The Effect of In-Class vs Out-of-Class Involvement as Input Enhancement Strategy on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' Paragraph Writing Ability

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Abstract: This study investigates the effects of in-class and out-of-class involvement as input enhancement strategies on both the paragraph writing proficiency and motivational attitudes of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. Employing a quasi-experimental design, the study was conducted with 60 adolescent female students at the Saba Institute in Mazandaran, Iran. Participants were assigned to two experimental groups and one control group based on their Oxford Placement Test (OPT) results, which identified them as intermediate learners. The in-class involvement group engaged in structured activities such as peer review, teacher-guided discussions, and collaborative revision, while the out-of-class group independently completed structured paragraph-writing tasks outside classroom hours. The control group received conventional instruction based on the coursebook. Data were collected through pretests, posttests, and a validated motivation questionnaire. ANOVA results revealed statistically significant differences in writing performance, with the in-class group outperforming others. Additionally, both experimental groups reported high motivation levels, with the out-of-class group demonstrating slightly stronger motivational outcomes. These findings underscore the dual benefit of involvement strategies in enhancing both writing performance and learner engagement. The study contributes to the growing body of research on EFL writing instruction by highlighting the differential impacts of involvement types. It provides practical implications for curriculum designers and educators seeking to foster both academic achievement and motivation through contextually appropriate pedagogical strategies.

Keywords: *Input enhancement, EFL learners, Paragraph writing, In-class involvement, Out-of-class activities, Learner motivation.*

Introduction

Writing is universally acknowledged as one of the critical macro skills in language acquisition, alongside listening, speaking, and reading. It plays an indispensable role in the process of learning English, as it consolidates learners' grasp of grammatical structures and vocabulary introduced in classroom instruction (Cole & Feng, 2015). In an era where written communication increasingly dominates professional and academic spheres, particularly through digital platforms, its importance continues to grow. Jabali (2018) argues that written communication may even surpass verbal communication in terms of its long-term significance. Pratama (2015) further emphasizes that adherence to grammatical rules and correct spelling is essential for articulating ideas clearly in written form. Moreover, writing is not merely a mechanical process but a complex cognitive activity, involving the generation and organization of ideas into coherent sentences and paragraphs (Mehr, 2017). Mastery of writing requires a profound understanding of grammar, vocabulary, and logical structuring, positioning it as a productive process that demands close attention to linguistic conventions (AL-Haj, 2015).

Despite its pivotal role, writing remains one of the most challenging skills for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). According to Zhao (2015), even in advanced societies where literacy is a priority, individuals often encounter difficulties with writing. These challenges are exacerbated for EFL learners, as noted by Rekibi (2016), who identified difficulties in mastering the necessary vocabulary, sentence structures, and punctuation. Writing in a foreign language presents a unique set of obstacles, with learners struggling to apply grammatical rules in practical settings, particularly in academic environments where English is the medium of instruction (Isleem, 2012; Bacha, 2002).

Jabali (2018) adds that non-native speakers face these difficulties largely due to limited vocabulary and differing linguistic backgrounds, resulting in frequent inaccuracies in written expression. Hammad (2014) highlights the limitations of instructional methods, which often isolate writing from real-world applications, leaving learners ill-equipped to apply their knowledge in meaningful contexts.

Proficiency in writing is a key determinant of academic success and is critical for students aiming to excel in higher education. Mokhamar (2016) observes that strong writing skills not only

enhance academic performance across various disciplines but also prepare students for tasks such as research papers, reports, and examinations, which have a direct impact on their overall academic standing. As Piršl et al. (2011) contend, writing is an essential skill for both academic achievement and professional development. However, the complexity of writing instruction, particularly in EFL contexts, necessitates pedagogical approaches that integrate practical applications of writing. Traditional models focusing solely on mechanical aspects of writing are no longer sufficient; a more holistic approach is needed—one that considers cognitive processes and social contexts (Flower & Hayes, 1981). This study aims to explore the specific challenges EFL learners face in developing coherent writing, particularly at the paragraph level, and seeks to identify instructional strategies that can enhance writing proficiency in EFL contexts.

In the case of Iranian EFL learners, writing presents unique challenges due to deficiencies in grammar, vocabulary, and confidence. Students often approach writing by first translating ideas from their native language, Persian, into English, resulting in texts that are frequently disjointed and grammatically incorrect. This reliance on direct translation inhibits the development of natural and fluent English writing skills. Furthermore, a lack of confidence prevents learners from experimenting with varied grammatical structures and new vocabulary, stifling their linguistic growth (Salimpoor Aghdam et al., 2024).

