

A Single or Separate Entities? A Genre-Based Investigation Into the Correspondence Between L1 and L2 Writing Skills

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Abstract—Reflecting one of the state-of-the-art issues in SLA, this study aimed at inspecting the correspondence between Persian and English writing skills to see whether or not they emerged from a single entity called multi-competence (Cook, 1991, 2016). Besides, the impact of genre on Persian and English writing skills was examined to explore if the skills and their possible source were genre-sensitive or not. In so doing, 50 MA TEFL students, at the intermediate level of language proficiency, were selected through Oxford quick placement test. Each student wrote down four argumentative and descriptive compositions: two in Persian and two in English. Then the compositions were evaluated based on the criteria of IELTS task 2 writing scoring scale. To analyze the obtained data, Pearson product-moment correlations and one-way repeated measures ANOVAs were employed. The findings illustrated that there were significant correlations between Persian and English argumentative and descriptive compositions, which supported the possible existence of the single entity, multi-competence. The findings also displayed that genre affected the participants' L1 and L2 writing skills, implying that the skills and their source, multi-competence, were possibly influenced by genre. Based on the findings, it is recommended that L1 writing instruction be included in L2 writing courses as they are inter-dependent and can help each other's amelioration. It is also suggested that a genre-based approach be utilized in L2 writing instruction to enhance the students' awareness over the building blocks of each genre.

Index Terms—correspondence, genre, L1 and L2 writing skills, multi-competence, single entity

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing skill has been of paramount importance in recent decades because it has enabled people to achieve most of their professional and academic goals (Altınmakas & Bayyurt, 2019). University students, specifically, are the ones who need to have a high-quality writing skill to manage their assignments for academic courses (Shabani et al., 2016). Likewise, for the students who are studying TEFL, writing is a crucial skill that needs to be learned well due to the significant role it plays to fulfil course objectives (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019). Nonetheless, this skill has been considered as a burdensome one for decades. It is even more demanding in L2 because second language learners need to develop L2 linguistic features and L2 writing expertise simultaneously (Defazio et al., 2010). As a result, many scholars in the field have embarked on providing theories to help make writing less challenging.

A. Theoretical Panaceas to the Demanding Nature of Writing Skill

1. Multi-competence

Some theories have been proposed to examine the correspondence between L1 and L2 and their major skills to recommend panaceas to the burdensome nature of writing skill. A prevalent theory in the field of SLA was called separationism that denied any relationships between L1 and L2 and their skills (Dulay & Burt, as cited in Cook, 2003). In the course of time, however, some anti-separationist theories have emerged through within-subject comparisons of skills in more than one language (Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2016). One of those prominent theories was Cook's (1991, 2016) multi-competence. It was on the possible correspondence between mother tongue and second language in bilinguals' minds which could lead to the improvement of both L1 and L2 and facilitate their skills. Cook (2003, 2012,

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2016) modified the definition of multi-competence several times to make it as all-inclusive as possible. In his latest modification, Cook (2016, p.1) defined multi-competence as “the overall system of a mind or a community that uses more than one language.” In other words, he viewed languages as different representations of a reservoir inside bilinguals’ brains, which shared many similarities. According to this theory, the existence of an acquired L1 skill, in L2 learners’ brains, will pave the way for learning the same skill in L2 or vice versa.

2. Genre-Based Approach

Aside from multi-competence, there was another remarkable theory called genre-based approach that was directly related to writing skill and its predicament-like nature. It emphasized focusing on the features of each genre, while instructing writing, in order to make learners aware of the building blocks of each genre. This approach encouraged the technique of awareness-raising to facilitate the irksome task of writing. This theory was supported by many scholars and they agreed on its paramount importance to improve writing skill (Dirgeyasa, 2016; Firkins et al., 2007; Rezvani & Saeidi, 2019). In a context in which genre-based approaches are employed, the learners might use that acquired knowledge of genre in one language to write a better composition in another language (Cummins, 2000). In other words, the explicit instruction of the features of genres might facilitate learning transfer and make a correlational bridge between L1 and L2 writing skills, which would not otherwise occur easily (Rounsaville, 2012). As Devitt (2007) pointed out, having received genre-based instruction, L2 writers would benefit from a genre repertoire while facing a pretty new genre. That is to say, to manage a new writing task, they would search through their prior knowledge to transfer the appropriate pieces to the new context. Hence, genre-based instruction is a method of high values that has practically indicated the importance of the variable of genre in the past few decades (Casan-Pitarch, 2017).

