In the Name of God,

the Most Compassionate

and the Most Merciful

English Language Department

M.Sc. Thesis in Language Teaching

Exploring IELTS Teachers' Perspectives on Strategies and Techniques in Teaching Writing: a Grounded Theory

By: Seyyed Esmail Safaee

Supervisor:

Dr. Seyyed Ali Ostovar-Namaghi

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باسمه تعالی

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با تأییدات خداوند متعال و با استعانت از حضرت ولی عصر (عج) ارزیابی جلسه دفاع از پایان نامه کارشناسی ارشد آقای /خـــانم .... به شماره دانشجویی .... رشته .... گرایش .... تحـــت عنـــوان ....بــا حضـور هیـأت محتـرم داوران در دانشـگاه صنعتی شاهرود برگزار گردید به شرح ذیل اعلام می‌گردد:

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my wife and family for their patience during the process of this thesis.

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Firstly, I would like to thank God for giving me a healthy body which helps to look everywhere for the required knowledge and study my desired subjects in my field of the study. Secondly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Seyyed Ali Ostovar-Namaghi, who has helped me during all of my M.A. courses and this formidable thesis writing. Thirdly, I would like to thank my dear wife who was patient during this thesis and supported me. Fourthly, I would like to thank Mr. Sobhanifar, one of my best friends, who helped me and traveled with me to find expert IELTS practitioners for data collection. Fifthly, I would like to thank dear participants who sincerely gave me their time and answered my questions and helped me with data collection.

Abstract

The difficulty of writing tasks and the high-stakes nature of IELTS lead both IELTS teachers and students towards discovering effective writing techniques. Although some techniques have been frequently discovered, incomprehensible information is available about these techniques. The current study aims at exploring IELTS writing teachers' perspectives on effective techniques and strategies in teaching writing skills. By grounded theory methodology, the researcher theoretically sampled concepts through interviewing 13 IELTS practitioners. The interviews were audio taped, transcribed, and analyzed by applying open coding, selective coding, and axial coding. In a cyclical process of data collection and analysis, the researcher found the effectiveness of writing samples as layouts; moreover, he discovered that teaching prefabricated phrases, discourse markers, writing based on scoring criteria, and teaching thinking and writing ideas in target language are effective writing techniques. Some of the techniques are new in the body of the knowledge and the results are applicable for IELTS writing teachers, ELT teachers, academic writing teachers, and IELTS candidates.

Keywords: IELTS, writing skills, writing techniques, writing strategies

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CHAPTER

ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview

During the current chapter, firstly a background to the study is presented and then research problem is stated. Afterwards, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, limitations, and delimitation are discussed.

1.2. Background to the Study

Learning how to write is one of the demanding skills in EFL/ESL learning. However, this is not that much easy and the nature of writing skill causes this difficulty. A written text is read and judged by an absent reader not similar to spoken messages which are heard in a face-to-face situation during conversations. The reader's absence and frequent judgment by readers cause writers to frequently check and revise their texts. Consequently, writers experience a bad mood of anxiety and their writing performance is negatively influenced.

Moreover, not only learning how to write is difficult, but also teaching it is difficult and requires special skills. As a result of writing task difficulty, providing a suitable situation to foster writing skills becomes necessary for those who teach writing. Neman (1995) states that teaching writing just like learning it, is a formidable mission for EFL teachers because students have negative attitudes towards writing tasks. Thus, EFL teachers need to use strategies in order to motivate students to write and then apply suitable techniques in teaching writing as the most difficult language skill.

Furthermore, writing tasks become more formidable when writers write in high-stakes tests such as IELTS. The difficulty of writing tasks causes both students and teachers to look for effective writing techniques and strategies in IELTS settings and even in general language learning settings. Consequently, researchers have conducted studies and they have discovered some useful techniques, but the insufficiency of previous studies is observable through the review of related literature.

1.3. Statement of the Research Problem

Most of the studies in the field of teaching writing are conducted by the researchers who are not familiar with teaching writing or they have conducted experimental studies to investigate the effect of a special technique on the improvement of students' writing skills. However, teachers' perceptions of strategies and techniques in teaching writing have not been discovered by previous studies. Although previous studies have discovered the importance and effectiveness of different strategies for writing skills development, they have ignored why they are important and how they should be taught.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

This study aims at extracting techniques and strategies that expert IELTS writing teachers use in teaching writing skills. Furthermore, the researcher is going to discover the rationale behind the use of these strategies and techniques. Moreover, he seeks to discover how IELTS practitioners apply the techniques and strategies they propose. To this end, he starts with answering the following general question. What techniques do IELTS writing teachers use in teaching writing skills and why do they use them?

1.5. Significance of the Study

1.5.1. Implications

Most of the research in the field of teaching writing skills are experimental studies which investigate the effect of special techniques on improving writing skills, and none of them have explored the techniques and strategies used by expert IELTS writing teachers in teaching writing skills. The result of the present grounded theory added to the body of knowledge by exploring IELTS practitioners' perspectives on techniques and strategies in teaching writing. The present study explored some new techniques useful for both general and IELTS writing skills. In addition to the discovered techniques, the present study added to the body of knowledge by exploring why to use the proposed techniques and how to use them in teaching writing.

1.5.2. Applications

Since the data of this study are gathered by interviewing teachers who are dealing with teaching IELTS writing skills, its findings are applicable to IELTS writing classes and general writing classes. The results of this study are useful for IELTS writing teachers since they can use the techniques to improve their students' band scores. Additionally, since some IELTS writing and general writing tasks overlap, ELT teachers and academic writing teachers can use most of these techniques to improve language learners' writing skills. As well, ELT teacher trainers can benefit from the results and train language teachers to use these techniques in their writing classes. Moreover, IELTS candidates can use the explored techniques to improve their writing skills and to increase their band scores.

1.6. Limitations

Just like any other study, the process of current study encountered with some limitations. One of the most important limitations was the disagreement of language institute principals; therefore, the researcher missed the chance of interviewing some expert practitioners. Moreover, all of the participants disagreed observing their classes for the sake of students and principals' dissatisfaction; as a result, the researcher missed the chance of observation as a great source of data collection. The last limitation was setting the time of the interviews; since these practitioners were really busy, they taught until late at night and the researcher could not interview some of them in a desired and suitable time.

1.7. Delimitations

The mentioned limitations would cause insufficient results. Thus, the researcher did his best to delimit them. To overcome the first limitation, he went to different institutes, talked to the principals, and tried to convince them that the data will be used only for the purpose of the research; as a result of a long-time search he could find some

expert practitioners who were helpful and agreed to participate. Although participants disagreed to observe their classes; they sincerely answered the questions in the interviews and presented sufficient examples of how they teach writing skills in their classes. Even though the participants of the study were really busy and some of them could not participate in the desired times, they agreed on the time between their classes.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITRETURE

2.1. Overview

Chapter two of this thesis presents previous studies related to teaching writing. The reviewed related literature has been provided in two sections. The first section is theoretical perspectives and the second one is empirical findings. In theoretical perspectives section the researcher presents scholars' beliefs and claims on teaching writing. In the empirical findings section, conducted studies on teaching writing, which had applied different strategies and techniques to improve writing skills have been reviewed. Finally, the summary of empirical findings and the identified gap in previous studies are presented for a better insight to the present research.

2.2. Theoretical Perspectives

While teaching and studying English language writing skill, we should primarily understand its importance. Fu (2009) discusses the importance and the usage of learning how to write in English as a second language. She believes that writing not only helps us to improve our language proficiency, but also forces us to think more analytically, deeply, and logically. She adds that writing about what we read makes contributions to read more critically and participate in related conversations; as a result, we grow academically.

