A Comparative Investigation of Peer Revision versus Teacher Revision on the Production and Comprehension of Relative Clauses in Iranian EFL Students' Writing Performance

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Abstract

This study compared teacher revision with peer revision on comprehension and production of relative clauses (RCs) in Iranian EFL students' writing performance. Data were collected from 109 Iranian intermediate language learners studying at Imam Khomeini International University and Kharazmi University. After being homogenized by taking Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP), they were divided into three groups (teacher revision, peer revision, and control). They all sat for the pretest. Then, the students in teacher revision and peer revision groups underwent eight treatment sessions, practicing teacher revision and peer revision respectively. The control group, however, did not receive any treatment. Then, the posttest was administered to all the groups. ANCOVA was employed to compare the performances of the groups. The results indicated that both teacher and peer revision were beneficial to students. However, peer revision led to better comprehension and production of RCs. The findings may carry implications for language educators, language learners, and language teachers.

Keywords: Peer Revision, Teacher Revision, Relative Clause, Writing Performance

1. Introduction

Writing is an integral component of communication. It is a skill that translates into any career fields (Huy, 2015). According to Mandal (2009), writing is an essential tool that allows people to communicate with each other in different ways. To Huy (2015), writing brings many benefits for students. For example, writing is a good way to help students increase their ability of using vocabulary and grammar. In other words, writing can be a way of developing the ability of using language. Grammar is a part of language which plays a vital role in writing. Chin (2000) stated that grammar is the sound, structure, and meaning system of language, which includes the structure of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. Among the mentioned structures, the acquisition of clauses and relative clauses is of great importance due to their complexity (Bao, 2015).

English relative clause structure is a unit of syntax whose acquisition in the first language has been the focus of many studies (Diessel & Tomasello, 2005; Kidd & Bavin, 2002; Sheldon, 1974). Also, several L2 studies have been conducted on the acquisition of English RCs extensively in both cross-sectional (e.g., Doughty, 1991; Eckman, Bell, & Nelson, 1988; Gass, 1979; Izumi, 2003; Pavesi, 1986) and longitudinal (e.g., Mellow, 2006; Schumann, 1980) ways.

Some L2 studies revealed that comprehension and production of RCs may cause problems for students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) (Abdolmanafi & Rezaee, 2012; Izumi, 2003; Sheldon, 1974; Tavakolian, 1981). Gass and Selinker (2001) stated that relative clauses are complex syntactic forms whose production, understanding, and imitation are difficult for learners. Therefore, relative clause structures need to be noticed and developed for EFL learners. Although the importance of relative clauses is emphasized, teaching relative clauses as a part of writing and grammar is sometimes regarded as a difficult job. This negative attitude could be due to the number of facts such as the complex structure of RCs (Chang, 2011), and cross-linguistic influences (Kidd, Chan, & Chiu, 2014). Moreover, class size (Mia, Badger, & Zhen, 2006) and occurring corrected mistakes in the learners' subsequent writing task (Hu, 2002) could be two other reasons for difficulty in teaching and learning relative clause structures. To solve this problem, peer revision approach, which is very effective in teaching grammatical points, can be used in EFL classes (Pennington, 1995).

Based on the AAL (Assessment as learning) definition, students play an important role in self-evaluation to find out their own strengths and weaknesses, so feedback is the way to enhance the students' self-evaluated accuracy. Feedback can be provided by various sources, for example,

instructor, classmate, parents, and even the individual (Masantiah, Pasiphol, & Tangdhanakanond, 2018).

According to Mowlaie and Maftoon (2015), peer revision is an alternative to revision provided by teachers to solve the management problem existing in the classes with a large number of students. Some researchers believe that peer revision is as effective as teacher comments (Bartels, 2003; Saito & Fajito, 2004; Srichanyachon, 2011), and even some reported that peer revision contributes to more improvement in writing than teacher revision (Kara, 2013; Rollinson, 2005). Feedback or revision provided by the teacher is highly preferred by students who often think teacher knows best. However, excessive dependence on teacher adds to their workload. Therefore, teachers can use peer revision as a useful adjunct to teacher revision (Vasu, Ling, & Nimehchisalex, 2016). Feedback is a key component of L2 writing primarily because learners are supposed to receive feedback and teachers feel they are supposed to offer it (Hyland & Hyland, 2006, as cited in Ene, & Upton, 2018).

Many students are not interested in writing which is an important skill needed to fulfill the education requirements (Ahmed, 2010). This may be due to the approaches which consider a passive role for students to whom teaching material should be dictated. As a result, teachers are responsible for providing revision and feedback (Sun & Feng, 2009). Teacher revision might lead to learners' use of teacher feedback without complete understanding which consequently makes learners make the same mistakes in their subsequent writing tasks (Zhao, 2010). However, by considering an active role for students, peer revision approach can be used to motivate learners to take responsibility for their own learning. Therefore, learners are involved in negotiation of meaning leading to meaningful learning and development of learners' long term writing proficiency (Moore & Teather, 2013).

Students are required to learn grammatical points and structures which are essential for considerable improvement in writing (Clark, Jones, & Reutzel, 2013). Relative clauses are among the structures whose comprehension and production are difficult for Persian EFL learners due to their structural complexity (Marefat & Rahmany, 2009).

The feedback that students normally get from instructors has a significant role in their attitudes towards writing not only in their first language but also in the second language as they get tremendous insights about the feedback they receive from instructors. This helps them identify their mistakes and points of weakness. On the contrary, students who give their peers feedback have been found to develop more in writing skills than those who receive it (Jabali, 2018).