B. Practical Background

1. The Correspondence between L1 and L2 Writing Skills

“Writing in the academy has assumed huge importance in recent years as countless students and academics around the world must now gain fluency in the conventions of academic writing in English to understand their disciplines, to establish their careers, or to successfully navigate their learning” (Hyland, 2013, p.54). Hence, it has become the focus of a plethora of investigations based on which the researchers in the field could recommend remedies to the challenging nature of L2 writing. The researchers aimed at different aspects of the skill, such as the correspondence between L1 and L2 writing skills. Kim et al. (2020), for example, carried out a study on South Korean undergraduate students, and a part of their findings revealed that the participants’ L2 writing was moderately associated with their L1 writing regarding the elements such as task completion, lexical choice, coherence, syntactic variety, organization, and proper way of explaining and exemplifying. Based on their findings, they claimed that L1 use might be constructive in second language writing; however, the level of L2 vocabulary knowledge was found to be a factor affecting the amount of correspondence. In addition, Ströbel et al. (2020) investigated L1 and L2 academic essays written by German participants at the advanced level of English proficiency. Their research revealed significant correspondence between L1 and L2 writing complexity. That is to say, the participants with higher complexity in L1 writing showed higher complexity in L2 writing, suggesting the existence of a single repertoire from which both languages and their skills emerged.

To get into more details, Mirahmadi (2011) and Javadi-Safa et al. (2013) scrutinized Iranian EFL students’ Persian and English essays and revealed that Persian and English writing skills were significantly inter-dependent concerning the components of content, organization, vocabulary, and language use. In a similar vein, Moulavi Nafchi et al. (2014) discovered that there were high correlations between Persian and English essays regarding the elements of organization, content, and language use. Their investigations denoted that both L1 and L2 writing skills and their components ought to be taken into account to improve L2 writing skill. However, being after only the correspondence between L1 and L2 writing skills was not enough to help abate the storm L2 learners experienced while writing in L2. Hence, genre-based approaches towards L2 writing skill were taken into account to help reduce the hardships L2 learners encountered while writing a composition in L2.

2. Genre and Writing Skill

To check the merits of genre-based approach towards writing skill, Thongchalerm and Jarunthawatchai (2020) conducted a study on Thai undergraduate students. As they stated, L2 writing was the most critical problem that the participants ever experienced; however, they improved significantly regarding the linguistic features of writing skill due to the genre-based instruction they received. On the pros of genre-based approach, Huang and Zhang (2019) also indicated that this approach towards L2 writing instruction caused improvements in their Chinese participants’ writing performance in terms of language use, mechanics, i.e., content, organization, and vocabulary. Another piece of research conducted in the same context as the present study, i.e., Iran, was by Rezvani and Saeidi (2019). Their focus was on the impacts of genre pedagogy on Iranian EFL learners’ motivation level for writing an essay. They found that the genre-based pedagogy significantly improved the participants’ motivation for writing. In a similar vein, Uzun (2017) examined the possible association between Turkish university students’ genre knowledge and writing skill to see whether genre knowledge at micro-level, i.e., content, mechanics, language use, vocabulary, and organization, might be

correlated with the writing performance. The results indicated that the participants' writing performances were significantly correlated with their genre knowledge, and the participants' writing performances increased by having higher genre knowledge. Pursuing the same goal, Viriya and Wasanasomsithi (2017) made an effort in order to inspect the possible impact of genre awareness on the enhancement of Thai university students' writing skill. The findings uncovered that genre awareness had a positive significant effect on the participants' writing performances.

Although writing skill has been surrounded by a plethora of studies to reduce the challenges L2 learners encounter, this skill is still a source of worry and anxiety for Iranian L2 learners who were not given the chance to practice this skill and its components enough (Ansarimoghaddam & Tan, 2014; Javadi-Safa et al., 2013). In addition, L2 writing skill has been reputed as the tough one because L2 learners have to deal with the principles governing this skill along with the command over the second language that makes it trickier (Tavakoli et al., 2014). Furthermore, to teach L2 writing to EFL university students in the context of Iran, the applied approach is mostly the monolingual one. This approach demands teaching L2 writing skill through L2 as the only medium of instruction, and it ignores the possible benefits of L1 and L1 writing skill instruction to facilitate L2 writing (Marzban & Jalali, 2016). However, "L1 use is no more considered to be inherently detrimental in second language pedagogy" (Ahmadian et al., 2016, p. 767). Another problem is that the role of genre and the essential components of each genre are underestimated in most of L2 writing classes in the context of Iran (Ziahosseiny & Derakhshan, 2006), whereas many researchers have emphasized that genre is a major part of the linguistic knowledge that might play a constructive role in L2 learners' performances while writing L2 compositions (e.g., Casan-Pitrach, 2017; Driscoll et al., 2019). As a result, most of Iranian L2 learners, for instance, feel more comfortable writing expository compositions than the argumentative ones, for they have not received enough systematic instruction on the specific features of all genres and the rules governing them (Sadeghi & Maleki, 2015).

