the gap between students due to their communication ability and time limitation for the writing tasks.

Regarding Item 9 of observation concerning cultivating open communication and keeping students on target, 33.3% of the instructors applied this strategy more than the others by supporting learners dealing with writing issues.

Regarding this issue, Prof 4 from NB applied a friendly comment during writing task implementation and clarified how students can fix their writing problems by improving students' knowledge of the writing activities. She motivated students not to be anxious regarding their second writing draft. Consequently, she prescribed a freewriting strategy for her students. For those who faced problems in her classes, she highlighted that freewriting would improve their writing fluency.

In line with the results of observation, 70% of interviewees believed in establishing team goals to keep students on their target.

For example, Prof 4 from NB reflected that, “Setting goals for group tasks is important. Setting specific goals stimulates higher performance among students and can help us move towards our pedagogical purposes.”

Concerning Item 10 which related to removing the instructors' scaffolding phase by phase, 50% of instructors encouraged individual learners to plan the content of the writing task individually after consulting with their group members and they eliminated their further support at the while-writing stage.

As an example, Prof 5 from SEB requested students to ask questions in groups and to do joint problem solving during first draft preparation. After task implementation, within ten minutes, the instructor proudly displayed each group's work throughout the classroom and expressed his thanks to group tasks which were implemented well.

Results of this sub-section revealed teachers' unawareness concerning gaps between students, their ability for communication, time limitation for tasks, and group members' unequal participation. It shows that in Iranian EFL setting, teachers ignore CL components such as learners' positive interdependence, their accountability, and group interaction. This is due to the fact that in Iranian EFL context, writing is taught traditionally and writing classes are product oriented. In this context, learners follow some fixed patterns, without considering the socio-cultural features in their compositions (Shahrokhi Mehr, 2017).

It is crucial for Iranian EFL teachers to attend in-service programs and to enhance their knowledge of CL. However, there is an inconsistency between administrative decisions and practical needs of Iranian teachers. Iranian teachers believe that in-service programs are not effective enough (Atai & Mazlum, 2013). Consequently, administrative executive in the ministry of higher education should consider more time for writing classes and teaching CL during in-service trainings.
| Items                                                                 | VM+M | A            | AI + L        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------|--------------|
| 11. Motivating learners to evaluate their friends’ writing through correction and peer feedback process. |      |              | 6            |
|                                                                    |      | 3            | 50%          |
| 12. Reassuring learners’ self-reflection on how well they write based on their initial plans and how well they correct their errors through proofreading tasks. |      |              |              |
|                                                                    |      | 3            | 50%          |
| 13. Noticing the learners’ relevant needs for further learning.     | 6    | 100%         |              |
| 14. Connecting ideas to make a coherent piece of writing.           | 4    | 66.7%        | 2            |
|                                                                    |      |              | 33.3%        |
| 15. Inspiring, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of writing strategies and motivating students to transfer strategies to new tasks by providing learners with oral and written feedback. | 3    | 50%          |              |
|                                                                    |      |              | 3            |
|                                                                    |      |              | 50%          |
4.1.2.4. Post-writing stage. The following table shows descriptive statistics for the observation regarding the post-writing stage.

Regarding Item 11, which was related to motivating learners to evaluate their friends’ writing over error correction process and peer feedback, all of the participants (100%) applied this strategy in very few cases.

Regarding Item 12, which related to the reassuring learners’ self-reflection and proofreading writing tasks, 50% of instructors applied this strategy in moderation and 50% of the participants applied this technique less than the others.

In line with the results of observation, majority of the interviewees (90%) believed in group tasks as an effective method to develop critical thinking and students’ reflection through the decision-making process.

For example, Prof 2 from NB echoed that, “Reflection is a vigorous process of education which leads to students’ better performance in the writing classes.”

Concerning Item 13 of observation, most of the instructors (100%) noticed learners’ needs for further instruction.