Nowadays, peer revision plays a vital role in the learners' writing development because it is an approach whose focus is on the learner autonomy and centeredness (Sarfraz & Akhtar, 2013). By collaborating throughout the writing process, learners benefit from the feedback that their peers provide, and they are able to foster reflective thinking, gain self-confidence, and improve their fluency in the foreign language (Kwon, 2014). They are also stimulated to express their own authentic voices in the process of the text product. Therefore, peer revision promotes a sense of co-ownership and subsequently encourages students to contribute to decision making on all aspects of writing: context, structure, and language (Storch, 2005). Using correct relative clauses as one aspect of writing is a significant factor in composing a good and well-designed writing. By using peer revision students may be empowered to apply each other's revision toward utilizing correct relative clauses to their writing.

2. Literature Review

In teaching the writing skill there has been a significant change from product-based approaches to process-based approaches. This model focuses on three stages of (a) planning, (b) translating, and (c) revising. In the last stage there are three types: self, peer, and teacher revisions among which much use is made of peer revision activities which help students become progressively more independent and self-confident as writers (Ruecker, Shapiro, Johnson, & Tardy, 2014).

Variously known as peer response, peer feedback, peer editing, and peer evaluation, peer revision refers to "the learners as sources of information and interactants for each other by commenting on and critiquing each other's drafts in both written and oral formats" (Liu & Hansen, 2002, p. 1).

Considering peer revision as a type of responding to students' text, Hyland (2003) stated that peer revision may help students develop their drafts and improve their understanding of effective communication in both conversation and written expression. Hyland (2003) mentioned several advantages of utilizing the peer revision technique in the classroom: (a) learners actively participate in doing their writing tasks; (b) peer revision provides an authentic communicative content where revision is implemented in pair work which creates an environment for students to discuss and share ideas; (c) peer revision creates a nonjudgmental environment where students try to discuss and improve each other's paper rather than judge each other's deficiencies; (d) there is an alternative and authentic audience and students become active readers of each other's work; (e) writers gain understanding of reader needs as students play the role of a reader; (f) there is reduced apprehension about reading; (g) critical skills are developed; and (h) and there is reduction in teacher's workload.

Learners can use peer revision to revise their texts and improve their writing ability in terms of vocabulary, organization, and content (Mulligan & Garofalo, 2011). Mowlaie and Maftoon (2015) investigated the effect of language proficiency on the negotiation in peer review in an EFL context. They found that peer revision is a viable alternative to teacher-fronted classes in which a large number of students cause class management problem for the teacher. By involving learners in the process of negotiation, EFL writing teachers can make their students take responsibility for their own learning. Giving and receiving feedback provide opportunities for learners to practice critical argumentation which is not necessarily limited to writing classes. Exchanging feedback can also increase learners' tolerance as they listen to their peers.

Srichanyachon (2011) conducted a comparative study on the three revision methods, self-revision, peer revision, and teacher revision, in EFL writing in Bangkok University. The students were asked to do a writing task after which the data were collected from a peer response sheet, and a semi structured interview. In order to show differences among the three methods, error numbers and error types identified in the revision stages were compared. The findings indicated that the self-revision method was the least useful for leading to successful revision. On the contrary, the teacher revision method played a crucial role in EFL students' revision processes because it encouraged them to write more carefully and correctly. The peer revision method provided opportunities for students to see new ideas, and gain more motivation to improve their writing. He also found that peer revision could be used as a useful adjunct to teacher revision.

Attan and Khalidi (2015) investigated the success of peer revision as a tool for learners' writing improvement. They found that writers felt very comfortable with peers' comments on their writing and this led to gradual development in their knowledge, skills, and language related to the topics. Similarly, Ketabi and Torabi (2013) investigated the effectiveness of feedback in the development of EFL learners' writing ability. Peer revision in the form of comments and suggestions given by the students on each other's draft was seen to be effective. They also found that revision based on peer feedback reinforced the idea that students wrote for real audience other than the teacher.

Salih and Rahman (2013) investigated the effect of peer revision on L2 students' writing. Sixteen L2 students at a Malaysian university participated in five peer revision sessions. The data showed that the main focus of peer responses was the clarity of feedback. The researchers also pointed out that peer revision was an alternative feedback delivery system in L2 writing and could provide teachers with great perspectives about the L2 students' language and writing knowledge. Moreover, the results showed that

all of student writers specified grammar as the main area for the reviewer to respond to.

In their investigation of the effects of peer feedback on Turkish EFL students' writing anxiety and perceptions towards it, Yastibas and Yastibas (2015) learned that students had positive perceptions about peer feedback because there were decreased anxiety and increased confidence in writing in the study subject. They concluded interaction and collaboration made the learning environment less stressful as students were able to learn from each other. Thus, students considered peer feedback educational and supportive.

2.1. Benefits of Peer Revision for the Reviewer

When students engage in peer feedback, they can learn more about writing and revision by reading other's drafts critically and their awareness of what makes writing successful and effective can be increased and, finally they automatically become proficient writers (Maarof, Yamat, & Lili, 2011). Likewise, Teo (2006) believes that even if two students who are beginners in learning English are paired together, they can still support and scaffold each other's learning. Therefore, both the recipient and sender of peer feedback may benefit from peer review activities.

In another study, Cho and Cho (2011) analyzed the quality of writing of 87 college students who used and gave feedback to their peers. They found that reviewers' peer feedback activities improved their own writing quality. When learners were asked to review their peers' draft critically, they could detect, diagnose, and remedy problems in their own writing.