II. THE PRESENT STUDY

This study aimed at finding the potential existence of the correspondence between L1 and L2 writing skills through examining the correspondence between Persian and English argumentative and descriptive compositions written by MA TEFL students. As the employed analytical framework was IELTS task 2 writing scoring scale, the correspondence between the compositions was checked based on its four criteria: a) task response, b) coherence and cohesion, c) lexical resource, and d) grammatical range and accuracy (Table 1). Furthermore, Cook's (1991, 2016) multi-competence theory was employed as the main theoretical framework of the study. According to Cook, the existence of such correspondence might consolidate the hypothesis that both L1 and L2 and their skills are the manifestations of a single entity that is called multi-competence. If so, it might not be a good idea to ban the use of L1 while teaching L2 and ignore the possible benefits of a previously acquired L1 skill to help improve the same skill in L2.

The current study also attempted to find out if genre could affect L1 and L2 writing skills and their possible source (multi-competence) by inspecting if the scores obtained from Persian and English compositions of two different genres, argumentative and descriptive, were significantly different or not. This goal was also achieved through the same pattern considered for the correspondence between the compositions (Table 1). In the available literature, there were some studies to further the concept of multi-competence by focusing on a wide variety of variables, such as syntax (Berkes & Flynn, 2016), UG (Cook, 2007), personality (Dewaele, 2016b), empathy (Dewaele & Wei, 2012), emotion (Dewaele, 2016a), and age (Cook, 1995). However, to the researchers' best knowledge, there were no studies inspecting how multi-competence might be affected by genre, which is one of the key variables in writing skill (Javadi-Safa, 2018). That is why this variable was chosen to be put under scrutiny in the present study. Furthermore, argumentative and descriptive genres were selected because they were considered to be the most necessary genres for the tertiary-level students to fulfil their academic and even professional purposes (Nesi & Gardner, as cited in Kim et al., 2020; Sadeghi & Maleki, 2015; Ziahosseiny & Derakhshan, 2006).

TABLE 1
THE PATTERN USED TO CHECK BOTH THE CORRESPONDENCE AND THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE SCORES

Persian Descriptive		English Argumentative	
TR	←→	TR	
CC	←→	CC	
LR	←→	LR	
GRA	←→	GRA	
Persian Argumentative		English Descriptive	
TR	←→	TR	
CC	←→	CC	
LR	←→	LR	
GRA	←→	GRA	

Note. TR = task response; CC = coherence and cohesion; LR = lexical resource; GRA = grammatical range and accuracy.

Finally, based on the two aims of the study, the following questions were posed:

1. Is there any correspondence between Persian and English argumentative and descriptive compositions of MA TEFL students, according to the four IELTS-based criteria: a) task response, b) coherence and cohesion, c) lexical resource, and d) grammatical range and accuracy?

2. Are there any significant differences between the scores obtained from Persian and English argumentative and descriptive compositions of MA TEFL students, according to the four IELTS-based criteria: a) task response, b) coherence and cohesion, c) lexical resource, and d) grammatical range and accuracy?

III. METHOD

A. Participants

The participants of the study were 50 MA students (18 males and 32 females) majoring in TEFL in the 24-28 age range. Convenience sampling was employed to choose the participants from the available population of 78 MA TEFL students. In addition, Oxford Quick Placement Test was utilized to ensure homogeneity of the participants. The selected participants were all at the intermediate level of English proficiency.

B. Instruments

1. English Proficiency Test

The paper-and-pencil version of Oxford Quick Placement Test (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, 2001) was applied to select the participants of the same English proficiency level, i.e., intermediate. The test was composed of 60 multiple choice questions that were expected to be answered in two phases. In the first phase, according to the instructions, the participants were asked to answer the first 40 questions. Those who could score at least 36 out of 40 were permitted to continue to answer the other 20 questions in the second phase. This test was provided with a look-up table to divide the participants into different proficiency levels from basic to advanced. According to the table, only those whose scores were between 30 and 47 were selected as the intermediate-level participants of the present study. To ensure the test's reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated (0.82, N=60).

2. Writing Tasks

The participants were asked to write down Persian and English argumentative and descriptive compositions (four in total). The topics were selected from the writing topics provided for IELTS task 2 writing exams. The chosen topics were "More and more people are relying on their private car as their major means of transportation. Describe some of the problems overreliance on cars can cause, and suggest at least one possible solution." for the descriptive compositions, and "Do you agree or disagree that a person should never make an important decision alone?" for the argumentative ones. The above-mentioned topics were selected due to the familiarity of the participants with the topics' subjects. That way the participants would be able to make use of their general knowledge to generate ideas necessary for writing an essay at an appropriate length. The instruction, according to IELTS task 2 writing exams, informed the participants that they were supposed to write down at least 250 words during at most 40 minutes for each composition.