These difficulties are rooted in a deeply ingrained bilingual mindset, which impedes students' ability to think and write directly in English. The present study addresses these challenges by examining the causes of writing difficulties among Iranian EFL learners and proposing pedagogical solutions to improve paragraph writing proficiency, thereby enhancing overall writing skills. Through this investigation, the study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on effective teaching strategies for writing in EFL contexts, particularly in Asian educational settings.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundation of Writing Skill

The foundation of composition writing can be traced back to the 1960s, when initial research began focusing on first language writing development, organization, and linguistics (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). However, it wasn't until the 1980s that formal guidelines for composition writing were established. Influenced by John Dewey's belief in learning as a continuous process, early 20th-century educators laid the groundwork for teaching writing, sparking theoretical debates on teaching methods (Susser, 1994). Zamel (1985) was one of the first to outline a structured approach to writing, emphasizing pre-writing, writing, and editing as key stages. According to Hageman (2003), writing and composing are synonymous, and Langan (2010) further highlighted that writing involves a meticulous attention to aspects such as spelling and paragraph structure. Voon (2007) asserts that students with strong writing skills can express thoughts effectively, while writing itself remains a vital medium for communication. Thus, mastering writing not only requires technical proficiency but also the ability to convey ideas clearly and persuasively.

Writing, as a critical skill in both first and second language learning, involves an ongoing process of drafting, revising, and editing. Oshima and Hogue (2006) describe it as a complex, recursive process requiring the integration of content knowledge, linguistic proficiency, and strategic understanding. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, the role of writing is multifaceted, reinforcing other skills such as reading and listening while also preparing learners for academic assessments and future career demands (Meyers, 2009). Grammar and vocabulary, essential language systems, are intricately tied to writing proficiency, helping learners improve overall English language skills (Harmer, 2004). Despite the prominence of writing in EFL curricula, especially in countries like Ethiopia, paragraph writing remains a challenge for many learners due to English not being their first language. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive pedagogical approach that recognizes the cognitive and linguistic demands of writing for EFL learners.

Structure of Paragraph

Dokchandra (2018) underscores that proficient paragraph composition is a fundamental measure of students' foundational writing abilities, which significantly influence their academic performance. Effective paragraph construction entails the articulation of a clear and focused topic sentence, followed by supporting statements that are enriched with relevant details and illustrative examples, thereby fully developing the central theme. Alsmari (2019) further posits that a paragraph serves as a cohesive textual unit, initiated by a topic sentence that conveys the main idea, followed by five to eight supporting sentences that expand on this concept, and concluded by a closing sentence that reinforces the key message of the paragraph. In line with this, Rustipa(2016) asserts that paragraphs represent the foundational structure of essays, with each paragraph adhering to a consistent structure comprising an introduction, body, and conclusion. The introduction presents the topic sentence, the body elaborates through supporting sentences, and the conclusion encapsulates the essence of the paragraph's central idea.

Moreover, Wirantaka (2016) highlights that high-quality paragraph exhibit three key characteristics: unity, coherence, and adequate development. Unity refers to the alignment between the topic sentence and its supporting statements, ensuring that the paragraph remains focused on a single idea. Coherence is achieved through the strategic use of transitional devices, which facilitate logical progression and connectivity within the paragraph. Adequate development involves providing detailed and well-supported statements, thereby offering readers comprehensive insights into the central thesis. Mokhamar (2016) also emphasizes the role of cohesion in maintaining thematic continuity across paragraphs, further reinforcing paragraph unity. In addition to structural integrity, Mokhamar advocates for grammatical accuracy, including correct sentence capitalization and punctuation, as well as the thoughtful selection of vocabulary to articulate coherent and meaningful ideas or arguments. Mayers (2009) similarly underscores the importance of paragraph structure, identifying unity, coherence, and development as essential components of effective academic writing.

EFL Learners' Paragraph Writing Problems

Writing tasks present a significant challenge due to their dual focus on both practical and theoretical aspects. The writing process, often conceptualized as a form of problem-solving, encompasses various stages such as idea generation, planning, goal setting, monitoring, and evaluation (White & Arndt, 1991). Despite its crucial role in language learning, writing continues to be a formidable task for both first and foreign language learners (Ingels, 2006). Learners' errors provide valuable insights into the underlying issues they face. Shaughnessy (1979) identified common difficulties in writing, including challenges related to handwriting, punctuation, syntax, subject-verb agreement, spelling, vocabulary limitations,

and difficulties in developing and elaborating on central ideas. Hailemariam (2011) also underscored the obstacles encountered by L2 writers, such as vocabulary selection, punctuation misuse, issues with generating and organizing ideas, spelling errors, and improper grammar usage. These issues, particularly vocabulary limitations, organizational problems, and grammar inaccuracies, are consistent challenges that prevent learners from crafting coherent and independent texts across various genres (Hailemariam, 2011).