Lei (2012) examined different types of peer feedback and their relations to student writing performance and writing improvement in a writing class in China. In his study, Lei (2012) categorized peer feedback into four types regarding its usefulness. The results of his study revealed that there was no significant correlation between student writing improvement and the feedback they were provided. However, most students were able to give feedback in an effective and constructive way. It was also found that students with better writing performance had the ability to provide more helpful peer feedback. Moreover, the researcher concluded that whatever the attitudes were towards peer feedback (e. g., positive, partially accepted or not-accepted), students might improve their second writing.

2.2. Peer Feedback and Teacher Feedback

Walker (2009) stated that feedback should be used by students and it can become usable by students if they reduce the gap in their performance and look beyond the assignment just submitted to future work. Lin, Liu, and Yusan (2001) pointed out that specific peer feedback and critical peer feedback may contribute to the students writing improvement.

Plusky and Wilson (2004) conducted a quasi-experimental study to compare three methods of teaching writing. They stated that peer feedback helped students become competent and proficient writers. Moreover, they found that most students view peer feedback as effective as the instructors'.

By utilizing peer feedback, students' motivation for having the sense of self-responsibility can increase. Peer feedback also has a positive effect on the self-confidence of learners (Topping, 2000). Kurt and Atay (2007) maintain that when students observe their peers making mistakes similar to the mistakes they make, or see their peers going through the same difficulties, they are relieved and their apprehension of being judged by others decreases and hence, their confidence is boosted

The peers can discuss the feedback provided and question it. But if teachers provide the feedback, students incorporate it into their writing without questioning. Therefore, peer feedback gives students a chance of improving their critical thinking abilities in a learner-centered and non-threatening classroom atmosphere (Rollinson, 2005). Although peer revision can be effective, there are some problems related to its implementation.

The main issue is that peers are not the most trustworthy experts as opposed to teachers. As a result, the accuracy of peer feedback could vary. Peer feedback may be correct, completely correct or misleading. Furthermore, the peer who provides feedback is not usually considered a "knowledge authority" by the students (Hanrahan & Isaacs, 2001; Strijbos, Narciss, & Dunnebier, 2010).

Peterson and Irving's (2008) study showed that students had negative attitude towards peer feedback and believed it is unhelpful because friends may provide comments to each other, which are too positive. Therefore, students' ability or expertise to offer useful feedback has been questioned.

Zhao (2010) conducted a study to distinguish learners' use of peer and teacher feedback from learners' understanding of peer and teacher feedback. He wanted to figure out which type of written feedback, peer or teacher, the students would use more frequently in their revision. He concluded that the students integrated more teacher feedback than peer feedback in their drafts. However, they could understand a large part of peer feedback more easily than teacher feedback. This is due to the fact that students trusted teacher feedback more than peer feedback and incorporated it into their drafts without full understanding. While using peer feedback, there is L1 which facilitated mutual understanding in peer interaction. Students' culture and the country in which they are learning English also have a key role in the efficiency of peer revision.

Sometimes students' attitude towards teachers' commentary style is the reason for unsuccessful response to teacher feedback. Accordingly, Goldstein (2004, p. 71) identified several reasons for unsuccessful response to teacher feedback at the time of revision:

1. Lacking the willingness to critically examine one's point of view,
2. Feeling that the teacher feedback is incorrect,
3. Lacking the content knowledge to do the revision,
4. Lacking the time to do revisions,
5. Feeling that the feedback is not reasonable,
6. Lacking the motivation to revise,
7. Being resistant to revision suggestions,
8. Feeling distrustful of teacher's content knowledge,
9. Mismatches between the teachers' responding behavior and the students' needs and desire.

Kamimura (2006) explored the effectiveness of peer feedback in Japanese EFL university student writing at different levels of English proficiency. In the study, the students received training in peer feedback, and exchanged comments with peers. The findings revealed that peer feedback positively affected the overall quality of both high and low-proficient Japanese university EFL students' writing. However, in terms of fluency, peer feedback had no significant effect on both high-and low-proficient students' writing performance. The results also showed that peer comments led to great improvement in the rewrites provided by the students. Moreover, most of the peer comments were meaning-based.

Wu's (2006) study explored EFL adult learners' reaction to peer revision and teacher feedback in an EFL composition class. The findings revealed that some L2 students could not respond to the teacher feedback properly due to their low English competence. In addition, peer revision is an effective tool that can provide students with social interaction, learning collaboration, and negotiation of meaning. The researcher concluded that on the one hand, the teacher feedback could lead to both positive and negative revisions, depending on the attitude and proficiency level of the learners. On the other hand, peer revision did not contribute to a linguistic function to produce meaningful and constructive comments but served as a pragmatic function to give complimentary praise or blessing.

Numerous studies have been conducted to explore different factors that may influence the effectiveness of feedback in L2 grammar learning. For example, Alkia and Ghazali (2015) investigated the effects of teacher and peer feedback on the grammatical accuracy in writing among the L2 learners. The results of their study showed that both types of feedback positively influenced L2 writing. In addition, they concluded that peer feedback can be

as effective as teacher feedback in promoting overall writing quality. However, teacher feedback is superior to peer feedback in dealing with grammatical accuracy.