Regarding this issue, Prof 4 from NB inspired self-assessment at the last phase of writing. She asked students to notice their skill gaps and met students’ needs through building the learner-centered class and a stress-free environment. She was attentive towards the students’ apprehensions and involved them to share their strategies. She asked students to take responsibility for their learning. In the last phase of writing, she asked students to read their peers’ essays for five minutes and commented on their writings for ten minutes.

In line with the results of the observation, all of the participants (100%) believed in learner-centered classes.

For example, Prof 4 from NB believed that, “Through promoting trust, communication, and cooperation between my students and I, a learner-centered context is created in my classes.”

Regarding Item 15 of the observation, about evaluating the effectiveness of writing strategies and conveying strategies to new tasks, 50% of the instructors provided learners with oral and written feedbacks and 50% of them applied this less than the others.

Concerning this issue, Prof 3 from SEB facilitated the learning process by providing written feedback on the learners’ final draft. She wrote A+/A/B or C on the students’ written tasks, and when she was thrilled with a student’s on-task behaviors, she went beyond with praise and applauded that students’ effort.

In line with the results of observation, the majority (70%) of interviewees believed in group tasks as the central part of CL, which leads to group feedback in an interactive context.

As an example, Prof 3 from SE echoed, “both in-class instructor feedback and small group peer feedback led to the students’ better-writing outcomes.”

The result of this sub-section revealed that Iranian EFL teachers hardly ever consider learners’ self-reflection on how well they write based on their initial plans. It shows that promoting learners’ strategic knowledge awareness is not properly practiced in Iranian EFL settings and teachers rarely focused on learners’ self-reflection and their metacognitive knowledge awareness in writing classes.
This is due to the fact that in Iranian EFL context, teachers don't want to give up their authority (Safari & Pourhashemi, 2012). Iranian academic context has less emphasis on learners' reflective practice. This is due to the traditional method of teaching and over emphasis on accuracy in writing in Iranian setting. Thus, teachers in Iranian EFL setting merely focus on grammar and vocabulary training for writing instruction and important roles of interactive process in writing were ignored in writing classes (Avarzamani & Farahian, 2019). Accordingly, it is important for Iranian EFL teachers and executive managers to consider learners' metacognitive knowledge awareness in writing classes.

4.1.3. Comparison between teachers’ perceptions and their instructional practices
To compare six teachers' attitudes based on CL attitude questionnaire and their instructional practices of CL in six writing classes, an independent sample t-test was run to compare their perception and their instructional practices.

The following table shows the mean difference of classroom observation and teachers' perceptions questionnaire.

As shown in the table above, the mean of the observation is 1.33 and the mean of the questionnaire is 1.50. The results of this section reflects that there is not a significant difference between the perceptions and instructional practice of the teachers in their writing classes.

The following table presents independent sample t-test statistics for classroom observation and teachers' perceptions questionnaire.

Based on the data presented in the above table, there was not a significant difference between six classroom observations (M = 1.33, SD = .51) and teachers' perceptions (M = 1.50, SD = .54), while \( t(10) = -.542, P = .59 \) two-tailed \( P > .05 \). Based on the data attained from the participants of the current study, there is not a significant difference between the results of the classroom observation and teachers' perceptions regarding CL. The results indicate that the teachers practiced what they theorized in their classes.

5. Discussion
Results of the questionnaire concerning the quantitative phase of the study revealed promotive interaction the most favorable CL component. Findings of this part support Mary's (2014) study which revealed that cooperative activities enhanced learners' promotive interaction, understanding, thoughtfulness, and helped learners to deal with conflict relationships among themselves in a class setting. On the other hand, findings of quantitative phase concerning group processing is not in line with Johnson et al.'s (1990) finding which showed group processing as a crucial factor for group productivity and learners' higher educational attainment.