3. Scoring Scale

IELTS task 2 writing scoring scale was utilized as the analytical framework of the study to rate both argumentative and descriptive compositions. It included four components: a) task response, b) coherence and cohesion, c) lexical resource, and d) grammatical range and accuracy, based on which the compositions were evaluated (see Appendix). This scoring profile was provided by British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (n.d.) on the major linguistic features of English compositions. Though the scale was originally designed to assess English compositions, three university professors in applied linguistics and Persian literature, who were also experienced experts in the fields, affirmed the validity of the scoring scale for both essays (English and Persian).

4. Raters

More than one rater was involved in the process of scoring to ensure the inter-rater reliability of the scores obtained from both English and Persian compositions. Therefore, the raters of the current study included an experienced university professor holding PhD in Persian Literature, an expert in the field of TEFL, and one of the researchers who were both PhD candidates in TEFL. All of the raters knew the objectives of the present study and had enough expertise and command over the scoring scale to assess the compositions.

5. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

First of all, 50 MA students majoring in TEFL were chosen through Oxford Quick Placement Test. The test was given to select only the participants with the intermediate level of English proficiency. Then, each participant was asked to write down two argumentative compositions (one in Persian and one in English) and two descriptive compositions (one in Persian and one in English). They wrote the compositions in two sessions with an interval of 3 weeks to decrease any possible practice effects. The writing tasks were counterbalanced across both languages to reduce any

possible effects of task order. That is, during the first session, half of the participants (N=25) were asked to write one English argumentative composition and one Persian descriptive composition, and the other half (N=25) were asked to write down one English descriptive composition and one Persian argumentative composition. During the second session, the order was reversed.

The participants were given 40 minutes to write down at least 250 words for each composition, and they were not allowed to consult a dictionary or their peers. After collecting all the compositions, they were evaluated based on the four criteria of IELTS task 2 writing scoring scale, namely a) task response, b) coherence and cohesion, c) lexical resource, and d) grammatical range and accuracy. Each composition received four scores (ranging from 0 to 9) for the four criteria. The English compositions were assessed by one of the researchers and a skilled expert in TEFL. The Persian compositions were rated by the same researcher and an experienced professor who held PhD in Persian Literature.

After scoring the papers, the inter-rater reliability of each component was calculated for English and Persian compositions using Pearson product-moment correlation. The reliability values obtained were all high for both English and Persian compositions. In addition, in an attempt to answer the first question of the study on the correspondence between Persian and English argumentative and descriptive compositions, the researchers benefited from Pearson product-moment correlation. Finally, to answer the second question, one-way repeated measures ANOVA was employed to see if there were any significant differences between the scores obtained from argumentative and descriptive compositions.

IV. FINDINGS

A. The Correspondence between the Compositions

The first objective of the study was to find out whether there was any possible correspondence between Persian and English argumentative and descriptive compositions. Table 2 displays the Pearson correlations between the scores from Persian descriptive and English argumentative compositions and also the Pearson correlations between the scores from English descriptive and Persian argumentative compositions.

TABLE 2
PEARSON CORRELATIONS FOR THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN PERSIAN AND ENGLISH ARGUMENTATIVE AND DESCRIPTIVE COMPOSITIONS

English Argumentative Compositions		TR	CC	LR	GRA
Persian Descriptive Compositions	Pearson				
	Correlation	.632*	.579*	.487*	.742*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	50	50	50	50
Persian Argumentative Compositions		TR	CC	LR	GRA
English Descriptive Compositions	Pearson				
	Correlation	.464*	.600*	.644*	.797*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000	.000
	N	50	50	50	50

Note. TR = task response; CC = coherence and cohesion; LR = lexical resource;
GRA = grammatical range and accuracy.

* $p < .01$.

According to Table 2, all of the correlations between Persian descriptive and English argumentative compositions and also between English descriptive and Persian argumentative compositions were positive and significant ($p < .01$). Furthermore, all of the correlations were either medium, ($r_s = .46, .48$) or large, ($r_s = .57, .60, .63, .64, .74, .79$), based on Cohen's interpretations of values (as cited in Pallant, 2007). The highest correlation was between English descriptive and Persian argumentative compositions, regarding grammatical range and accuracy ($r = .79, p < .01$). The lowest correlation was between English descriptive and Persian argumentative compositions, regarding task response ($r = .46, p < .01$). All in all, the results implied that, no matter what genre the participants were dealing with, those who could receive a high score in Persian compositions were also able to get a high score in English compositions, or vice versa.