Writing, and especially writing in another language, is not an easy skill. Rivers (1981) claims that we should notice that writing in a language is much more difficult than speaking it. She believes that, since the receiver of the message is clear and we are face-to-face with the receiver we can speak more comfortably than when we write a text. She adds that novice writers need to learn how to clarify things for a recipient who is not indicated for them and this causes them to prevent from well performing in such an exhausting task. Likewise, McDonough, Shaw, and Masuhara (2013) believe that writing is carried out for an absent readership. Fu (2009) argues that writing like natives is the most challenging skill since it demands the use of grammatical structures, vocabulary, and rhetorical conventions different from spoken language. Similarly, Celce-Murcia (2001) regards writing one's idea as a skill which is a great achievement that even many native speakers can never master it.

Just like learning how to write, teaching writing is challenging as well. Neman (1995) points out that teaching writing is a formidable mission for EFL teachers since students have negative attitudes towards writing. She proclaims that the negative attitudes are rooted in the extreme sensitivity of people to be judged by their writing. She further believes that students protect a personal part of themselves from being discovered to the public by writing unsuitable texts. Consequently, their self-confidence to write is decreased, and the lack of self-confidence prevents them from recognizing their writing problems to be avoided in next writings; hence, teachers encounter difficulties in teaching writing skills. Correspondingly, Barkaoui (2007) states that as many writing teachers attest, teaching second language writing is a challenging mission just like learning it.

Kirby and Crovitz (2013) present two dilemmas in teaching writing. The first dilemma is the pressure of the final writing test. They believe that most teachers want to do the right thing about writing and the right thing is passing the writing test by students. In other words, most teachers believe in a product approach towards writing. The second presented dilemma by Kirby and Crovitz (2013) is teaching a longer course of writing by teachers. They clarify that teaching more, does not result in improving students' writing; instead of teaching more we must teach writing skills well. They further believe that teachers should teach in a way that improves language learners' writing skills not only for their schools, but also for their outside lives.

As it was pointed out by Kirby and Crovitz (2013), approaches towards writing are different. Coffin et al. (2003) express that two approaches are available towards writing. One of them is product-oriented approach in which students are meant to produce a text. The other is process-oriented approach which focuses on the performance of students during writing. They further believe that whatever students are going to write is daunting for them. They present some stages of process-oriented writing such as pre-writing, planning, drafting, reflecting, peer or tutor reviewing, revising, and editing. They remind this fact that not all of the writers go through all of these stages, but some of them are helpful. Gabrielatos (2002) enumerates some elements for a good writing, which these elements are also considered to assess the candidates' writing in EFL public examinations. The elements of product-oriented writing are language, layout, organization, relevance to the task, and clarity. Effective

steps for process-oriented writing include task or title analysis, planning (content, organization, language, and sequence), writing the first draft, and finally evaluating and improving the first draft and writing the final draft.

Up to now, a brief review about the difficulty of writing tasks and approaches towards writing were clarified. In the following, scholars' perspectives on the how of teaching writing will be reviewed. Kroll (2001) states that, since teaching writing is a worldwide enterprise, different settings and classrooms are doing this enterprise; as a result, there is no surprise for the varieties of methods in teaching writing. Although the methods of teaching writing vary, anywhere a writing course is being taught, facts such as "teacher-planned lessons, presentation of writing assignments, student-written texts, and feedback on the writing" are deniable (p. 219).

As it was previously discussed by Fu (2009), writing skill demands the knowledge of vocabulary and grammar to make the writing tasks easier. Similarly, Frodesen (2001) stresses the importance of grammar and claims that focusing on form enriches linguistic recourses and causes effective writing; additionally, it facilitates error correction. Moreover, he concludes that language learners require grammar rules to improve their writing proficiency and focusing on form does not only aim at error correction but also at facilitating communicative purposes. Fordesen (2001) also presented two considerations to choose grammar rules. Firstly, the grammar points should be in the students' level of proficiency. Secondly, grammar points should be selected based on the objectives of the course. Moreover, the importance of learning and teaching vocabulary in language learning was discussed by Decarrico (2001). She claims that vocabulary is central to first, second, or foreign language learning. She further believes that teachers should teach a large number of productive vocabularies, at least the two thousand high frequent ones which are repeated in most of what is heard or read by language learners. Two ways of learning vocabulary are explicit and implicit vocabulary learning. In the first one, vocabulary is learned when students directly focus on it, but in implicit vocabulary learning the focus is elsewhere, such as reading a text (Decarrico, 2001).

More specific information about how to teach writing is presented by Coffin et al. (2003) who propose some effective techniques for pre-writing stage. They believe that pre-writing strategies like brainstorming and free writing are helpful in gathering

ideas, collecting information, activating background knowledge, and organizing thoughts. Besides free writing and brainstorming, they introduce journal writing as another useful form for the pre-writing stage. Since journals are written informally and personally, they help students to respond, ask questions, and reflect on the course material and the topic without any constraint.

In the writing stage like pre-writing stage, students can use some beneficial tools such as computers. McDonough, Shaw, and Masuhara (2013) believe that computers are assisting in writing skill. They believe that word-processor is the most beneficial technological tool for writing since it permits generating, developing, and making modifications on a text while its users check their texts. They further believe that a wiki is an astonishing replacement for word-processor since it provides opportunities for collaborative writing and students can edit each other's text and see the history of edits.

2.3. Empirical Findings

2.3.1. Approaches towards Teaching Writing

The review of related literature reveals two approaches towards teaching writing, including process-based and product-based. Some studies (Hasan & Akhand, 2010; Kamimura, 2000) found that a balanced use of the approaches works better than a separated use of them. Hasan and Akhand (2010) compared the writings of two groups of students, one taught by process-based approach and the other by product-based approach. They found that students taught by product-based approach have difficulties in producing a good composition and some of them imitated model writings. Likewise, the process-based approach was not helpful and students wrote paragraphs without any structure, even after a long period of instruction. Also, the findings revealed that neither the product-based, nor the process-based alone is the best alternative for students. Hasan and Akhand (2010) discovered that using a balanced instructional and curricular approach of the product-based and process-based to teaching writing is more helpful. Similarly, Kamimura (2000) found that the integration of process and product orientations in EFL writing instruction is more useful than separating them. Moreover, Kamimura (2000) clarified that skillful writers use the strategies of composing process more sophisticated than unskilled writers.

A balanced use of approaches was not supported by all of the reviewed studies on approaches to teaching writing and the superiority of one approach on the other was also discovered. Ho (2006) found that process approach is more effective than product approach in promoting writing skills. Contrastingly, Setyono (2014) discovered teachers' perceptions about approaches towards teaching writing. The findings of the study revealed that they prefer product-oriented writing which is linear instruction. Furthermore, the findings of this study revealed that teachers use product-oriented approach to assess students' achievement in writing as summative assessment; moreover, their corrective feedbacks were based on this approach.

2.3.2. Task Type and Writing Performance of IELTS Candidates

Writing tasks in every language teaching setting differ; furthermore, in some settings such as a high-stakes test like IELTS the differences between the tasks is crucial. As a result, some studies (Ahmadi & Mansoordehghan, 2014; Lan, 2015; O'Loughlin & Wigglesworth, 2003) have focused on writing task types to discover whether types of task is essential or not and how different task types should be dealt with. Ahmadi and Mansoordehghan (2014) compared the effect of task 1 and task 2 of IELTS writing module on test performance and found that there is no significant difference between the performances of test takers in these tasks. Contrastingly, Lan (2015) found that when teachers require a low demanding task, such as task 1 (graphic description) students significantly perform better in terms of accuracy. However, requiring a high-demanding task elicits more complex texts with lexical variations and grammatical subordinations. More specifically, O'Loughlin and Wigglesworth (2003) compared the effects of two samples of task 1 and discovered that candidates outperformed the simple task with less information to be processed in comparison to the task with more information; moreover, they found that simpler tasks elicit more complex structures.