Furthermore, findings of the study concerning the subcomponent of promotive interaction about proposing specific time for summarizing activities and conducting debriefing sessions is in line with Crosby's (2005) outlook about debriefing sessions as an essential factor in educational context for summarizing, clarifying, and enhancing the achievement of the learners. Additionally, the outcome concerning the subcomponent of interpersonal and small group skill about recognizing CL as an effective instructional practice supports Korkmaz Toklucu and Toy (2016) whose results supported CL and constructivist learning as a practical strategy for increasing learners' achievement in EFL context.

| Table 13. Mean difference of instructors’ perceptions versus instructional practices |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Group Statistics**                                          |
| Codes | N  | Mean  | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
| Perceptions VS. Practice | Observation | 6 | 1.3333 | .51640 | .21082 |
| Questionnaire | 6 | 1.5000 | .54772 | .22361 |
Table 14. Independent sample t-test between observation and teachers' perceptions

|                  | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | t-test for Equality of Means |
|------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------|
|                  | F          | Sig. | T     | DF | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |
| Scores           |            |      |       |    |                |                 |                          |                                      |
| Equal variances assumed | .625   | .448 | -.542 | 10 | .599           | -.16667         | .30732                    | -.85141 to .51808                   |
| Equal variances not assumed |     |      |       |    |                |                 |                          |                                      |
|                  |            |      | -1.542 | 9.966 | .600           | -.16667         | .30732                    | -.85174 to .51840                  |
Concerning the results of positive interdependence, the findings highlighted CL as a dominant factor for enhancing learners’ contribution in learning activities. The outcome supports some researchers’ perspectives (e.g., Liao, 2009; Pattanpichet, 2011) who believed that CL could develop students’ interaction and communicative competence.

On the other hand, the minority of teachers faced some challenges regarding CL implementation due to the poor language proficiency of the Iranian EFL learners. Teachers mentioned that they had limited time for CL implementation in the writing classes. Due to these reasons, some of the teachers were not eager to implement CL in their writing courses. The findings are in line with Pica’s (1994) outlook concerning learners’ lack of attention to the organizations of the foreign language classes. In such contexts, students shift to their mother tongue due to teachers’ lack of supervision of all groups during cooperative task implementation and students’ poor language proficiency. It is crucial for Iranian EFL teachers to motivate students for further interaction, consider appropriate techniques, and having a clear plan for CL implementation in writing classes.

The result of the interviews and observations regarding providing guidelines for cooperative task implementation and decision-making strategies echoes Kagan’s (1995) outlook that through CL, students’ output would be enhanced and acquisition could be elevated if it happens in a supportive, motivating, and communicative context. The findings supports Dendup and Onthanee (2020) and Soleymani Moghaddam and Heydari (2018) concerning CL implementation in improving interaction and communicative ability of students in academic contexts. Likewise, the findings are in line with Dweck’s (2012) viewpoint concerning instructors’ positive outlook as a crucial factor for proper implementation of CL in classes.

Additionally, the result of observation and interview regarding establishing team goals through assigning responsibility echoes some researchers’ perspective (Ghufron & Ermanawi, 2018; Swain, 2010; Yeh, 2015) who elaborated the activation of learners’ reasoning through students’ interaction in classes’ social groups through collaborative language, which leads to a better presentation during cooperative assignment enactment. Additionally, the finding supports inter subjectivity theory which ameliorates learners’ consciousness and learning through interaction and communication with others (Vygotsky, 1986).

Concerning implementation of brainstorming technique in writing classes, the outcome supports Colantone’s (1998) viewpoint about the pre-writing stage for strengthening students’ thinking skills. Additionally, some researchers considered brainstorming as an active factor that helps students’ interaction for generating noble ideas (Alhatib, 2012; Maghsoudi & Haririan, 2013). Further, the findings concerning group brainstorming echoes the distributed cognition theory and highlights the outcome of cognitive association among group members and practicing the negotiation in class settings (Roselli, 2016).