B. The Differences between the Scores and the Role of Genre

In addition to inspecting the correspondence, the present study also made an attempt to find out whether or not there were any significant differences between the scores obtained from Persian descriptive and English argumentative compositions, and also the scores obtained from English descriptive and Persian argumentative compositions. In other words, the differences between the scores were explored to see if Persian and English writing skills and their possible source (multi-competence) were influenced by genre or not. Tables 3, 4 and 5 show the findings related to the descriptive statistics, multivariate tests, and one-way repeated measures ANOVAs.

TABLE 3
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Persian Descriptive				English Argumentative			
TR	6.0300	1.28734	50	TR	5.1000	1.19949	50
CC	5.4100	1.38759	50	CC	5.1000	1.19949	50
LR	6.0000	1.15175	50	LR	5.2300	.91032	50
GRA	6.0500	1.04124	50	GRA	5.5600	.99304	50
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
English Descriptive				Persian Argumentative			
TR	5.9600	1.32803	50	TR	5.0900	1.18962	50
CC	6.0700	1.27379	50	CC	5.0800	1.20102	50
LR	5.8000	1.16496	50	LR	5.2100	.92079	50
GRA	5.7900	1.25393	50	GRA	5.5400	.98375	50

Note. TR = task response; CC = coherence and cohesion; LR = lexical resource; GRA = grammatical range and accuracy.

As it is displayed in Table 3, the means of the four criteria obtained from Persian descriptive compositions ($M_{TR}=6.03$, $SD=1.28$; $M_{CC}=5.41$, $SD=1.38$; $M_{LR}=6.00$, $SD=1.15$; $M_{GRA}=6.05$, $SD=1.04$) were all higher than their counterparts in English argumentative compositions ($M_{TR}=5.10$, $SD=1.19$; $M_{CC}=5.10$, $SD=1.19$; $M_{LR}=5.23$, $SD=0.91$; $M_{GRA}=5.56$, $SD=0.99$). On the other hand, the means of the four criteria obtained from English descriptive compositions ($M_{TR}=5.96$, $SD=1.32$; $M_{CC}=6.07$, $SD=1.27$; $M_{LR}=5.80$, $SD=1.16$; $M_{GRA}=5.79$, $SD=1.25$) were all higher than their counterparts in Persian argumentative compositions ($M_{TR}=5.09$, $SD=1.18$; $M_{CC}=5.08$, $SD=1.20$; $M_{LR}=5.21$, $SD=0.92$; $M_{GRA}=5.54$, $SD=0.98$). The criterion of coherence and cohesion in English descriptive compositions enjoyed the highest mean score ($M=6.07$), and the criterion of coherence and cohesion in Persian argumentative compositions received the lowest mean score ($M=5.08$).

TABLE 4
MULTIVARIATE TESTS^b

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
genre	Wilks' Lambda	.553	12.662 ^a	3.000	47.000	.000	.447
TR	Wilks' Lambda	.508	15.155 ^a	3.000	47.000	.000	.492
genre	Wilks' Lambda	.591	10.862 ^a	3.000	47.000	.000	.409
CC	Wilks' Lambda	.665	7.889 ^a	3.000	47.000	.000	.335
genre	Wilks' Lambda						
LR	Wilks' Lambda						
genre	Wilks' Lambda						
GRA	Wilks' Lambda						

Note. TR = task response; CC = coherence and cohesion; LR = lexical resource; GRA = grammatical range and accuracy. Within Subjects Design: genre.

^a Exact statistic. ^b Design: Intercept.

According to table 4, there was a significant effect of genre on all the four criteria: a) task response, Wilks' Lambda= .55, $F(3, 47)=12.66$, $p<.0005$, multivariate partial eta squared= .44; b) coherence and cohesion, Wilks' Lambda= .50, $F(3, 47)=15.15$, $p<.0005$, multivariate partial eta squared= .49; c) lexical resource, Wilks' Lambda= .59, $F(3, 47)=10.86$, $p<.0005$, multivariate partial eta squared= .40; and d) grammatical range and accuracy, Wilks' Lambda= .66, $F(3, 47)=7.88$, $p<.0005$, multivariate partial eta squared= .33. Besides, the obtained effect sizes were all very large (multivariate partial eta squared= .44, .49, .40, .33) according to Cohen (as cited in Pallant, 2007, p. 255) (.01= small, .06= moderate, .14= large). Therefore, Table 4 shows that genre caused significant differences between the correlated scores obtained from Persian and English compositions. Tables 5 displays which set of scores significantly differed from each other.