2.3.3. Reading Samples of Writings

The importance of reading in teaching writing skills is highly researched in previous studies. Some studies (Ambe, 2008; Bagheri & Zare, 2009) have focused on presenting the samples of IELTS candidates' writing answers to foster IELTS candidates' writing skills by reading these samples. Bagheri and Zare (2009) found that model essays have significant impacts on writing development and they improve the candidates' awareness of writing features in terms of four language-related subparts including form, discourse, relevancy, and lexical resources. Similarly, Ambe (2008) found that by applying model essays, Japanese ESL learners compared their essays with these models and noticed some linguistic features in the models which are helpful to improve their writing skills. These features are lexical, form, discourse, and content. Additionally, Ambe (2008) found that the degree of noticing is different according to the differences in language learners' proficiency and task types.

Some other studies (Al-Mansour & Al-Shorman, 2014; Kirin, 2010; Mermelstein, 2015; Tsang; 1996; WaSrschauer, Zheng, & Park, 2013) focus on the importance of extensive reading as another technique to improve writing skills. Al-Mansour and Al-Shorman (2014) found that extensive reading program has a significant positive effect on writing performance. In a similar way, Mermelstein (2015) found that extensive reading significantly promoted all writing sub-skills of language learners. The improved sub-skills of writing include organization, content, vocabulary, language use, spelling, and writing fluency. Likewise, Tsang (1996) found that extensive reading was significantly effective for the improvement of writing in both content and language use areas. WaSrschauer, Zheng, and Park (2013) found that reading texts in digital formats can assist language learners to discover the structure of the English language which helps them to produce the correct form of the language during the writing process.

In contrast to the previous studies whose results revealed the positive effects of extensive reading, Kirin (2010) found that despite high proficient learners' reading ability was enhanced by extensive reading, it did not cause any improvement in their writing skills. Moreover, low proficient learners were unable to well understand the reading texts and this caused no improvement in their reading and writing skills (Kirin, 2010).

2.3.4. Brainstorming

Another important studied technique was brainstorming and some studies (Hashempour, Rostampour, & Behjat, 2015; Khalaf-Ibnian, 2011; Maghsoudi & Haririan, 2013; Mahdian-Mehr, Aziz-Malayeri, & Bayat, 2016) focused on examining its effects on the writing performance of language learners. Khalaf-Ibnian (2011) found that the proposed technique has positive effects on developing EFL learners' essay-writing skills. Using brainstorming helped learners to progress in their essay-writing skills in terms of content and organization, the mechanics of writing, language use, and as well as skills emerged from creative thinking abilities (fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration). In another study, Maghsoudi and Haririan (2013) discovered that instructing brainstorming strategies has positive effects on EFL learners writing skills. More specifically, their writing skills were improved in terms of organization, content, language, spelling, and fluency. Additionally, students' cooperation to write their essays was strengthened during the instruction. Similarly, Mahdian-Mehr, Aziz-Malayeri, and Bayat (2016) found that brainstorming is an effective pre-writing strategy on Iranian EFL learners' writing skills. Contrastingly to the previous studies on brainstorming technique, Hashempour, Rostampour, and Behjat (2015) found that brainstorming strategy has no significant effect on EFL learners' writing skills. Moreover, the result was similar for both males and females subgroups.

2.3.5. Discourse Markers, Conjunctions, Collocations, and Prefabricated Phrases

Another strategy applied by IELTS practitioners is teaching discourse markers and some studies (Ahmadi-Fatalaki & Nazari, 2015; Serajfard & Allami, 2012; Patriana, Rachmajanti, & Mukminatien, 2016) have investigated it. Ahmadi-Fatalaki and Nazari (2015) found that most of IELTS students used framework and boosters meta-discourse markers as the most frequently used to qualify their writings. Serajfard and Allami (2012) found that teaching engagement markers resulted in more qualified and effective writings by IELTS candidates. Patrianaet, Rachmajanti, and Mukminatien (2016) found that although EFL learners use discourse markers to build coherent texts, there are some problematic areas of applying them and they needed more instruction to use them more appropriately.

Some studies (Heidarnezhadian, Aliakbari, & Mashhadi, 2015; Ghonsooly-Hazare, Khaghaninezhad, & Shahriari-Ahmadi, 2010) discovered that teaching prefabricated phrases are helpful for writing development. Heidarnezhadian, Aliakbari, and Mashhadi (2015) executed a study aiming at enhancing Iranian EFL learners' writing skills through the instruction of prefabricated patterns. The findings of the study indicated the importance of instructing prefabricated patterns since those who were treated by prefabricated patterns outperformed those who were treated in traditional methods in terms of writing skills. Similarly, Ghonsooly-Hazareet, Khaghaninezhad, and Shahriari-Ahmadi (2010) examined the effects of a novel approach named formulaic writing and discovered that those who were taught in this approach outperformed in completing tasks. They also wrote more accurate and coherent texts.

The importance of teaching lexical chunks and collocations was investigated by some studies (Yousefi-Oskuee, Pustchi, & Salehpour, 2012; Li, 2014). Li (2014) studied the improvement of foreign language writing through lexical chunks and found that the more input of English lexical chunks will result in the less signs of negative transfer of their native language. Also, it was discovered that students' foreign language writing was improved in terms of cohesion, sentence building, wording collocation, and expressions. In another study, Yousefi-Oskuee, Pustchi, and Salehpour (2012) studied the effect of pre-teaching vocabulary and collocations on writing development. The result of the study shows that there is a significant difference between pre-teaching vocabulary and collocations and the traditional methods of writing without pre-teaching vocabulary. Furthermore, the result of the study revealed that pre-teaching vocabulary and collocations improves L2 learners' writing fluency by making them aware of learning to write and writing to learn over time.

2.3.6. Technology and Writing

The use of technology in writing improvement is another much researched area. Ocriciano (2016) found that gamification (applying digital games) motivates students towards writing; moreover, it improves their IELTS writing skills in terms of spelling, vocabulary, and sentence structures which result in more qualified pieces of writing.

Some studies (Abuseileek, 2006; Fang, 2010; Van-Leeuwen & Gabriel, 2007) reveal the usefulness of computer-assisted writing programs as important tools to promote writing skill. Van- Leeuwen and Gabriel (2007) conducted a study on the use of word-processor in writing process and found that students are enthusiastic to use it in their writing. Word-processor motivated them to invent and easily try new spellings for the words. As a result, they were more autonomous and it was not necessary to ask their teacher. Similarly, Abuseileek (2006) found that practicing writing through word-processor is more beneficial than the pen-and-paper practice of writing. In another study, Fang (2010) discovered university EFL students' perceptions of a computer-assisted writing program and found that the computer-assisted writing program was beneficial to students in revising their essays because this program provided essential feedbacks. Additionally, Fang (2010) found that these feedbacks had positive effects on students' writing skills by suggesting grammatical changes. Chen and Cheng (2006) found that just the editing function of a computer-assisted program named My Access was beneficial to students for the sake of detecting their grammatical and spelling mistakes and also raising their awareness of the most frequent mistakes. Moreover, it was discovered that the program was more beneficial when the teacher gave feedback on the content and organization of the essays which cannot be helped like surface mistakes by the program. Also, the familiarity level of the instructor with the writing programs and technology was discovered to be beneficial by comparing the different ways that were applied by different instructors.