Furthermore, it has been observed that L2 learners often struggle to effectively utilize the defining features of different writing genres without explicit instruction on potential error-prone areas. In the context of academic writing, paragraph development presents additional challenges, especially for learners striving to produce academic texts. Byrne (1988) identified psychological, linguistic, and cognitive barriers as key factors that impede the paragraph writing abilities of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. These barriers, in turn, contribute to the overall difficulties learners experience in acquiring writing proficiency. The complexity of these obstacles underscores the need for targeted instruction to foster the development of writing skills, which will be explored further in the following sections.

The Importance of Teachers' Written Feedback

A significant body of literature supports the pivotal role of teacher-provided written feedback in enhancing students' academic writing skills. Straub (1997) emphasizes the centrality of teacher-written feedback, asserting that written responses serve as the primary mechanism through which educators convey instructional intent, particularly when face-to-face discussions are unfeasible. This mode of feedback allows teachers to address students' unique learning needs, thereby facilitating more personalized instruction. Similarly, Ressor (2002) posits that teacher feedback not only guides students in improving their writing but also serves as a motivational tool, encouraging sustained engagement with writing tasks. Ferris (2002) further underscores the role of feedback in second language acquisition, suggesting that targeted teacher feedback can substantially enhance learners' language proficiency and overall academic development. Collectively, these scholars agree that written feedback is a versatile instructional strategy that plays an integral role in both language learning and skill development.

Recent studies

Recent studies have continued to investigate the efficacy of various feedback and instructional interventions on improving writing performance in EFL contexts. Salimpoor Aghdam, Gholami, and Saeidi (2024) explored the impact of the ENGAGE Model versus task-based language teaching (TBLT) on the writing performance of Iranian EFL learners. The study, involving 67 female learners, found that those exposed to the ENGAGE Model demonstrated significantly better improvements in essay writing skills than those taught using TBLT. These findings, confirmed through an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), highlight the potential of structured instructional models like ENGAGE to significantly enhance learners' writing competencies. In another relevant study, Ebrahimi and HadaviZade (2022) examined the effect of computer-based concept mapping on the writing accuracy and fluency of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. The study's findings, obtained through independent t-tests, indicated that learners who utilized concept mapping tools performed better in writing accuracy compared to their peers in the control group, though both groups achieved similar levels of writing fluency. This research suggests that integrating technology-enhanced tools into writing instruction may help students refine specific aspects of their writing, particularly accuracy, without detracting from fluency.

Yundayani, Susilawati, and Chairunnisa (2019) contributed to this discourse by investigating the impact of Canva, a digital platform, on the writing skills of Indonesian EFL students. Their study revealed that students who used Canva showed a significant reduction in writing errors compared to those in the control group, demonstrating the platform's efficacy in supporting the development of writing skills through visually engaging, technology-driven methods. These findings align with Tai, Ling, and Yang's (2015) research, which compared the effectiveness of teacher feedback combined with peer review (TF + PR) versus teacher feedback alone. Their results indicated that students receiving combined feedback exhibited more substantial improvements in multiple writing dimensions, including content, organization, and grammar. Furthermore, research on input enhancement strategies such as in-class versus out-of-class involvement has shed light on their effectiveness in improving paragraph writing skills among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. Such studies collectively underscore the value of diverse feedback mechanisms and instructional strategies, reinforcing the consensus that written feedback, particularly when integrated with other pedagogical tools, significantly contributes to the improvement of writing proficiency in EFL contexts.

Research Question and Hypothesis of the Study

RQ1: Does in-class vs. out-of-class involvement as input enhancement strategy have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' paragraph writing ability?

H01: In-class vs. out-of-class involvement as input enhancement strategy does not have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' paragraph writing ability.

RQ2: How do in-class and out-of-class involvement strategies influence the motivation and attitudes of Iranian intermediate EFL learners towards learning and writing in English?

H02: There is no significant difference in the motivation levels of Iranian intermediate EFL learners who receive in-class involvement strategies and those who receive out-of-class involvement strategies.

Methodology

The Design of the Study

This study employed a quasi-experimental design to examine causal relationships within an educational context, incorporating three distinct groups to assess the effectiveness of two instructional methods. Given the constraints of conducting research in real-world educational settings, random assignment was not feasible; thus, the quasi-experimental approach allowed for the investigation of interventions under more naturalistic conditions. The research design was intended to generate robust, generalizable findings applicable to educational contexts, particularly those relevant to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. To achieve the research objectives, the study utilized two experimental groups, one participating in in-class activities and the other in out-of-class activities. The in-class group received instruction in a traditional classroom setting, while the out-of-class group engaged in comparable learning tasks in alternative environments such as home or community spaces. This division facilitated a comparative analysis of the impact of different learning contexts on language

development outcomes. A control group, which did not receive any instructional intervention, was included to establish a baseline for comparison. A pretest-posttest design was employed to evaluate changes in paragraph writing proficiency. A pretest was administered at the beginning of the study to assess the participants' initial proficiency in writing, followed by a posttest after the intervention period to measure any improvements.