Jalalifarahani and Azizi (2012) tried to figure out if two kinds of feedback (teacher vs. peer) have positive effects on grammatical accuracy of high vs. low-proficiency Iranian EFL learners' writing. They also aimed to investigate students' attitude towards these two types of feedback. Accordingly, they divided the participants into four groups based on the kind of feedback (peer vs. teacher) they would receive on their initial writing tasks. The findings revealed that feedback plays a vital role in the development of Iranian EFL writing. The teacher feedback led to improvement in formal accuracy of the final product, while the peer feedback was not useful in dealing with grammatical accuracy due to the participants' inadequate grammar knowledge. Therefore, for grammatical errors, the teacher feedback was found to be much more effective than the peer feedback. In addition, the researchers found that the teacher feedback was more useful for low proficiency learners than high proficiency ones in correcting grammatical mistakes. Although the peer feedback did not influence grammatical accuracy, it was found to be greatly useful in enhancing the overall writing quality of Iranian EFL student writers.

2.3. Relative Clause

The acquisition of relative clauses has been the focus of numerous studies over the past thirty years (Diessel, & Tomasello, 2005). Abdolmanafi and Rezaee (2012) defined relative clause as a noun-modifying construction which leads to the generation of a higher level noun phrase. According to Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), relative clause is a "type of complex postnominal adjectival modifier that is used in both written and spoken English, and gives a means to encode complex adjectival modifiers that are easier to produce than complex attributive structures and that are less wordy than two independent clauses" (p. 571). Diessel and Tomasello (2005) believed that relative clauses are difficult to process if they are different from the canonical word order pattern of simple intransitive clause.

Several studies have indicated that the structural differences between first and second languages often pose problems in the process of acquiring an L2 complex structure. For example, Shaheen (2013), and Zagood and Juma (2012) researched the effect of cross-linguistic transfer between Arabic and English on the acquisition of L2 relative clauses. They showed that Arab adult EFL learners widely committed errors at the time of forming relative

According to Alroudhan (2015), there is a need to conduct studies to find out the causes of such problems that prevent learners from being able to master the complex structures of the English language such as relative

clauses. He conducted a research study to unravel the factors influencing the acquisition of English restrictive relative clauses by Arab adult EFL learners. His study revealed that as learners were learning English relative clauses, the phenomena of L1 negative transfer occurred.

Alotaibi (2016) examined the learnability of English relative clauses. In his study, he tested the extent to which Kuwaiti EFL learners understand English relative clause structures through measuring their ability to produce this structure. In this regard, the students were required to perform a sentence combination task to measure their ability in producing correct English relative clauses. The results showed that Kuwaiti EFL learners could not fully understand the formation rules of relative clauses in English. The analysis of errors revealed that errors made by the students were mostly deletion of the relative pronouns, use of wrong relative pronouns, repetitive use of resumptive pronouns, passivisation of the relative clause, and problems with the indirect object and genitive relative clauses.

Abdolmanafi and Rahmani (2012) investigated the learnability of relative clauses by EFL Persian learners. Their findings supported Sadighi's (1994) findings that confirmed perceptual difficulty of relative clauses. Subject relative clauses formed on objects resulted in fewer errors since they do not involve interruption or word order re-arrangement.

Emphasizing the importance of relative clause acquisition, Farsi and Zarei (2013) conducted a contrastive analysis of English and Persian. They tried to find the extent to which Iranian students make errors when they use English relative clauses. The results showed that errors made by students were of multiple types. For example, students had difficulty distinguishing between restrictive and non-restrictive clauses in addition to their problems in the selection of relative clauses. In sum, some errors resulted from L1 transfer, while other major errors were interlingual errors.

Bahrami (2013) conducted a comparative investigation of task-based activities versus teacher-focused activities on learning relative clauses by Iranian EFL learners. In her study, she divided participants into three homogeneous groups, and administered a pretest followed by treatment. Students of the two experimental groups were given task sheets which provided the students with the necessary information regarding relative clauses and relative pronouns. The results revealed when students participated in group-work to learn relative clauses, they were enthusiastic and developed their knowledge of relative clauses effectively. Thus, students taking part in-group work outperformed those participating in teacher-focused activities.

By looking carefully at the studies reviewed above, it becomes clear that there are few studies investigating the effectiveness of peer and teacher

feedback in production and comprehension of relative clauses. For this reason this study aimed to explore if peer revision influences production and comprehension of relative clauses in Iranian EFL writing performance. It is also attempted to compare peer revision and teacher revision. The present study seeks to find the answer to the following questions:

1. Is there any significant difference between the effect of peer revision and teacher revision on the EFL learners' comprehension of relative clauses while controlling for their pretest?

2. Is there any significant difference between the effect of peer revision and teacher revision on the EFL learners' production of relative clause while controlling for their pretest?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants of the study were initially 120 intermediate EFL students at Imam Khomeini International University (IKIU) and Kharazmi University. They ranged in age from 18 to 28. To make sure the students were homogeneous and at the same level of proficiency, Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP) was administered. 109 students were included in the study and 11 students were excluded. The participants were divided into two experimental groups (79 students) and one control group (30 students). The participants were all native speakers of Persian.

3.2. Instruments

Two instruments were used during the treatment sessions. Guidance sheets which were distributed among the learners containing the correct forms of relative clause sentences and a sheet containing relative clause exercises given to the students who were asked to do the exercises. This investigation also made use of three assessment tools.

3.2.1. Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP)

The standardized Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP) including items on grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension was used to homogenize the participants. This multiple-choice test contained 20 grammar, 20 vocabulary, and 10 reading comprehension items. It took the students approximately 40 minutes to complete it.