Other studies (Al-Haq & Al-Sobh; 2010; Armstrong & Retterer, 2008; Dizon & Edelman, 2015; Vurdien, 2012) on the effects of technology on writing development consider the role of blogs in promoting language learners' writing skills. Vurdien (2012) found that blogs motivate students by involving them in peer-correction and self-correction. Additionally, the results of the study revealed that students' consciousness was raised and they were more involved in correcting errors and planning their essays. As the last finding, Vurdien (2012) found that students' collaborative writing skills were improved through interaction on blogs. Similarly, Dizon and Edelman (2015) found that blogs improved critical thinking and class participation in writing classes. In another study, Al-Haq and Al-Sobh (2010) found the effectiveness of an instruction in which

EFL students browsed the related ideas to the subject, sent them to their peers and their teacher, and used their feedbacks in revising their writing.

Some studies (Armstrong & Retterer, 2008; Lin, Groom, & Lin, 2013) explored students' perceptions on the use of blogs. Armstrong and Retterer (2008) found that students felt positive about using blogs and especially about hyper-writing. Similarly, Lin, Groom, and Lin (2013) found that students perceive blog-assisted learning as a useful strategy to improve their writing skills; moreover, they perceive blogs helpful to learn and remember what they need to use in their writing.

A distinctive study on the importance of technology dealt with the examination of word clouds on writing skills development. Baralt, Pennestri, and Selvandin (2015) used word clouds as a visualization tool to improve foreign language writing. Word clouds make the possibility for users to enter the text and based on statistical calculation, the program shape words in a cloud that more frequent words are the in larger fonts. The findings revealed word clouds help students to visualize the words, brainstorm, and generate ideas for the topics of writings. Additionally, word clouds acted as critical consciousness raising tasks because they made students aware of the frequency of used words in their essays and language learners tried to decrease those words which are overused by replacing them with new words.

2.3.7. Collaborative Writing

Some studies (Ajideh, Leitner, & Yazdi-Amirkhiz, 2016; Elola & Oskoz, 2010; Kessler, 2009; Sanonguthai, 2011; Storch, 2005) examined the efficacy of collaborative writing as another essential technique in writing development. Ajideh, Leitner, and Yazdi-Amirkhiz (2016) through examining the quality of IELTS candidates' writing in terms of lexical resources, task achievement, cohesion and coherence, and grammatical range/accuracy found that collaborative writing improved students' writing skills only in terms of task achievement, cohesion, and coherence. Similarly, Sanonguthai (2011) found that collaborative brainstorming and debating about the topics prior to writing is effective on IELTS candidates' writing skills. In another study, Elola and Oskoz (2010) found no significant difference between learners' writings when they wrote individually or collaboratively. Contrastingly, Storch (2005) by comparing the differences between

the texts written by individual learners and those written by pairs, found that although individuals produced longer texts, pairs composed more qualified texts in terms of complexity, task fulfillment, and grammatical accuracy. Additionally, Storch (2005) found that since collaborative writing helps language learners to learn different ways of expressing new ideas, improves their grammatical accuracy, and increases their vocabulary, most of them have positive experiences about writing cooperatively. In another study, Kessler (2009) found that writing wikis collaboratively caused grammatical improvements in language learners' writings; nevertheless, they found that language learners tended less form-demanding collaborative writing activities.

Some other studies (Spence & Cardenas-Cortez, 2011; Lin, 2013) focus on students' attitudes towards workshops and group-work activities. Spence and Cardenas-Cortez (2011) designed a workshop in which students chose their own topics and searched their topics on the internet and then they discussed their topics with their peers and teachers for better development. In the group discussion, they discussed about organization, grammar, and spelling; additionally; they helped each other to revise and edit their writings. Cardenas-Cortez (2011) found that the collaborative writing activities in this workshop improved language learners' writing skills; moreover, they found that language learners were encouraged in the process of writing and enjoyed this workshop. In another study, Lin (2013) found that students preferred negotiated tasks in which they make decisions about what they should write. In addition, students preferred group-work activities rather than working individually. They preferred group-work for: writing more proficiently; learning from each other; providing opportunities to learn team-works and exchanging ideas; strengthening friendship; and being happier.

2.3.8. Other Techniques and Strategies for Writing Development

Still, some other beneficial techniques and strategies were discovered in the related literature. One of these techniques is dictogloss and some studies (Abbasian & Mohammadi, 2013; Kooshafar, Youhanaee, & Amirian, 2012) have examined its efficacy on writing skills development. Kooshafar, Youhanaee, and Amirian (2012) compared the effects of explicit instruction and dictogloss techniques on learners' writing improvement in terms of writing coherent texts. The results revealed that both

dictogloss and explicit instruction affect learners writing improvement, and the results also showed that dictogloss technique has a better effect on learners' writing improvement. In another study, Abbasian and Mohammadi (2013) found that dictogloss technique positively affected EFL learners' general writing abilities. To be more specific, organization and the mechanics of writing were positively affected; while, content, appropriate language use, and vocabulary dimensions of their writing were not that much affected by this approach.

Some other studies (Al-Asmari, 2013; Ferede, Melese, & Tefera, 2012; Okasha & Hamdi, 2014) focus on the efficacy of teaching writing strategies on the development of writing skills. Al-Asmari (2013) discovered the effect of writing strategies and writing apprehension on writing achievement and found that there is a negative correlation between teaching writing strategies and writing anxiety/apprehension. Also, writing achievement was discovered to be negatively correlated with writing apprehension; however, there were positive relationships between writing achievement and teaching writing strategies. Likewise, Okasha and Hamdi (2014) found that teaching writing strategies such as suspending judgment and writing more, taking aside ideas, organizing, planning, developing a topic, adding supporting ideas, rejecting arguing with the other side, elaborating on main ideas, substitution, taking irrelevant information out, adding new information, rearranging, and story writing strategies caused significant changes in EFL learners' writings. Additionally, Ferede, Melese, and Tefera (2012) discovered the importance of teaching writing strategies; however, students' responses revealed the ignorance of teaching writing strategies by most of their teachers. In another study, Griffiths and Jordan (2005) found that those IELTS test-takers who received scores such as 6 or higher, more frequently used strategies for language skills development than those who obtained 5 or lower scores.

Teaching writing based on students' learning styles was discovered as another beneficial strategy in some studies (Ahmed, 2012; Jones, 1998). Ahmed (2012) found obvious improvements in EFL learners' writing performance as a result of teaching based on their learning styles. Their ability to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant sentences, to edit and revise a given text, and to write correct English sentences were developed. Similarly, Jones (1998) gathered students' preferences of learning and taught them based on their learning styles; as a result of the instruction,

students expressed that they have learned "how to organize a longer paper, how to collect and interpret evidence, how to communicate ideas more clearly in writing, and how to use appropriate citations and references" (p. 19). These students also mentioned their preferences of the most helpful activities such as "teacher-student writing conferences, group discussions, peer reviews, multiple revisions of papers, and models of good papers" (p. 20).

Some other studies (Tuan, 2010; Marefat, 1998) investigated the effects of writing journals and diaries on the development of language learners' writing skills. Tuan (2010) discovered that journal writing positively affects learners' writing scores, motivation towards writing, writing fluency and accuracy, and task completion skill. Marefat (1998) investigated the effect of using diaries on teaching writing in which students wrote their feelings, comments, and reactions on the process of teaching. The researcher found diaries to be useful in understanding students' difficulties and interests and based on these diaries, teachers can revise the materials and syllabuses. She also found that students enjoy peer-correction, discussing problems, and simpler texts.