This design allowed for the assessment of the effectiveness of the instructional methods and enabled a comparison between the two experimental groups and the control group. The pretest-posttest framework was essential for determining whether significant differences emerged between the groups in terms of writing proficiency.

The primary aim of this study was to evaluate the effects of in-class versus out-of-class instructional methods on the paragraph writing proficiency of Iranian EFL learners. Specifically, the study sought to determine which instructional approach, structured classroom-based learning or flexible, out-of-class learning was more effective in enhancing writing skills. The analysis of pretest and posttest data provided insights into the relative efficacy of these instructional modes, with implications for future curriculum design and pedagogical strategies in EFL contexts.

Participants

The study focused on a sample of 60 intermediate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, all female, aged 14 to 16, whose native language was Persian. These learners represented a critical demographic for investigating adolescent language acquisition strategies. The participants were enrolled at Saba Institute, a prominent language institute located in Mazandaran province, northern Iran. The specific age group and educational background of the participants provided a rich context for exploring language learning strategies in adolescent learners.

Materials and Instruments

To ensure a rigorous and comprehensive evaluation of the participants' progress and outcomes, the present study employed a multi-method data collection approach incorporating both quantitative and qualitative instruments. Pretest and posttest writing tasks were administered to all participants in order to assess their paragraph writing proficiency prior to and following the intervention. These tasks provided objective, performance-based data reflecting learners' initial skill levels and subsequent improvement. The internal consistency of the pretest and posttest was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a value of .994 across the two items, indicating an exceptionally high level of reliability. This result underscores the robustness of the test scores and confirms that the measures reliably assessed a common underlying construct in writing proficiency.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics of pretest and posttest

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.994	2

In addition to performance assessments, an 18-item Motivation and Attitudes Questionnaire was administered at the conclusion of the intervention to capture learners' affective responses to the instructional strategies employed. The instrument was specifically designed to address the second research question concerning the influence of in-class and out-of-class involvement strategies on learners' motivation and attitudes toward learning and writing in English. The questionnaire included four dimensions: (1) intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, (2) attitudes toward English writing tasks, (3) perceptions of the learning environment, and (4) evaluations of the instructional strategy. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The data obtained through this tool offered valuable insights into learners' engagement, interest, self-confidence, and preferences regarding writing instruction. The integration of this attitudinal measure provided an essential complementary perspective to the test-based evaluation of writing performance, enabling a more holistic understanding of the instructional impact.

To further triangulate findings, qualitative data were collected through systematic notetaking, which captured learners' observable behaviors, particularly during out-of-class activities. These observations and reflections were carefully recorded and subsequently categorized for thematic analysis. This qualitative component enriched the study by highlighting patterns of learner engagement and involvement that could not be fully captured through quantitative means alone. The instructional materials utilized in the study included the Teen2Teen textbook and instructor-designed PowerPoint presentations. The Teen2Teen textbook provided a coherent and level-appropriate curriculum with integrated language skills, while the PowerPoint slides supplemented instruction with visual and interactive support. Together, these materials formed the core of the instructional design, aimed at developing students' ability to produce structured and coherent paragraphs in English. The combined use of print-based and digital resources was intended to support both the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning. The findings derived from this study contribute to the broader literature on effective instructional practices in EFL writing and offer pedagogical implications for curriculum design and classroom implementation in similar educational contexts.

Procedure

This study employed a quasi-experimental, quantitative research design to examine the impact of in-class and out-of-class involvement as input enhancement strategies on the development of paragraph writing skills among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. To ensure homogeneity in proficiency, intact sampling was used, and participants were administered the Oxford Placement Test (OPT). Those with scores ranging from 51 to 59 were classified as intermediate learners (see Table 2). A total of 60 adolescent female students were then randomly assigned to three groups: in-class involvement, out-of-class involvement, and a control group.

Table 2. OPT Numerical Scale

Level	Score Range	Course Level
<A1	0	Beginner
A1	1-19	Beginner
A2	20-39	Elementary
B1.1	40-50	Pre-Intermediate
B1.2	51-59	Intermediate
B2	60-79	Upper-Intermediate
C1	80-90	Advanced
C2	>100	Proficiency

Prior to the intervention, all participants completed a pretest requiring them to write a 100–150-word paragraph on the topic of a school trip, based on the "Teen2Teen" textbook. Writing

proficiency was assessed using Brown's (2001) analytic scoring rubric, which evaluates content, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics (see Figure 1). Inter-rater reliability was established by having the researcher and a senior instructor at the Saba Institute independently evaluate the scripts. The average of the two scores was used for analysis.