MTELP consists of 100 items. Unfortunately, 50 items, the odd numbers, of MTELP were used in this study due to lack of time available. Cronbach's alpha was used to examine the internal consistency of MTELP.

Table 1
Reliability Statistics of MTELP

N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
50	.77

Ideally, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of a scale should be above .7 (Pallant, 2011). As seen in Table 1, and the test can be considered reliable.

3.2.2. Pretest

The pretest included two parts and each part consisted of 18 items. The first part measured the extent to which students were able to comprehend relative clause structures properly. The second part determined the extent to which the students were able to produce the correct form of relative clause structures. The items were representative of the six types of relative clauses determined by Keena and Comire (1977).

3.2.3. Posttest

An attempt was made to develop the posttest similar to the pretest. Like the pretest, the posttest included 36 items. The first part measured the extent of correct relative clauses comprehended by the students. The second part was constructed to measure the extent to which the students could produce relative clauses correctly. In addition, like the pretest, the posttest consisted of the six types of relative clauses. Both tests followed strikingly similar patterns.

3.3. Procedure

The design used in this study was pretest-posttest-control group. During the first phase of the study, the MTELP test was administered to the students in one testing session. The allocated time was about 40 minutes. The students were ensured that the results would not influence their final scores. 109 out of 120 participants whose scores were within 1 standard deviation from the mean were kept and 11 participants were excluded from the study. The first experimental group classified as group A consisted of 35 students and was provided with teacher revision on their writings, the second experimental group classified as group B comprised of 44 students and received peer revision on their writings, and the control group consisting of 30 participants received no treatment. They went on with the conventional method of the class procedure. In the second testing session, the researchers administered the pretest to the students. They were requested to carefully read the 36 items on the test and answer them. It took the students about 30 minutes to answer the items.

The third phase of this study was the treatment. Group B was given the exercise sheets. The instruction was thoroughly explained to the students.

First, the students were asked to do the exercises by themselves. It took the students 30 minutes to do the exercises. When the students completed the task, they were asked to exchange their first drafts with their peers who were sitting next to them. Then, the guidance sheets containing the examples of correct forms of relative clauses were distributed to each of them. The students were required to read the guidance sheet within 15 minutes. Then the students were requested to read their peer's drafts precisely and put comments on them. After writing comments on their peers' drafts, each student got his/her own draft and revised their drafts based on their peers' comments. The students were also allowed to negotiate with their peers in either English or Persian during peer revision sessions. The students were also reminded that they did not need follow all peer reviewer's comments; however, they were obligated to read them and consider them.

In Group A, the students were given the exercise sheets similar to those given to group B. After doing the exercises on the paper, the students handed their papers over to the teacher and it was the teacher who read the students' drafts and put comments on them. The teacher returned the students' paper and the students were asked to take the papers home and revise their drafts based on the comments given by the teacher. The teacher asked the students to bring their revised texts the next week. All the six types of relative clauses were practiced in the two groups and the treatment sessions lasted for eight sessions. Meanwhile, the students in the control group did not receive any instructions and revisions regarding the relative clauses

The last phase was carried out and the posttest was administered to all the groups. They were requested to precisely read the 36 items on the test and answer them. It took the students about 30 minutes to answer the items.

Two experienced teachers were asked to score the production tests as assessing the production of RCs needed to be done with great delicacy. If the students correctly produced the sentences, they were given one point for each item. In addition, the students did not lose any point for incorrect spelling.

3.4. Data Analysis

The analysis of covariance was utilized to test the main and interaction effects of categorical variables (treatments) on a continuous dependent variable (posttest), controlling for the effects of another continuous variable (pretest), which may co-vary with the dependent variable.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

In the present study, MTELP was used as a criterion to measure overall language proficiency of the language learners. In addition, the pretest and posttest were utilized to assess the students' comprehension and production on six types of RCs. The descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation on MTELP, pretest, and posttest are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of MTELP, the Pretest, and Posttest Measuring Comprehension and Production of RCs

	N	MTELP		Pretest comprehension		Posttest comprehension		Pretest production		Posttest production	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Group A	35	21.77	5.52	6.49	4.17	7.1	3.93	6.8	3.13	7.8	2.9
Group B	44	20.74	7.65	7.9	4.92	9.9	4.32	6.91	3.92	9.2	3.3
Group C	30	22.8	5.05	6.9	2.1	6.9	2.1	7.93	1.65	8.0	1.6

As seen in Table 2, in comparison to groups A and C, group B had the largest standard deviation (7.65) on MTELP test, so the most heterogeneous performance on MTELP was seen in group B. The closest value to the mean of the data set belonged to group C. It indicates that students' scores in group C were closer to the mean than the ones in groups A and B. Also, the best performance belonged to group C, then group A and after that group B.

On the pretest and posttest used to measure the comprehension of RCs, the largest standard deviation belonged to group B, and group C's scores were mostly clustered around the mean in comparison to the other groups. With regard to the mean, group B shows the highest improvement from the pretest to the posttest (2 points). The students' scores improved slightly in group A after the treatment (from 6.49 to 7.1). The scores in the control group did not undergo any changes.

On the pretest which assessed the production of RCs, group B's standard deviation was the largest one. Similarly, on the posttest, group B's scores were farther away from the mean than group A and group C's. The improvement of the students' score from the pretest to the posttest was approximately the same for groups A and B. In Table 2, above, the data show that group C had the smallest amount of standard deviation meaning and that group C is more homogeneous than groups A and B.