Likewise, the result of interviews and observations concerning providing opportunities for group practice through planning is in line with Mizuki’s (2003) study, who emphasized sharing responsibility, and gradually shifting responsibility from the teacher to learners during the educational time of the class and the benefit of this modification for language learning in EFL settings. It echoes Vygotsky’s (1978) theory concerning ZPD and the basis of scaffolding. The major goal of scaffolding in teaching refers to ZPD as transmission of responsibility for task implementation of students (Mercer & Fisher, 1993 as cited in Wells, 1999). Moreover, it supports Berry’s (2003) perspective, who highlighted cooperative task implementation as an approach of enhancing students’ learning, active participation, and academic achievement in the classroom setting. The findings are in line with Kristiansen et al.’s (2019) investigation which specified students’ interpersonal interaction and active participation in group work tasks was improved through teachers’ inspiration for communication in groups and resulted in successful CL application.
Additionally, the result concerning peer feedback is in line with Natri’s study (2007), who suggested practical views of peer and self-evaluation in the classroom context. Similarly, the results are in line with Ghaith’s (2018) study, who highlighted that the teachers’ knowledge, crowdedness of the class, time management, and school procedure are all challenges of cooperative tasks in the academic contexts.

The results about self-reflection echo Schraw’s (2002) perspective on instructors’ monitoring process and their dominant role as a facilitator in promoting students’ learning through improving learners’ cognition of their learning ability and feedback in writing classes. Furthermore, the results concerning noticing learners’ relevant needs for further learning supports Krashen’s (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis concerning anxiety-free settings for learning, which can promote student-centered classes and stimulates learners to produce more output and step towards superior presentation. Moreover, the results about oral and written feedback support Küçükali (2017) study which revealed the positive effect of oral and written feedback on EFL learners’ essay writing skills.

6. Conclusion
The findings regarding the first research question concerning teachers’ perception about the CL implementation in Iranian EFL setting showed that most of the instructors favored CL as an operative strategy in language teaching. They considered promotive interaction as their most promising CL component. Findings of the study are in line with Prieto Saborit et al. (2016), who examined the effect of teachers’ perceptions concerning the application of CL in academic settings.

The social interdependence theory offers a foundation for CL implementation in an academic context. Based on this theory, knowledge and skills construction occurs via learners’ interaction (Tran, 2013). Thus, CL should be applied in an interactive context to support learners learn together to attain their collective objectives. Such education occurs via interaction with each other in the learners’ ZPD and stimulating background knowledge of the students (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, it seems significant social interaction be stimulated for higher achievement. In this realm, learners’ communicative competence is important which would enhance learners’ communication and cooperation in academic context. If social interaction does not occur, learners would not attain higher outcome in classes (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 2008). Thus, the main focus of the current study is on higher educational context (IAU) where learners are English language students and they have good language proficiency and, consequently, they can easily communicate with each other in English.

The findings regarding the second research question concerning teachers’ practice of CL for writing instruction in Iranian EFL setting showed that IAU teachers practiced CL in their writing classes and they also favored and used five components of CL. The result supports some researchers’ outlook (e.g., Ghufron & Ermawati, 2018; Hijzen et al., 2007) concerning instructors’ positive viewpoint towards CL which resulted in its proper employment in class setting.

The findings regarding the third research question concerning the difference between teachers’ perceptions and their instructional practices of CL use in Iranian EFL writing classes showed no significant difference between instructors’ perceptions and their classroom practices of CL implementation. The findings are in line with Gillies and Khan (2009) study which revealed teachers’ attitude and in-service training in CL led to better CL implementation in classes.

Results of the current study can help language teachers to make inquiries concerning the effectiveness of CL activities in several contexts. Students can benefit from CL tasks in writing classes where anxiety is reduced, self-confidence is enhanced, and the class attention is on whole groups (Slavin & Karweit, 1981). Likewise, CL components can assist teachers to apply these practices in their classroom routines to reduce the load of teachers’ work in writing classes and to increase learners’ role during the class procedure.
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