Components of Writing	4- Excellent	3- Good	2- Fair	1- Poor
Content (C)	Present the information in well-chosen details across the paragraph	Present the information with details in parts of the paragraph	Present the information with some details	Present no clear information
Vocabulary (V)	Good vocabulary choice	Error in vocabulary choice are few and do not interfere with understanding	Error in vocabulary choice are and sometimes interfere with understanding	Many errors in vocabulary choice that severally interferes with understanding
Grammar (G)	Good in grammar	Errors in grammar choice are few and do not interfere with understanding	Errors in grammar choice are and sometimes interfere with understanding	Many errors in grammar choice that severally interferes with understanding
Mechanics (M)	Good in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization understanding	Error in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are few	Error in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization and sometimes interfere with understanding	Error in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization severally interfere with understanding

Figure 1. Evaluation Rubric by Brown

The intervention phase consisted of 12 one-hour sessions. The in-class involvement group engaged in peer-review activities, group discussions, and collaborative revision under teacher supervision. This setting encouraged critical thinking, social interaction, and metacognitive reflection. The out-of-class involvement group received writing assignments requiring them to independently organize pre-selected sentences into coherent paragraphs, with personalization through the inclusion of their own experiences. These tasks aimed to foster learner autonomy and application of learned structures. The control group followed conventional instruction solely based on the "Teen2Teen" textbook, completing paragraph writing exercises modeled after textbook samples. Upon completion of the treatment, all participants sat for the posttest under conditions identical to the pretest. The posttest topic required students to write a paragraph about the best places for teenagers to visit in their country. The same rubric and evaluation procedure were used to ensure consistency. Data from pretest and posttest scores were analyzed using one-way ANOVA to identify statistically significant differences across the three groups. Additionally, paired-sample t-tests were conducted within each group to evaluate progress.

To examine the second research question regarding learners' motivation and attitudes towards learning and writing in English, a structured Motivation and Attitudes Questionnaire was administered to all participants at the end of the treatment period. The questionnaire was designed to measure the affective domain of learning, specifically learners' emotional responses, engagement levels, and preferences regarding in-class and out-of-class involvement strategies. The questionnaire comprised 18 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The items were categorized into four subscales representing distinct dimensions:

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation (Items 1–5): Explored the degree to which learners were driven by internal satisfaction or external rewards.

Attitudes Toward Writing in English (Items 6–10): Assessed learners' feelings about the writing process, including anxiety, enjoyment, and perceived value.

Perception of the Learning Environment (Items 11–14): Evaluated learners' experiences with the instructional strategy they received (peer feedback, independence, or textbook-based).

Satisfaction and Self-Efficacy (Items 15–18): Measured learners' confidence in their writing abilities and their satisfaction with their progress.

Table 3. Structure of the Motivation and Attitudes Questionnaire

Item Numbers	Subscale	Description
1–5	Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation	Measures learners' internal drive and external incentives to learn writing
6–10	Attitudes Toward Writing in English	Assesses learners' emotional responses toward the writing process

11–14	Perception of the Learning Environment	Evaluates satisfaction with the teaching method and classroom experience
15–18	Satisfaction and Self-Efficacy	Gauges learners' confidence in writing skills and satisfaction with progress

Note. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Higher scores indicate greater motivation and more positive attitudes toward English writing.

Responses were aggregated to produce total motivation scores (maximum possible = 90), as well as subscale scores for each construct. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated. Higher scores reflected greater motivation and stronger engagement. The questionnaire demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha = .91. A one-way ANOVA was used to compare group mean scores on motivation. Post-hoc Tukey tests were conducted where significant differences were found, offering insight into how each instructional method influenced learners' motivation and attitudes toward English writing. Additionally, qualitative data were collected through systematic notetaking, which recorded students' observable engagement behaviors during out-of-class activities. These notes were reviewed and categorized into descriptive codes to triangulate findings from quantitative data and provide richer insights into learner involvement. The integration of pretest/posttest scores, rubric-based evaluation, motivational questionnaire data, and qualitative field notes allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the pedagogical effects of the two involvement strategies on EFL learners' writing performance and motivational development.