4.1.1. Peer Revision vs. Teacher Revision in The Comprehension of RCs

The first research question of the present study was aimed at finding

whether there is any significant difference between the effect of peer revision and teacher revision on the EFL learners' comprehension of relative clauses while controlling for their pretest. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was run to answer this research question.

Preliminary checks were conducted to ensure that there was no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, homogeneity of regression slopes, and reliable measurement of the covariate. ANCOVA was run to explore the differences among the treatment groups and the control group. The independent variable was the type of intervention (peer revision, teacher revision and control), and the dependent variable consisted of scores on the comprehension test of RCs administered after the intervention was completed. The participants' scores on the pre-intervention administration of the comprehension test were used as the covariate in this study. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

The Results of One-way ANCOVA: Test of between Subject Effects for Comprehension Posttest

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	143.730[a]	3	478.24	207.60	.000	.095
Intercept	132.785	1	132.78	57.12	.000	.104
Pretest	1374.571	1	1374.57	595.96	.123	.085
Group	161.011	2	80.50	34.22	.000	.731
Error	242.377	106	2.73			
Total	1059.000	109				
Corrected Total	1676.107	108				

a. R Squared = .888 (Adjusted R Squared = .885)

The Sig. value of the independent variable (group) is less than .05, which illustrates the groups differ significantly. Therefore, there is a significant difference in the relative clause test scores for the participants in the teacher revision, peer revision, and control group, after controlling for scores on the relative clause pretest administered prior to the intervention ($F_{(2,\ 106)}= 34.22$, p $<$ .0005). The effect size which is presented by the corresponding partial eta squared value should also be considered. This value shows that how much of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable. The value in this case is .73 (a high effect size according to Cohen's (1988) guideline). It can be said that 73 percent of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variable. The other piece of information that can be obtained from Table 3 is the influence of the covariate (the pretest).   In this case the sig. value

corresponding to the covariate is .12 (p>.05). Thus the covariate is not significant.

Since there is a statistically significant difference between the adjusted means, it can be realized where the differences lie by looking at Table 4 labeled pairwise comparisons. There is a significant difference between group 1 (teacher revision treatment) and group 2 (peer revision treatment). Groups 1 and 3 (no treatment) also differ significantly. Moreover, there is a remarkable difference between group 2 and 3.

Table 4
Pairwise Comparisons for RC Comprehension

(I) group	(J) group	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.[b]	95% Confidence Interval for Difference[b]	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1.00	2.00	-2.082[*]	.298	.000	-1.981	-.800
	3.00	.769[*]	.328	.021	.117	1.418
2.00	3.00	2.852[*]	.309	.000	1.545	2.771

To illustrate the mean differences, the means plot was used. As seen in Figure 1 there is a noticeable difference between the groups. The highest amount of mean is attributed to group B and the lowest one belonged to group C.
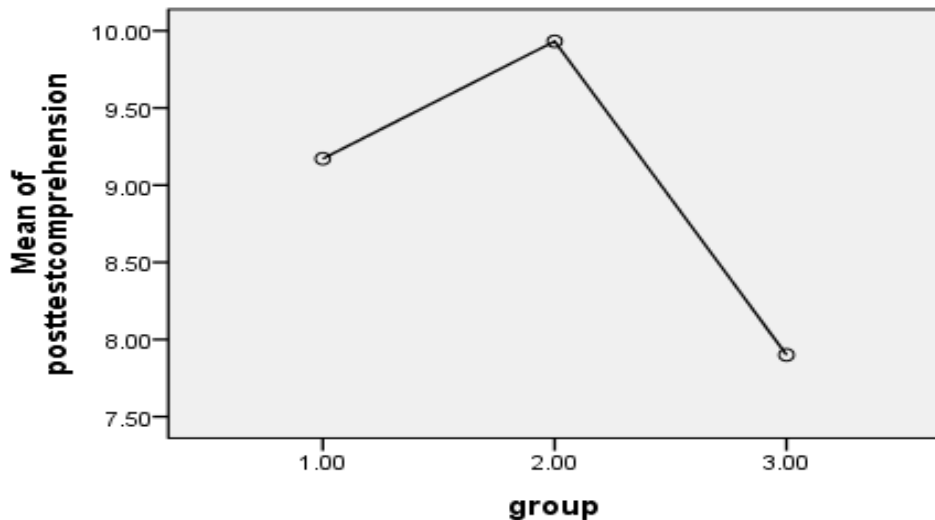

Figure 1. Means Plot Representing the Means for the Three Groups in the Comprehension Post-test

4.1.2. Peer Revision vs. Teacher Revision in the Production of RCs

The second research question of the present study was aimed at finding whether there is any significant difference between the effect of peer revision and teacher revision on the EFL learners' production of relative clauses while controlling for their pretest. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was run to answer this research question.