TABLE 5
ONE-WAY REPEATED MEASURES ANOVAS

Persian Descriptive	English Argumentative	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig. ^a	95% Confidence Interval for Difference ^a	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
TR	TR	.930*	.151	.000	.626	1.234
CC	CC	.310	.170	.074	-.031	.651
LR	LR	.770*	.151	.000	.467	1.073
GRA	GRA	.490*	.103	.000	.282	.698
English Descriptive	Persian Argumentative	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig. ^a	95% Confidence Interval for Difference ^a	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
TR	TR	.870*	.185	.000	.498	1.242
CC	CC	.990*	.157	.000	.675	1.305
LR	LR	.590*	.128	.000	.332	.848
GRA	GRA	.250*	.107	.024	.035	.465

Note. TR = task response; CC = coherence and cohesion; LR = lexical resource; GRA = grammatical range and accuracy. Based on estimated marginal means.

^a Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

* $p < .05$.

According to Table 5, the Mean Differences (MDs) were significant for the scores obtained from Persian descriptive and English argumentative compositions for three criteria, i.e., task response ($MD = .93$, $p < .05$), lexical resource ($MD = .77$, $p < .05$), and grammatical range and accuracy ($MD = .49$, $p < .05$). That is, the scores on those criteria of Persian descriptive compositions were significantly greater than the scores on the counterpart criteria of English argumentative compositions. Contrariwise, the mean difference was not significant for coherence and cohesion ($MD = .31$, $p = .07$).

Concerning English descriptive and Persian argumentative compositions, the mean differences were significant for the scores obtained from the compositions for all the four criteria, i.e., task response ($MD = .87$, $p < .05$), coherence and cohesion ($MD = .99$, $p < .05$), lexical resource ($MD = .59$, $p < .05$), and grammatical range and accuracy ($MD = .25$, $p < .05$). In other words, the scores on the criteria of English descriptive compositions were significantly higher than the scores on the counterpart criteria of Persian argumentative compositions.

V. DISCUSSION

A. Discussion of the Results Regarding the Corresponded Scores and the Possible Existence of Multi-competence

The results on the correspondence between Persian and English argumentative and descriptive compositions disclosed that there were positive significant correlations between Persian and English descriptive and argumentative compositions. This part of the findings was theoretically in line with the prominent concept of multi-competence (Cook, 1991, 2016). It supported the interdependence of mother tongue and the foreign language in multi-competent minds because of the single entity from which both languages and their related skills might have emerged. In other words, it could be hypothesized that the participants of this study were multi-competent L2 learners, and the development of English writing skill was a function of the extent to which Persian writing skill had been developed in L2 learners' single language reservoir, or the other way around. On the other hand, the findings invalidated the separationist approaches that denied any correspondence between L1 and L2 and asserted that L2 would develop almost independent of L1 (Dulay & Burt, as cited in Cook, 2003).

Furthermore, in line with the findings of this study, Javadi-Safa et al. (2013) and Mirahmadi (2011) found positive significant correlations between Persian and English argumentative compositions regarding content, organization, vocabulary use, and language use, which could be considered as the rough counterparts of the same IELTS-based criteria based on which the compositions of the current study were rated. Likewise, Nafchi et al. (2014) discovered positive significant correlations between Persian and English compositions concerning content, organization, and language use. The afore-mentioned studies yielded the results in line with the current study in spite of the differences in analytical frameworks, educational levels, and the participants' majors, which probably were not determining factors influencing those correlations.

B. Discussion of the Results Regarding the Effects of Genre on Writing Skill and Multi-competence

The results of the multivariate tests (Wilks' Lambdas) for the second aim of the study revealed that the participants' L1 and L2 writing compositions were affected by genre. Also, the results of the one-way repeated measures ANOVAs confirmed that the variable of genre caused significant variation between the scores obtained from descriptive and argumentative compositions. Consequently, L1 and L2 writing skills were considered to be genre-sensitive. However, in the previous part of the results, it was indicated that those skills were significantly correlated and possibly emerged from a single entity, so such variation between the scores was not expected.

A participant who received a high score for a criterion in the English descriptive composition, also received a high score for the same criterion in the Persian argumentative composition (as the scores were positively correlated). However, the score for the criterion in the English descriptive composition was significantly higher than that in the Persian composition. The main question that arises here is why the multi-competent participants, whose L1 and L2

writing skills were possibly the manifestations of a single entity, did not receive more or less the same scores for both L1 and L2 writing compositions. One possibility was that the single entity of multi-competence itself was influenced by the variable of genre. Thus, the researchers of the present study came up with the new term of *genre-sensitive multi-competence*.

The results of the one-way ANOVAs also supported the researchers' genre-sensitive multi-competence hypothesis by pinpointing where the differences were located. They showed that the scores the participants obtained on the criteria of Persian descriptive compositions were significantly higher than those of English argumentative compositions apart from coherence and cohesion. It can be inferred that, although L1 and L2 writing skills were possibly the manifestations of a single entity, genre affected writing skills directly, and the single entity indirectly. Therefore, description won over argumentation as it was a less challenging genre (Ka-Kan-Dee, 2015). While writing the descriptive compositions, the L2 learners did not have to get involved in the burdensome process of reasoning as an attempt to argue and convince the readers to go along with their attitudes (Saito, 2010).