Results

Writing proficiency is a fundamental aspect of language acquisition, and identifying the variables that influence its development is crucial for advancing instructional methodologies. A key area of investigation is the role of student involvement, both within the classroom and in external learning environments, in enhancing writing performance. This study aims to examine the differential effects of in-class and out-of-class involvement on learners' paragraph writing proficiency, providing insights into effective strategies for fostering writing development.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for paragraph writing posttests across groups

Paragraph Writing	N	Mean	S.D	Minimum	Maximum
In-class involvement	20	10.43	3.54	6.00	16.00
Out-of-class involvement	20	8.49	3.09	5.00	14.00
Control group	20	6.75	3.81	1.25	11.50
Total	60	8.55	3.75	1.25	16.00

The results presented in Table 4 reflect paragraph writing performance among the three participant groups: in-class involvement, out-of-class involvement, and a control group. The in-class group achieved the highest mean score (M = 10.43, SD = 3.54), followed by the out-of-class group (M = 8.49, SD = 3.09), and the control group (M = 6.75, SD = 3.81). These findings suggest that while both involvement strategies positively influenced writing proficiency, in-class instruction produced more substantial effects.

Table 5. Paired sample t-test results for control group

Test	Mean	Std. Deviation	Tobs	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest–Posttest	1.13	0.86	5.82	19	.00

For the control group, a significant improvement was observed between pretest and posttest scores (M = 1.13, SD = 0.86), with a t-value of 5.82 (p < .001), indicating that even minimal classroom exposure had a measurable, though limited, impact on writing proficiency.

Table 6. Paired sample t-test results for out-of-class group

Test	Mean	Std. Deviation	Tobs	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest–Posttest	2.99	0.98	13.69	19	.00

The out-of-class involvement group showed a statistically significant improvement from pretest to posttest (M = 2.99, SD = 0.98), with a t-value of 13.69 (p < .001). These results demonstrate the effectiveness of self-directed or externally guided learning activities in supporting writing development.

Table 7. Paired sample t-test results for in-class group

Test	Mean	Std. Deviation	Tobs	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest–Posttest	2.70	0.58	20.78	19	.00

Participants in the in-class involvement group achieved a significantly higher posttest score compared to their pretest (M = 2.70, SD = 0.58), with a t-value of 20.78 (p < .001), signifying a strong impact of in-class instruction on writing proficiency.
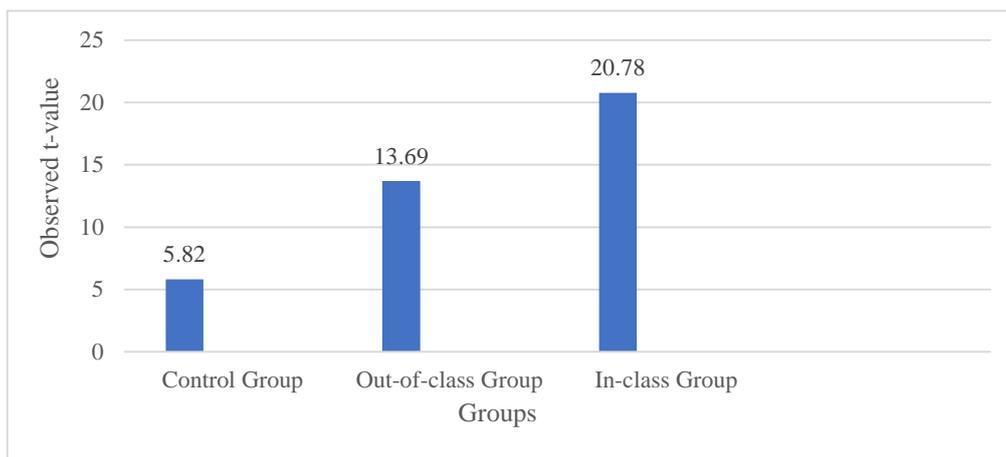

Figure 2. Compare Observed T of the Groups

As illustrated by the observed t-values in Tables 5–7, the in-class involvement group showed the largest gain (t = 20.78), followed by the out-of-class group (t = 13.69), and the control group (t = 5.82). These results suggest that while all three groups benefited to some extent, structured classroom-based interventions had the most substantial impact.

Table 8. One-way ANOVA results for paragraph writing posttest

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	135.19	2	67.60	5.54	.006
Within Groups	694.95	57	12.19		
Total	830.14	59			

A one-way ANOVA (Table 8) confirmed statistically significant differences among the three groups (F = 5.54, p = .006), validating that the writing improvement was significantly influenced by the type of involvement strategy.