Preliminary checks were conducted to ensure that there was no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, homogeneity of regression slopes, and reliable measurement of the covariate. ANCOVA was run to explore the differences among the treatment groups and the control group. The independent variable was the type of intervention (peer revision, teacher revision and control), and the dependent variable consisted of scores on the production test of RCs administered after the intervention was completed. The participants' scores on the pre-intervention administration of the production test were used as the covariate in this study. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

The Results of One-way ANCOVA: Test of Between-subjects Effects for Production Posttest

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	726.347[a]	3	242.116	56.674	.000	.129
Intercept	128.415	1	128.415	28.572	.000	.117
Pretest	671.990	1	671.990	156.194	.114	.118
Group	168.890	2	84.945	19.223	.000	.653
Error	451.929	106	4.777			
Total	9971.000	109				
Corrected Total	1177.967	108				

a. R Squared = .779 (Adjusted R Squared = .773)

After adjusting for pre-intervention scores, there was a significant difference between the three groups on post-intervention scores on RC production [$F_{(2, 106)}$ = 19.22, P< .0005]. There is not a strong relationship between the pre-intervention and post-intervention scores on RC production test, as indicated by a partial eta squared value of .11. The effect size illustrates that how much of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable. The value in this case is .65 (a high effect size according to Cohen's (1988) guideline). In other words, 65 percent of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent

variable. The sig. value corresponding to the covariate is .11 (which actually is greater than .05). Thus the covariate is not significant.

After knowing that there is a statistically significant difference between the adjusted means, it can be realized where the differences lie by looking at Table 6 labeled pairwise comparisons. There is no significant difference between group 1 (teacher revision treatment) and group 2 (peer treatment). Group 1 (teacher revision treatment) and group 3 (no treatment) differ significantly. Moreover, there is a noticeable difference between group 2 and 3 on the production of relative clause structures.

Table 6

Pairwise Comparisons for RC Production

Dependent Variable: posttest production

(I) group	(J) group	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.[b]	95% Confidence Interval for Difference[b]	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1.00	2.00	-2.024*	.302	.059	-1.173	.023
	3.00	.989*	.332	.006	.267	1.582
2.00	3.00	3.014*	.317	.000	.872	2.127

Means plot is also provided (Figure 2) to aid the visualization of the means. Compared to groups A and C, group B has the largest amount of mean. Moreover, the smallest amount of mean is attributed to group 3.
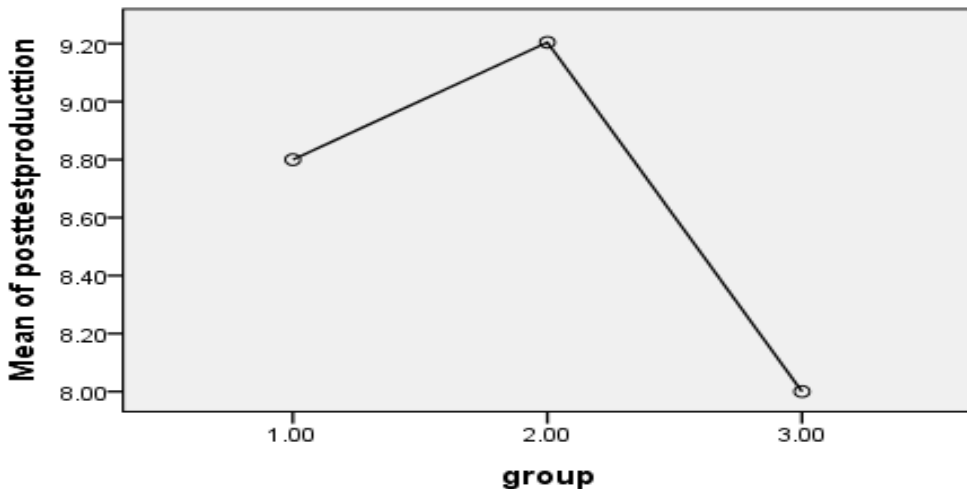

Figure 2. Means Plot Representing the Means for the Three Groups in the Production Posttest

4.2. Discussion

The present study set out to conduct a comparative investigation of peer revision versus teacher revision on the production and comprehension of Relative Clauses (RC) in Iranian EFL students' writing performance.

By looking at the results, it can be seen that the first finding of this study is related to the remarkable difference between group A (teacher revision treatment) and group B (peer revision treatment) on comprehension of RCs, whereas no significant difference was seen between group A and group B in the production of RCs. Moreover, groups B and C (no treatment) differed significantly in both comprehension and production of RCs. In addition, there was a significant difference between group A and group C in comprehension as well as production of RCs.

The second finding of the present study was that group B outperformed group A and group C in comprehension and production of RCs. That is, group B's means, which were 7.9 and 6.9 in comprehension and production tests, respectively, before the intervention, increased and reached 9.9 and 9.2 after the intervention. Accordingly, peer revision was found to be more efficient than teacher revision in helping the students to comprehend and produce RCs.

In line with this study, Mia, Badger, and Zhen (2006) found that learners who are encouraged to practice peer revision are able to incorporate more meaning change revisions into their writing than learners who use teacher feedback to revise their writing. Teacher-initiated revisions are less successful than peer-initiated revisions. This is due to the fact that negotiation of meaning during receiving and giving peer feedback helps students to increase mutual understanding and reduces misinterpretation and miscommunication. Using teacher feedback reduces self-correction because students believe that the teacher addresses all their mistakes and further correction is not needed.

This finding is accounted for by Maarof, Yamat, and Lili's (2011) study according to which when students engage in peer revision, they can learn more about writing and revision by critically reading others' drafts and their awareness of what makes writing successful and effective can be increased, and finally they automatically become proficient writers.

The results accord with Yarrow and Topping's (2001) study which indicated peer revision has a key role in increased engagement and time spent on-task, immediacy and individualization of help, goal specification, explanation, development, and reinforcement. In accordance with this study, Bijami, Kashef, and Sharifi Nejad's (2013) study proved that peer revision is regarded as an important dominant tool in developing the process of learning

English writing as well as a social activity. Moreover, using peer revision in writing classes is effective for its cognitive and social benefits. According to Bahrami (2013), when students participate in group work to learn RCs, they are enthusiastic and can develop their knowledge of RCs effectively. Thus students taking part in group work outperform those participating in teacher-focused activities.