In some studies (Dehghan & Nosratzadeh, 2015; Lytle, 2011; Wessels & Herrera, 2014) the use of different genres of literature was discovered to be effective in language learners' writing performance. Dehghan and Nosratzadeh (2015) investigated the role of drama on Iranian IELTS candidates' writing skill in terms of task response/achievement and cohesion and coherence. The researchers found that, by reading short stories, writing their summaries, and playing the roles of the stories, Iranian IELTS candidates' writing skills were improved in terms of task response and coherence and cohesion; furthermore general writing abilities of the candidates were improved by the application of such a treatment. In another study, Wessels and Herrera (2014) conducted a study in which students visualize the story, create a mental image of the story, draw that image, and write a verbal description of each image. Then, they write the complete story. The findings showed that, students' visualization leads them to a meaningful writing, their ideas are easily transformed to written form, and they actively participate in the writing process. Lytle (2011) found that ballads helped intermediate students to perform better in writing exercises.

Some of the previous studies discovered the role of critical thinking on writing skills (Fahim & Hashtroodi, 2012; Ferede, Melese, & Tefera, 2012; Mozaheb, Seifoori,

& Biglar-Beigi, 2012; Mozaheb, Seifoori, & Biglar-Beigi, 2013). Ferede, Melese, and Tefera (2012) conducted a study and investigated teachers' perceptions of writing and their practices of teaching writing; as a result, they found that most of the teachers believe in the necessity of critical thinking for writing. Nevertheless, Fahim and Hashtroodi (2012) examined the effects of "the techniques of critical thinking such as writing ideas on a piece of paper called admit tickets, writing logs based on the taught materials as homework listing and clustering for certain concepts such as internet, and writing focused free-writes on a specific subject like television for about five minutes or so" (p. 35). The findings revealed that critical thinking has no significant effect on argumentative essay-writing skills.

Some other studies (Ahwang, 2010; Coffin et al., 2003; Nguyen & Nguyet, 2011, Ong & Zhang, 2013) discovered free-writing as another useful technique for writing skills development. Ahwang (2010) found that free-writing practices increased EFL language learners' self-confidence and improved their writing fluency. In another study, Ong and Zhang (2013) found that free-writing enhanced the quality of the learners' writing; moreover, free writing facilitated content retrieval, which enhanced the overall text quality. Similarly, Nguyen and Nguyet (2011) found that free-writing significantly improves writing abilities. In another study, Coffin et al. (2003) proposed free-writing as one of the pre-writing strategies, which is helpful in gathering ideas, collecting information, activating background knowledge, and organizing thoughts.

Mozaheb, Seifoori, and Biglar-Beigi (2012, 2013) investigated the reasons to be an effective English writing teacher and found the reasons to be an effective English writing teacher as follows: 1) having enough knowledge in the field applicable to writing classes; 2) dedicating enough time to writing sessions; 3) using authentic texts; 4) teaching students writing outline; 5) providing situations for critical thinking; 6) fostering strategic writers; 7) using technology in writing classes; 8) using integrative approaches; 9) being patient in writing classes; 10) being aware of new approaches; 11) involving students in different genres of writing; 12) explaining the characteristics of a good writing; 13) considering students' needs; 14) introducing the concept of discourse; and 15) choosing the best way of assessing students' writings.

2.3.9. Correction and Feedback on Writings

Some other studies (Ganji, 2009; Ketabi & Torabi, 2013; Paulus, 1999; Vahdani-Sanavi & Nemati, 2014) investigated the effective techniques and strategies of corrective feedback to improve EFL learners' writing. Ganji (2009) discovered that IELTS candidates who were treated by peer-correction and self-correction outperformed in IELTS essay-writing than those who were treated by traditional teacher correction methods; moreover, it was discovered that the peer-correction was the most effective corrective strategy. Similarly, Ketabi and Torabi (2013) found that peer-correction is more effective than teacher-correction on the development of writing skills. Vahdani-Sanavi and Nemati (2014) found that by applying six different corrective strategies, including direct form, indirect form, error coding, peer-correction, meta-linguistic, and reformulation, the writing proficiency of Iranian EFL learners in task 2 of IELTS was significantly improved. In contrast to Ganji (2009), Vahdani-Sanavi and Nemati (2014) discovered that reformulation strategy was the most effective strategy for writing development. Paulus (1999) discovered more specific results on teacher and peer-correction in comparison to self-correction. S/he discovered that the changes as a result of peers and teachers' feedback are more meaning level in comparison to self-corrective feedbacks which cause surface level changes.

Among the different ways of giving corrective feedback, peer-corrective feedback is much researched by previous studies (Cote, 2014; Saito & Fujita, 2004; Xu, 2007). Saito and Fujita (2004) studied the characteristics of peer-rating and its acceptance by language learners in EFL writing classrooms and it was revealed that students like peer-rating. Moreover, the feedbacks from peers did not influence students' attitudes about the feedbacks. Additionally, it was discovered that peer-rating is significantly correlated with teacher-rating, but no significant correlation was found between self-rating and teacher-rating. In another study, Xu (2007) examined the effects of electronic peer-review in comparison to pen-and-paper peer-reviewing. However, the overall comparison of these two modes of revision revealed no significant difference either in the quality or in the quantity of peer-reviewing. In other words, the changes in the mode of reviewing did not change peers' way of revision and they benefited from both modes. Cote (2014) found that blind-reviewing removes the social interferences

and cause focusing on the type and the amount of errors much better. Moreover, the researcher found that most of the students accepted the changes proposed by peers.

Finally, Riddell (2015) examined the effect of an essay-writing project, which uses frequent feedbacks, applies specific criteria for writing assessment, and students assess other's essays based on these criteria. The findings revealed that students perceive that the repetition of evaluative exercises improves their writing. Also, they agreed that receiving feedbacks help them in writing and revising their own essays. Evaluating others' essays made them aware of their own mistakes. Eventually, they became more critical, gave themselves lower marks, and they were able to see how their instructors evaluate their essays.

2.4. Summary of Empirical Findings

Previous studies revealed two approaches towards writing (Coffin et al., 2003) and some studies proposed a balanced use of them (Hasan & Akhand, 2010; Kamimura, 2000); while, Ho (2006) found that process-oriented approach is more effective than product-oriented and Setyono (2014) found that teachers prefer product-oriented approach in promoting writing skills. Additionally, the effect of task type on writing performance was discovered by some studies and it was clarified that simpler task cause better (Lan, 2015; O'Loughlin & Wigglesworth, 2003) writing performance; while Ahmadi and Mansoordehghan (2014) found that there is no significant difference between candidates' writing performance based on task type. Some studies (Ambe, 2008; Bagheri & Zare, 2009) found the effectiveness of presenting the samples of IELTS writing answers in IELTS candidates' writing skills. Similarly, some other studies (Al-Mansour & Al-Shorman, 2014; Mermelstein, 2015; Tsang, 1996) discovered that teaching writing is highly affected by reading extensively. Moreover, brainstorming was shown to be effective in order to improve writing skills (Khalaf-Ibnian, 2011; Maghsoudi & Haririan, 2013; Mahdian-Mehr, Aziz-Malayeri, & Bayat, 2016); although Hashempour, Rostampour, and Behjat (2015) discovered that brainstorming does not significantly affect writing skills. Technology was also discovered to be effective in teaching writing by the application of computer-assisted writing programs (Abuseileek, 2006; Fang, 2010; Van-Leeuwen & Gabriel, 2007) and

the use of blogs (Al-Haq & Al-Sobh; 2010; Armstrong & Retterer, 2008; Dizon & Edelman, 2015; Vurdien, 2012).