Motivational Questionnaire Results

In addition to performance outcomes, participants in both experimental groups completed a motivation questionnaire at the end of the study. The results indicated that learners in both groups demonstrated relatively high levels of motivation toward the paragraph writing tasks and involvement activities. However, the out-of-class involvement group reported slightly higher levels of self-driven engagement and autonomy in managing their learning. These findings suggest that while structured in-class instruction may yield higher gains in performance, out-of-class activities might foster greater learner independence and intrinsic motivation.
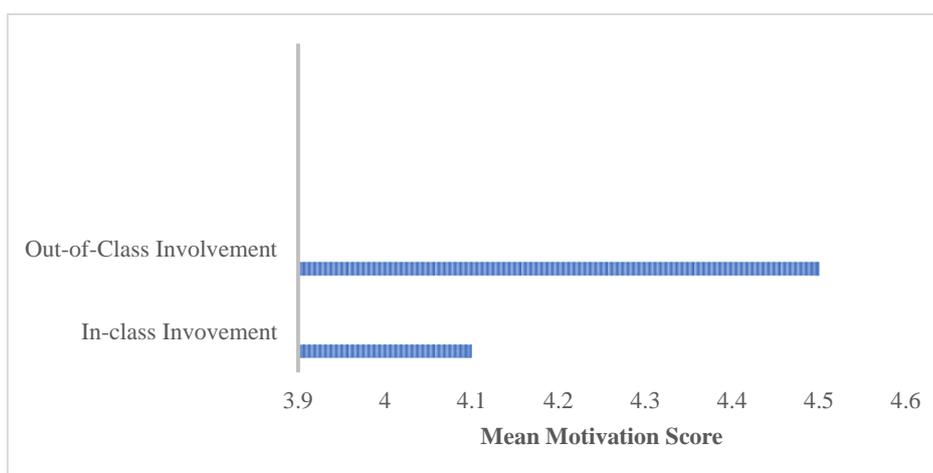

Figure 3. Comparison of mean motivation scores across experimental groups

Descriptive analysis of the questionnaire responses revealed that both groups perceived the intervention as beneficial. However, mean motivation scores for the out-of-class group were marginally higher, indicating that learners appreciated the flexibility and self-paced nature of the activities. This suggests that integrating opportunities for autonomous learning can complement structured instruction by enhancing learners' motivational states and long-term engagement with writing.

Results of Hypothesis Testing

In testing the first hypothesis that in-class versus out-of-class involvement does not influence Iranian intermediate EFL learners' paragraph writing abilities, the ANOVA yielded an F-value of 5.544 and a significance level of 0.006. This significance level, being considerably less than the alpha threshold of 0.05, leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The results indicate that the type of involvement, whether in-class or out-of-class, significantly impacts learners' writing performance, underscoring the importance of involvement type in the development of writing skills. Regarding the second research question *How do in-class and out-of-class involvement strategies influence the motivation and attitudes of Iranian intermediate EFL learners towards learning and writing in English?* the results of the motivational questionnaire indicated that both groups experienced high levels of motivation. However, a descriptive comparison revealed slightly higher mean motivation scores in the out-of-class involvement group. This difference suggests that learners engaged in out-of-class activities may have experienced enhanced autonomy and ownership over their learning, contributing to stronger intrinsic motivation. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H02), which stated that there is no significant difference in the motivation levels between in-class and out-of-class groups, is rejected at a descriptive level, warranting further inferential investigation in future research.

Discussion

This study reveals notable parallels and distinctions when juxtaposed with extant research in EFL writing instruction. Salimpoor Aghdam, Gholami, and Saeidi (2024) investigated the ENGAGE Model and task-based language teaching (TBLT) within the context of Iranian EFL learners, focusing on essay writing. Their findings demonstrated substantial enhancements in essay writing proficiency. In contrast, the present study highlights the effectiveness of structured in-class activities specifically for paragraph writing, suggesting that the efficacy of pedagogical strategies is contingent upon the specific writing task and educational context. Furthermore, Ebrahimi and HadaviZade (2022) examined the impact of computer-based concept mapping on writing accuracy. Although their study employed a quasi-experimental design similar to this one, it primarily enhanced writing accuracy. The current study, however, identified that in-class involvement activities such as peer review and teacher-facilitated discussions significantly improved both the coherence and overall quality of paragraph writing. This emphasizes the need for interventions tailored to specific writing skills and desired educational outcomes.

The research by Yundayani, Susilawati, and Chairunnisa (2019) explored the use of Canva to improve writing skills, focusing on innovative tools for error reduction and idea organization. While their study demonstrated the utility of such tools, the current research underscores the superior impact of structured peer interactions and teacher feedback on paragraph coherence and proficiency. This reinforces the notion that while different interventions can positively influence writing, their effects may vary based on the aspects of the writing process they target. Tai, Ling, and Yang (2015) investigated the effects of teacher feedback combined with peer review in an online setting, which aligns with the findings of this study regarding the benefits of peer review in in-class contexts. Both studies affirm that peer involvement, when combined with structured guidance, significantly enhances writing performance across content, organization, and grammar domains, highlighting the importance of interactive and collaborative learning environments.