Furthermore, the findings showed that the participants performed significantly better in English descriptive compositions than in the Persian argumentative compositions, although Persian was their native language, and the opposite result was expected. It could again be inferred that genre impacted L1 and L2 writing skills and their single source. Their better performance in English descriptive compositions might be attributed to the more challenging nature of the argumentation than description (Uysal, 2012).

Last but not least, the results concerning the impact of genre on L1 and L2 writing skills were in line with the findings of a study conducted by Amini and Iravani (2021). According to their investigation, genre played a role in determining the scores obtained from descriptive and narrative essays, and the participants' descriptive writing performance was significantly better than their narrative writing performance. By the same token, Yoon (2017) conducted a study by investigating argumentative and narrative compositions, and a part of his findings revealed that due to different communicative functions of different genres, the participants' language use varied largely across argumentative and narrative essays. Likewise, Bi (2020) examined cross-genre differences between argumentative and narrative essays, and his study indicated that, due to the impact of genre, the learners' language use was different across the two genres. Finally, it should be noted that the results related to multi-competence and its being possibly genre-sensitive could not be compared to the findings of other studies because, to the researchers' best knowledge, this study was innovative to inspect whether multi-competence was possibly affected by genre or not.

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the outcomes of the study, it might be concluded that Cook's multi-competence theory accounted for the correspondence between Persian and English argumentative and descriptive compositions written by MA TEFL students. That is, Persian or English writing skill was not "a separate entity but part of comprehensive multilingual writing competence" (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2013, p. 442). Hence, the development of L1 writing skill might lead to the improvement of L2 writing skill or vice versa. Additionally, the differences between the writers' scores implied that genre was a determining factor which could influence L1 and L2 writing skills and their possible source, multi-competence, and thus might enhance or deteriorate L2 learners' writing skills (Figure 1). This study was innovative by virtue of the fact that a new aspect of multi-competence was taken into account, and hence led to the proposal of the new term *genre-sensitive multi-competence*.

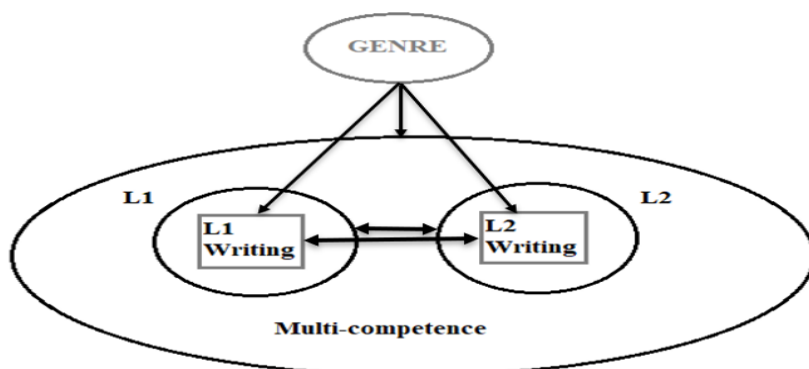


Figure 1 Genre-sensitive Multi-competence: The Adapted Version of Cook's (2008, p.15) Multi-competence

VII. IMPLICATIONS

As Harris (2014) stated, many scholars revealed that L2 writing is a bilingual not a monolingual activity, and L1 use can be helpful in the process of teaching and learning L2 writing skill. According to the findings of the current study, the stakeholders in the field of second language writing, such as L2 writing syllabus and materials designers and teachers, had better not ignore the inter-dependence between L1 and L2 writing skills. Being aware of such associations,

they can facilitate the challenging task of L2 writing through *L1-L2 writing skills integrationist views* towards L2 writing instruction (Cummins, 2005). This assumption might be specifically beneficial in the contexts, such as Iran, in which most of the TEFL university courses are held merely in English, and employing the mother tongue is like a taboo.

What is more, based on the findings of the present study, the variable of genre had better be taken into account for writing tasks. In the context of Iran, there is hardly any emphasis on the specific features of each genre. Therefore, L2 learners find it rather tough to be able to use the suitable vocabulary or grammar for a troublesome genre (Rahman, 2011). It is suggested that the state-of-the-art trend of genre-based writing instruction be employed to facilitate the laborious task of L2 writing by explicitly specifying the necessary features to be learned for each genre (Liu, 2018). Genre-based instruction also encourages teachers to consider the students' needs and assist them to raise awareness over the building blocks of different genres (Hyland, 2016). According to Liu (2018), genre awareness, which usually follows genre-based writing instruction, can help L2 learners recognize the specific features of genres, such as diction, grammar, mechanics, and organization. It can also facilitate the transfer of that kind of knowledge to other appropriate genres (Devitt, 2007).