Besides these techniques, there were some elements such as discourse markers (Ahmadi-Fatalaki & Nazari, 2015; Serajfard & Allami, 2012; Patriana, Rachmajanti, & Mukminatien, 2016), lexical chunks (Yousefi-Oskuee, Pustchi, & Salehpour, 2012; Li, 2014), and prefabricated phrases (Heidarnezhadian, Aliakbari, & Mashhadi, 2015; Ghonsooly-Hazare, Khaghaninezhad, & Shahriari-Ahmadi, 2010) which teaching them were discovered to be effective for writing improvement.

Still, there were some other strategies and techniques for writing skills development such as dictogloss (Abbasian & Mohammadi, 2013; Kooshafar, Youhanaee, & Amirian, 2012), teaching writing strategies (Al-Asmari, 2013; Ferede, Melese, & Tefera, 2012; Okasha & Hamdi, 2014), teaching writing based on students' learning styles (Ahmed, 2012; Jones, 1998), asking students to write journals and diaries (Tuan, 2010; Marefat, 1998), and using different genres of literature (Dehghan & Nosratzadeh, 2015; Lytle, 2011; Wessels & Herrera, 2014). Finally, some studies revealed the effectiveness of peer feedbacks in peer-correction process (Ganji, 2009; Ketabi & Torabi, 2013; Paulus, 1999).

The review of related literature revealed the usefulness of some techniques for writing skills development. However, the insufficiency and incomprehensiveness of these techniques in eliminating IELTS candidates' writing problems cause teachers and students to look for new techniques. Moreover, most of the previous studies ignored to explore why these techniques are important and how IELTS practitioners can apply them. This study aims at exploring IELTS teachers' perspectives on techniques and strategies in teaching IELTS writing.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Overview

In this chapter first of all some explanation about grounded theory (GT) are presented. Afterwards, a historical background to the varieties of GT is presented. After that, the researcher has explained constructing GT in details and its research methodology is explained from Charmaz (2006) point of view. Finally, the researcher has explained his research methodology and how he has used constructing GT in his research.

3.2. Grounded Theory

Although the general tendency of the public regards science as a phenomenon which is related to numbers and precision we can derive more fruitfulness and greater depth of understanding from the qualitative procedures (Berg, 2001). As well, qualitative research refers to what and how of things, meanings, concepts, characteristics, and descriptions of things (Berg, 2001). Of course, research method is not capable of generating a suitable research, what is important is how the researcher uses the method (Charmaz, 2006).

One of the different kinds of qualitative studies is grounded theory (GT). Creswell (2012) states that "grounded theory enables you to generate a broad theory about your qualitative central phenomenon "grounded" in the data" (p. 422). Creswell (2012) adds that this theory is a procedural theory and grounded theorists collect data, construct categories, and connect them to form a theory which explains the process of actions, events, activities, and interaction during the time. Charmaz who is one of the famous authors in relation to GT claims that "Grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2). Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) cite that GT is a method of developing theory during the analysis and gradually building up a systematic theory that is grounded in the observations. Creswell (2012) presents two usages of GT. The first one is using GT when researchers need a broad theory and existing theories cannot explain their problems or participants. The second usage is when researchers want to study and explain how of a process.

3.3. Historical Background of GT

Kenny and Fourie (2014) state that "grounded theory was the innovative brainchild of two American Sociologists, Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss" (p. 1). Bryant and Charmaz (2007) explain that what has brought these two researchers together is a family bereavement which has been caused by losing one of their dearest family members for the sake of an illness. This grief caused them to publish their first paper at 1965 named *Awareness of Dying* (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Afterwards, they published *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* in 1967 (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) claim that most of the present writings concern about accurate facts and test social research theories in a carful manner. These writings explain that social research needs verifying the generated theory and most of the social researchers have devoted their studies to testing the existing or already generated theories. Glaser and Strauss (1967) continued that eradicating this concern will be achieved by discovering theories from data and they called this approach grounded theory, which works and fits empirical positions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Additionally, they construe grounded theory different from a logico-deductive theory since grounded theory is inductively developed by doing a social research. Unlike logically deduced theories, the complete refutation of the theory is not possible by collecting more data or other established theories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Later on, although Strauss reformulated the original grounded theory, Glaser defended the original GT that was later identified as classic GT (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Kenny & Fourie, 2014). The original notion of classic GT is emerging theory from data (Kenny & Fourie, 2014). Glaser (1992) emphasized the importance of the data-driven theory rather than setting systematic stages. GT is all about generating of emergent conceptualizations into integrated patterns (Glaser 2002). Christiansen (2007) mentions conceptualization as the most important and problematic issue in GT. He adds that conceptualization is discovering and naming hidden patterns and relationships between these patterns as they are emerged and verified by data. Therefore, if a researcher can conceptualize, s/he can trust the emergence of theory, if not the theory cannot be emerged (Glaser 2002).

In 1990, Strauss joined Juliet Corbin and they revised the basic features of classic GT (Kenny & Fourie, 2014). Although many essential features were maintained there were some differences between the original GT and Strauss-Corbin GT (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Kenny and Fourie (2014) explain that Strauss and Corbin revised the perception of the natural emergence of theories out of the data and introduced an analytical and prescriptive coding procedure to systematically deduce theory from data. As well, a closer look at their definition of grounded theory reveals the systematic procedure that they added to the original GT. They define GT as a theory derived from the systematically gathered and analyzed data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998); whereas, the definition of GT in the original form was discovering theory from the data and nothing more (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) claimed that people describe their experience of their environment and these descriptions are the basis of conceptual ordering. By conceptual ordering they mean organizing data into discrete categories based on their characteristics and then using these descriptions to explain categories. Strauss and Corbin (1998) used systematic coding to conceptually order raw data. This systematic coding procedure had three stages, including: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained the process of open coding as fracturing data into discrete parts and closely examining them to find similarities and differences. Also, during open coding concepts are determined through comparing incidents in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Additionally, actions, events, happenings, and objects that are conceptually similar in meaning or nature make a group together and come under a more abstract concept named category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The second coding procedure is axial coding which helps researchers to determine subcategories of each category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As Strauss and Corbin (1998) remark the term axial refers to relating categories to their sub-categories to complete the explanations about phenomena and its purpose is to resemble the fractured data during open coding. Furthermore, they believe that subcategories are also categories, but they cannot stand alone and explain a broad action, statement, or phenomenon. Instead, subcategories are determiners of when, how, what, and why of a

category to extend the category and clarify the details of the phenomenon that category stands for (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The third coding procedure is selective coding in which researchers integrate categories to form a large theoretical scheme and present findings in a form of theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Strauss and Corbin explain that integration of categories means organizing them around a central concept and deciding on central category. After outlining theoretical scheme, categories should be refined to expand poorly developed categories and remove excess parts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Central category is sometimes named core category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1998) claim that this core category is the central theme of a research and it has the analytic power of control because it can pull other categories to create a whole that is explanatory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). They add that core category is capable of accounting for every variation in all other categories. In order to select the core category, Strauss and Corbin (1998) present two criteria such as being central (other categories can be linked to it) and appearing most frequently in the gathered data.

Theoretical sampling in reformulated GT is based on three systematic coding procedures proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Thus, three procedures in theoretical sampling are as follows: sampling in open coding, sampling in axial coding, and sampling in selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the following, these coding procedures which are used to sample theoretically in GT will be explained one by one and then the use of each one in the current study will be discussed.