In line with Salih and Rahman (2013), this study found that peer revision is an alternative feedback delivery system in L2 writing and supplies teachers with great perspectives about L2 students' language and writing knowledge. Moreover, all of student writers can specify grammar as the main area for the reviewer to respond to.

Mowlaie and Maftoon's (2015) study, in accordance with this study, proved that peer revision is a viable alternative to teacher-fronted classes in which a large number of students cause class management problem for the teacher. By involving learners in the process of negotiation, EFL writing teachers can make their students take responsibility for their own learning. Giving and receiving feedback provide opportunities for learners to practice critical argumentation which is not necessarily limited to writing classes. In this regard, Wakabayashi (2013) pointed out that through peer revision, learners are involved in critical evaluation of peer text to exchange help for revision.

In this study peer revision showed to have more efficacy than teacher revision. The results, however, do not accord with Plusky and Wilson's (2004) study, which indicated that teacher revision can be as effective as peer revision. Also, Saito and Fujita (2004) proved that teacher and peers review and rate students' writing in broadly similar ways. However, peer feedback is more likely to contribute to the development of students' writing. This finding is accounted for by Akiah and Ghazali's (2015) study, according to which peer and teacher revision influence L2 writing positively, but they found teacher revision is superior to peer revision in dealing with grammatical accuracy. Jalalifarahani and Azizi (2012) also found that peer feedback is not as effective as teacher feedback and teacher feedback influences grammatical accuracy improvement more positively than peer feedback. Their study also revealed that the learners see teacher feedback as a figure of authority guaranteed quality.

Mia, Badger, and Zhen's (2006) study also showed that the students use teacher and peer feedback to improve their writing, but teacher feedback is more likely to be adopted by the students. As a result, it contributes to greater improvement in the writing. However, the opposite results came up in this study in which the peer revision group made more progress than the teacher revision group.

It was also found that group A (teacher revision) performed better than group C (no revision) on both comprehension and production of RCs. The results of this study showed that teacher feedback can be effective on both comprehension and production of RCs in Iranian EFL students' writing performance. The findings of this study are in line with Goldstein's (2004) study which proved that teacher feedback is both desirable and helpful. The results also accord with Ferris, Pezone, Tade, and Tinti's (1997) study, which indicated that teacher feedback provides opportunity for students to gain a level of individualized attention. It also provides opportunity for students to have one-on-one communication that is rarely possible in the day to day operations of a class. It has a key role in motivating and encouraging students.

5. Conclusion and Implications

This study aimed to investigate the comparative effect of peer revision versus teacher revision on the production and comprehension of RCs in Iranian EFL students' writing performance. Drawing on the data collected from the language learners' scores in the pretest and post-test, analysis of covariance was used which displayed that the peer revision group performed better than the teacher revision and control groups in the comprehension of RCs. In the production of RCs, the difference between the teacher revision group and the peer revision group was not statistically significant. However, peer revision led to more improvement in production of RCs than teacher revision. Further, the findings showed that the teacher revision group outperformed the control group that did not receive any treatment. The results of the study also revealed that teacher revision like peer revision helped language learners improve their comprehension as well as production of RCs. However, the peer revision group had more improvement in comprehending and producing RCs.

The results showed that the students' involvement in the process of negotiation, which provided opportunities for them to practice critical argumentation, was very effective. During peer revision, the learners actively participated in doing their writing task, enjoyed an authentic communication, and were provided with non-judgmental environment. In addition, the students thoroughly followed a number of steps which led to their development in comprehending RCs. For example, the students were asked to give sufficient information to pinpoint the area to which they refer, have a clear idea of what is said, time their comments appropriately, check their response, and tell what they mean directly.

The results also indicated that both peer and teacher revision had positive effects on the comprehension of RCs. In this regard, Cheong (2007) proved that integration of form-focused instruction with communicative

activities such as peer revision has positive effects on learners' comprehension of RCs. Jafarigohar, Jahangiri, and Soleimani's (2015) findings also showed that students provided with implicit instruction outperform those provided with explicit instruction. They also added that implicit instruction has a positive effect on the acquisition of grammar. Complex grammatical phenomena such as RC constructions can be made more accessible to ESL/EFL learners when they are involved in implicit instructional activities such as group work activities which require them to interact with each other.

This study also showed that peer revision which is a practical alternative to teacher-fronted classes can be utilized by the teachers to gain great perspective about Iranian EFL students' writing, and encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. Moreover, peer revision can lead to reduction in teachers' workload.

The findings of the present study might yield pedagogical implications for the area of academic research regarding the Iranian English learners' comprehension and production of RCs. The findings of the present investigation may provide teachers and curriculum designers with an insight to design more appropriate instructions for the needs of language learners who tend to make progress in different types of RCs. Language learners may understand that they can benefit from both peer revision and teacher revision to improve their comprehension and production of RCs. Also, the results of this study may help policy makers to pay more attention to peer revision alongside teacher revision as advantageous strategies in comprehending and producing RCs.

Further research can be done to examine the performance of language learners on different aspects of writing. Further studies can provide both types of quantitative and qualitative data for achieving more robust results by conducting interviews with the language learners to take into account their attitudes towards these strategies (teacher revision and peer revision). Further research can also be done to compare monolingual learners with bilingual learners in comprehending and producing RCs.

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