VIII. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER SUGGESTIONS

This study benefited from only bilingual MA students with the intermediate level of English proficiency. Another piece of research can be carried out to inspect the participants of different educational and proficiency levels in order to see if they could play determining roles in L2 writing or not. In addition, the present study enjoyed only a quantitative method of analyzing the data. It is suggested that other investigations be done using the qualitative method to pinpoint the instances that caused the inter-dependence between L1 and L2 writing skills or the differences between the scores due to encountering a different genre.

APPENDIX. IELTS TASK 2 WRITING SCORING SCALE

Band	Task response	Coherence and cohesion	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fully addresses all parts of the task presents a fully developed position in answer to the question with relevant, fully extended and well supported ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses cohesion in such a way that it attracts no attention skillfully manages paragraphing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of vocabulary with very natural and sophisticated control of lexical features; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of structures with full flexibility and accuracy; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sufficiently addresses all parts of the task presents a well-developed response to the question with relevant, extended and supported ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sequences information and ideas logically manages all aspects of cohesion well uses paragraphing sufficiently and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of vocabulary fluently and flexibly to convey precise meanings skillfully uses uncommon lexical items but there may be occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation produces rare errors in spelling and/or word formation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of structures the majority of sentences are error-free makes only very occasional errors or inappropriacies
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> addresses all parts of the task presents a clear position throughout the response presents, extends and supports main ideas, but there may be a tendency to over-generalise and/or supporting ideas may lack focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> logically organises information and ideas; there is clear progression throughout uses a range of cohesive devices appropriately although there may be some under-over-use presents a clear central topic within each paragraph 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a sufficient range of vocabulary to allow some flexibility and precision uses less common lexical items with some awareness of style and collocation may produce occasional errors in word choice, spelling and/or word formation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a variety of complex structures produces frequent error-free sentences has good control of grammar and punctuation but may make a few errors
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> addresses all parts of the task although some parts may be more fully covered than others presents a relevant position although the conclusions may become unclear or repetitive presents relevant main ideas but some may be inadequately developed/unclear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> arranges information and ideas coherently and there is a clear overall progression uses cohesive devices effectively, but cohesion within and/or between sentences may be faulty or mechanical may not always use referencing clearly or appropriately uses paragraphing, but not always logically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses an adequate range of vocabulary for the task attempts to use less common vocabulary but with some inaccuracy makes some errors in spelling and/or word formation, but they do not impede communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a mix of simple and complex sentence forms makes some errors in grammar and punctuation but they rarely reduce communication
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> addresses the task only partially; the format may be inappropriate in places expresses a position but the development is not always clear and there may be no conclusions drawn presents some main ideas but these are limited and not sufficiently developed; there may be irrelevant detail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> presents information with some organisation but there may be a lack of overall progression makes inadequate, inaccurate or over-use of cohesive devices may be repetitive because of lack of referencing and substitution may not write in paragraphs, or paragraphing may be inadequate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a limited range of vocabulary, but this is minimally adequate for the task may make noticeable errors in spelling and/or word formation that may cause some difficulty for the reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses only a limited range of structures attempts complex sentences but these tend to be less accurate than simple sentences may make frequent grammatical errors and punctuation may be faulty; errors can cause some difficulty for the reader
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> responds to the task only in a minimal way or the answer is tangential; the format may be inappropriate presents a position but this is unclear presents some main ideas but these are difficult to identify and may be repetitive, irrelevant or not well supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> presents information and ideas but these are not arranged coherently and there is no clear progression in the response uses some basic cohesive devices but these may be inaccurate or repetitive may not write in paragraphs or their use may be confusing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses only basic vocabulary which may be used repetitively or which may be inappropriate for the task has limited control of word formation and/or spelling; errors may cause strain for the reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses only a very limited range of structures with only rare use of subordinate clauses some structures are accurate but errors predominate, and punctuation is often faulty
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not adequately address any part of the task does not express a clear position presents few ideas, which are largely undeveloped or irrelevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not organise ideas logically may use a very limited range of cohesive devices, and those used may not indicate a logical relationship between ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses only a very limited range of words and expressions with very limited control of word formation and/or spelling errors may severely distort the message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attempts sentence forms but errors in grammar and punctuation predominate and distort the meaning
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> barely responds to the task does not express a position may attempt to present one or two ideas but there is no development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has very little control of organisational features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses an extremely limited range of vocabulary; essentially no control of word formation and/or spelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot use sentence forms except in memorised phrases
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> answer is completely unrelated to the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fails to communicate any message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can only use a few isolated words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot use sentence forms at all
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not attend does not attempt the task in any way writes a totally memorised response 			

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