The first step is sampling in open coding. Since " The aim of open coding is to discover, name, and categorize phenomena according to their properties and dimensions, it follows that the aim of data gathering at this time is to keep the collection process open to all possibilities" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 206). So, as Strauss and Corbin (1998) state that sampling in open coding is open to all persons, situations, and places which are capable of providing the opportunities of discovering about the fact. Additionally, they believe that the choice of interviewees or observational cites is open to the researcher. To aim this, s/he can purposefully choose every person who is capable of providing data or s/he can select them based on a list of names (Strauss & Corbin,

1998). This openness is because no concept has proved the theory of the study yet (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The second step is relational or variational sampling, which occurs in axial coding procedure (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Strauss and Corbin claim that the aim of axial coding is relating categories to their subcategories and further development of categories in terms of properties and dimensions. Hence, in this part of data analysis, sampling aims at selecting incidents and events from previous or new data to identify variations or dimensional range of the categories and the relations between them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The third step is discriminate sampling, which occurs in selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). They add that " the aim of selective coding is to integrate the categories along the dimensional level to form a theory, validate the statement of relationship among the concepts, and fill in any categories in need of further refinement" (p. 211). Hence, sampling becomes deliberate and researcher chooses those who will maximize the differences for comparative analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This needs to go back to old or new sources of data to gather useful data in order to validate and saturate categories and finally complete the study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

3.4. Constructing GT

Constructing approach to GT was first articulated by Charmaz (Creswell, 2012). Charmaz was one of the Strauss's students and learned GT from both Glaser and Strauss (Kenny & Fourie, 2014). Creswell (2012) expresses that Charmaz focuses on meanings which are ascribed by participants of a study; moreover, "she is more interested in the views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, and ideologies of individuals than in gathering facts and describing acts" (p. 429). Charmaz (2006) states: "Grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves" (p. 2). With a close look at her definition of GT we can see her belief in a flexible method. She also adds that instead of giving fixed prescription, GT gives researchers flexible guidelines.

Charmaz (2006) argues that " I view grounded theory methods as a set of principles and practices, not as prescriptions or packages" (p. 9). She adds: "I emphasize flexible guidelines, not methodological rules, recipes, and requirements" (p. 9). Charmaz (2006) claims that in the classic GT Glaser and Strauss express about discovering emerging theories from data, detached from the researcher. Unlike Glaser and Strauss, Charmaz (2006) in her interactional theory claims that neither theories nor data are discoverable. Instead, we are part of the data we are gathering and we are part of the world we are trying to study. GT is constructed by our interactions and involvements with people, research practices, and perspectives in the past or in the present time (Charmaz, 2006). In the following, procedures and characteristics of constructing GT will be explained.

3.4.1. Data Collection

Charmaz (2006) claims that grounded theories can be constructed by gathering rich data. She adds that rich data are detailed, full, and focused. Rich data reveal contexts, actions, feeling, views, and intentions of the participants. Additionally, it gives the researcher solid materials to build a crucial analysis (Charmaz, 2006). She enumerates various types of data collection, including interviews, field notes, and information in reports and records. In another discussion about starting grounded theory, she adds other sources for data collection these are observations, materials, and interactions. Mason (2002) remarks, interviews are one of the most common methods of data collection for qualitative methods.

3.4.1.1. Intensive Interviewing

Charmaz (2006) introduces the notion of intensive interviews whose in-depth nature helps the researcher to elicit participants' interpretation of their experiences. Additionally, she states that "by creating open-ended, non-judgmental questions, you encourage unanticipated statements and stories to emerge" (p. 26). Charmaz (2006) explain that interviewers' questions require participants to describe their experience of real life. She adds that the interviewer should listen, observe sensitively, and encourage

the participants to respond and articulate their experiences. As the interview continues the interviewer asks more to clarify details and obtain more accurate information about the experience of participants (Charmaz, 2006). She characterizes intensive interview as follows:

• Go beneath the surface of the described experience(s)

• Stop to explore a statement or topic

• Request more detail or explanation

• Ask about the participant's thoughts, feelings, and actions

• Keep the participant on the subject

• Come back to an earlier point

• Restate the participant's point to check for accuracy

• Slow or quicken the pace

• Shift the immediate topic

• Validate the participant's humanity, perspective, or action

• Use observational and social skills to further the discussion

• Respect the participant and express appreciation for participating (p. 26).

Intensive interviewing fits GT because both of them are open-ended, but directed, paced, but unrestricted, shaped, but emergent (Charmaz, 2006). GT methods require researchers to have more control over collecting and analyzing data and these methods depend on flexibility. Charmaz (2006) claims that intensive interviewing has both of these features (having control upon data and being flexible) that causes it to fit with GT methods.

3.4.1.2. Field Notes

The data for GT can be constructed by field notes, existing information in reports and records, and interviews (Charmaz, 2006). So, field notes are another source of data collection. They help a researcher to build a grounded theory by providing rich data (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) explains the characteristics of field notes in grounded theory as follows: they are based on the participants' language use, record individual actions, highlight the most important processes, and contain all of the details during the observation.

Creswell (2012) explains that, although the shortage of time may cause you to analyze data by listening to audios or reading field notes, the complete procedure is transcribing both of them and converting them to a computer file to be analyzed. Charmaz (2006) believe that transcribing interviews and field notes is beneficial because researchers are not supposed to read and code data only one time, instead they need to turn back and recode the data. So, transcription will preserve all the details about the data to help researchers ignite new ideas later (Charmaz, 2006).

3.4.2. Data Analysis

After gathering rich data, the first analytic procedure is coding (Charmaz, 2006). She defines coding as a process of naming pieces of data with labels to account, summarize, and categorize each segment of data. Coding is the pivotal link between data collection and emerging theory that explain the collected data (Charamz, 2006). She enumerates two main phases to construct GT coding, initial coding and focused coding. In the following, these two phases will be discussed in more details.

Charmaz (2006) explains that in initial coding researchers are open to all theoretical possibilities that can be discerned from the data. She adds that the openness of coding sparks thinking and letting novel ideas to come out. During this phase a researcher should stick strictly to data and see actions in each piece of data rather than using preexisting categories (Charmaz, 2006). She characterizes initial codes as temporal and grounded in the data because researchers are free and can create or reword existing codes to aim fitting them with the collected data. She believes in the use of

initial sampling to move researchers ahead in identifying the core conceptual categories. Finally, she proposes three ways of initial coding including word by word, line by line, or incident to incident.

Focused coding involves researchers to sift the most important and frequent initials codes from the great amount of data (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) points out that the purpose of focused coding is to make the decision of selecting those initial codes that make the most analytical sense and completely categorize your data. She adds that moving from initial coding towards focused coding is not linear. Some statements make explicit what was implicit in previous statements and researchers encounter eureka experience and return to the data to make it fresh (Charmaz, 2006). Moreover, GT researchers should act upon the collected data rather than reading them passively (Charmaz, 2006). She claims that through comparing data to data a researcher develops focused coding and by comparing data to these codes s/he refines these codes.

The third kind of coding procedure was proposed by Strauss and Corbin as the second coding step in their data analysis (1998). As Strauss and Corbin (1998) remark the term axial refers to relating categories to their sub-categories to complete the explanations about phenomena and its purpose is to resemble the fractured data during open coding. They add that in axial coding questions such as when, where, why, who, how, and what can describe experiences more precisely. To answer these questions they apply scientific terms such as conditions, actions/interactions, and consequences and this helps them to reveal the links between categories (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) explains that axial coding gives a frame to researchers and it depends on themselves to use it or not. If they can tolerate the ambiguity they do not need doing that. But if they cannot tolerate the ambiguity and need a preset structure, they attend to apply it in their research. As it can be seen from the following statement by Charmaz (2006), she does not apply axial coding in the systematic way that Strauss and Corbin used.

> Although I have not used axial coding according to Strauss and Corbin's formal procedures, I have developed subcategories of a category and showed the links between them as I learned about the experiences the categories represent (p. 61).