Beyond performance outcomes, this study contributes novel insight into motivational dynamics among learners exposed to different involvement strategies. The finding that out-of-class participants exhibited slightly higher motivation levels suggests that opportunities for autonomous learning may play a crucial role in shaping learners' attitudes toward writing and learning English. This aligns with theories of self-determination and intrinsic motivation, which emphasize the significance of autonomy in educational engagement. Collectively, these studies substantiate the effectiveness of targeted instructional strategies whether incorporating peer review, task-based teaching, digital tools, or structured classroom activities in enhancing EFL learners' writing skills. This study contributes to the literature by demonstrating the particular efficacy of in-class involvement strategies in improving paragraph writing proficiency, while also highlighting the motivational advantages associated with out-of-class strategies. These findings offer practical insights for educators and curriculum designers seeking to balance performance-driven instruction with learner-centered engagement in EFL settings.

Implications of the Study

Curriculum Design: The integration of structured instructional models, such as the ENGAGE Model, can significantly improve writing proficiency. Educational institutions should consider adopting such frameworks to optimize writing instruction outcomes.

Technological Integration: The positive effects associated with computer-based concept mapping and Canva suggest that incorporating digital tools into writing instruction can enhance both writing accuracy and idea organization. This approach can contribute to creating more engaging and effective learning environments.

Feedback Mechanisms: The combination of teacher feedback and peer review has been shown to lead to substantial improvements in writing skills. This underscores the value of collaborative learning approaches and indicates that feedback mechanisms should integrate peer review elements.

Involvement Strategies: The significant impact of in-class versus out-of-class involvement on writing proficiency highlights the necessity of carefully considering the context of learning activities. Balancing in-class and out-of-class assignments can enhance overall writing instruction effectiveness.

Suggestions for Further Research

Longitudinal Studies: Future research should include long-term studies to evaluate the sustained impact of interventions such as the ENGAGE Model, computer-based concept mapping, and Canva on writing proficiency.

Diverse Populations: Expanding research to include diverse populations of EFL learners— across different age groups, proficiency levels, and cultural backgrounds—will enhance the generalizability of findings.

Comparative Analysis: Comparative studies investigating the effectiveness of various instructional methods, including flipped classrooms, project-based learning, and gamification, on writing proficiency are recommended.

Qualitative Insights: Employing qualitative methodologies to explore learners' perceptions and experiences with different instructional interventions can provide deeper insights into the mechanisms affecting writing skills.

Technology Integration: Research should explore the role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality, in enhancing EFL writing instruction and their potential integration into existing teaching practices.

Teacher Training: Examining the impact of professional development programs for teachers on the implementation of innovative instructional methods and their influence on student engagement and writing proficiency is crucial.

Conclusion

This study underscores the imperative of adopting a diverse array of contextually appropriate instructional strategies to enhance both writing proficiency and learner motivation among intermediate EFL learners. The findings support a comprehensive instructional approach that combines structured pedagogical models, technological tools, and collaborative feedback mechanisms, recognizing the multidimensional nature of writing development and motivational engagement. The results highlight the superior efficacy of in-class involvement strategies, particularly those incorporating peer review and teacher-guided feedback, in improving paragraph writing performance. At the same time, out-of-class involvement strategies demonstrated notable potential in fostering greater learner autonomy and intrinsic motivation, as evidenced by the motivational questionnaire results. These findings reveal that while in-class instruction yields more significant gains in performance, out-of-class activities contribute meaningfully to affective and attitudinal dimensions of learning.

Furthermore, this study aligns with prior research that demonstrates the value of integrating instructional frameworks such as the ENGAGE Model, digital tools like Canva, and computer-based concept mapping. Each approach contributes uniquely to the enhancement of writing proficiency and learner engagement, depending on the specific instructional goals and learner needs. From a pedagogical standpoint, these insights carry important implications for EFL educators and curriculum developers. They advocate for a balanced and context-sensitive instructional design that addresses both cognitive and motivational aspects of language learning. Such integrative practices are likely to foster deeper learner engagement, enhance writing quality, and support sustained educational outcomes. Nonetheless, the study also highlights areas requiring further inquiry. Future research should examine the long-term impacts of in-class and out-of-class involvement strategies on learners' writing development and motivational trajectories. Additionally, qualitative studies could provide richer insights into learners' subjective experiences and preferences regarding various instructional modes. Continued exploration of these dimensions will be vital for the ongoing refinement of effective, learner-centered approaches to EFL writing instruction.

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