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3.4.3. Theoretical Sensitivity

Theoretical sensitivity is defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as the ability of conceptualizing and formulating a theory emerging from the data. It is developed over years of thinking and searching different theories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). They add that another characteristic of theoretical sensitivity is involving researchers to have theoretical insight into their research. Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 42) state: "theoretical sensitivity refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't". Strauss and Corbin (1990) present two kinds of sources for theoretical sensitivity, one is from the background of researcher (personal experience and literature) and the other is from the analytic process during the research, through the frequent contact with data.

Charmaz (2006) proposes fostering theoretical sensitivity through theorizing and claims that gaining theoretical sensitivity needs to see "studied life from multiple vantage points, make comparisons, follow leads, and build on ideas" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 135). She adds that for the sake of going ahead through theorizing, researchers cannot foresee the endpoint either it is impossible to stop during the way. The practice of theorizing depends on researchers' findings in the field of study (Charmaz, 2006). Also, she proposes using gerunds to promote theoretical sensitivity for the sake of their ability to warn us about static topics and passive processes.

3.4.4. Constant Comparative Methods

GT researchers collect data, organize the data into categories, gather additional data, and compare new data with emerging categories (Creswell, 2012). Constant comparative method is an inductive data analysis process in GT to generate categories and connect them together through comparison of "incidents in the data to other incidents, incidents to categories, and categories to other categories" (Creswell, 2012, p. 434). Charmaz (2006) points out that, researchers compare data with data to find similarities and differences. They may compare the statements of each participant within the same interview and the statements of participants in different interviews (Charmaz, 2006). They also may compare statements of the same participant in

different interviews during the time or observations of events at different places and times (Charmaz, 2006).

3.4.5. Theoretical Sampling and Saturation

After making comparison between data and selecting focused codes, some categories seem thin and their properties need to be clarified by researchers (Charmaz, 2006). To aim this, researchers need to collect more data and develop categories and their properties (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) defines this strategy as theoretical sampling, which is searching for relevant data to improve and elaborate categories of emerging theory. She claims that this feature distinguishes theoretical sampling from other kind of sampling.

Charmaz (2006) adds that every researcher seeks to collect data to support his or her research questions; however, this kind of searching for the data is initial sampling. Initial sampling helps researchers to start where to go and sample people and places; instead, theoretical sampling directs where to go to develop the theory (Charmaz, 2006). Moreover, representativeness of the population to generalize the result of GT is not the area of concern in theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006).

Charmaz (2006) states that because the intention of researchers for using theoretical sampling is refining categories, conducting this kind of sampling depends on previously established categories. She adds that theoretical sampling is a pivotal strategy at GT that delineates and expands properties of categories. It promotes researchers to predict where and how they can find the required data "to fill gaps and to saturate categories" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 103). Then, researchers go to places to find these data and illuminate categories (Charmaz, 2006). After that, they can collect data and compare these codes with each other, previous codes, and emerging categories (Charmaz, 2006).

During theoretical sampling, researchers seek for new cases, events, and statements that illuminate categories (Charmaz, 2006). As a result, they may sample new participants, ask previously sampled participants further questions, or ask them about experiences that have not been covered by the researcher (Charmaz, 2006). This

specific kind of reasoning in GT is both inductive and deductive; in other words, it is abductive because researchers deduce a prediction and find the samples of this prediction in subsequent data collection (Charmaz, 2006). It entails " considering all possible theoretical explanations for the data, forming hypotheses for each possible explanation, checking them empirically by examining the data, and pursuing the most plausible explanation" (p. 104).

Charmaz (2006) states that theoretical sampling is a kind of emergent process in which a researcher should analyze the data otherwise s/he will not be aware of what ideas need to be sampled. It can be used in both beginning and later stages of research. Researchers should use it as a strategy to narrow their focus on emerging categories and expand and refine categories (Charmaz, 2006). Also, theoretical sampling depends on comparative methods to fill gaps between categories (Charmaz, 2006). By gaps among categories Charmaz means "your current categories do not account for the full range of relevant experience" (2006, p. 108).

In GT, gathering data is finished when theoretical saturation happens; in other words, when categories are saturated and this happens when collecting new data does not spark fresh theoretical insights, nor does it expose new characteristic for categories (Charmaz, 2006). Although many researchers interpret theoretical saturation as the repetition of events and statements, theoretical saturation is not considered as repetition of events, stories, actions, or statements; instead, the common use of theoretical saturation "refers to nothing new happening" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 113).

3.4.6. Memo Writing

During the research process, researchers write memos to elaborate some ideas about their data and the categories they have coded (Creswell, 2012). Charmaz (2006, p. 72) calls them " informal analytic notes" which plan, detail, and record the most important analytic part in the process of research. Similarly, Charmaz (2006) states that researchers begin by writing in relation to their codes and data and move to theoretical categories and writing them is kept during the process of research.

Charmaz (2006) declare that memo writing is an essential midway step between gathering data and writing drafts of research papers. She adds that memos promote researchers to analyze their data and codes in the early stages of the research process. Thus, memos involve researchers in analysis and assist them to boost their ideas' level of abstraction (Charmaz, 2006). Another usage of memos is giving place and space to make "comparison between data and data, data and codes, codes of data and other codes, codes and category, and category and concept" to guess about these comparisons (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72).

Charmaz (2006) states that, memos are written informally and unofficially which are used personally in the research process. Memos may be short and written freely in a way that works for researchers, but what is important is writing down their ideas about codes and data in a narrative form and storing them in a computer file (Charmaz, 2006). She claims that memo writing is a kind of explicating meanings by digging into implicit and condensed meanings in the data. She also introduces clustering and free writing as two exercises before writing memos.

Writing memos on codes helps researchers to clarify the happenings in the field of research (Charmaz, 2006). In GT, memo writing is dependent on conceptual categories which are constructed by some codes (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) declares that, memos can be used to increase focused codes. She explains that writing memos on focused codes help you to construct and elucidate your categories through examining all covered (covered by this category) data and discovering variations within this category and among other categories.

3.5. The Study

In this part of chapter three the methodology of current study is explained and it has been clarified that how the researcher has used the principles and procedures of constructing GT.

3.5.1. Research Context

The productive nature of writing provides a situation for people to judge more precisely the written materials. Thus, writing becomes an essential skill for educated people and teaching writing seems to be important. Writing teachers should use all of their powers to teach writing in the best way. Writing has been taught by different institutes and it has been tested by administering different exams. One of these tests is the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

IELTS is a high-stakes test because the result of this test is necessary for those who want to go to English language countries for the purpose of studying or working. Moreover, in the context of this research, an approval of sound level of English language proficiency is required for the Ph.D. program and IELTS degree can provide this requirement. As a result, many institutes all over the world teach language skills, including writing, to prepare IELTS candidates.

The present study took place in Iran, a country in south-west of Asia, with Persian language as the formal language. Persian is the most common spoken language of most cities and the only formal written language of the country. However, English is highly considered in Iran. Many language learners enroll in private language institutes to learn English for different purposes. These institutes have different kinds of classes to prepare language learners for their purposes. One of these purposes is being prepared for IELTS test and many institutes are providing the opportunity for language learners to master IELTS test.

IELTS preparation classes are highly appreciated and lots of candidates enroll in these classes. Although many institutes in most of cities in Iran teach IELTS writing, I selected teachers of just four cities including Tehran, Gorgan, Mashhad, and Semnan who were introduced by other participants and met the proposed characteristics of the sample of the study. These teachers have both the related degree in English language teaching and the experience of teaching IELTS writing. In addition, the selected cities, institutes, and teachers are the greatest ones in teaching IELTS among the other cities, institutes, and teachers.

3.5.2. Research Method

Constructing GT presented by Charmaz (2006) was chosen as the method of current research. Accordingly, the methodology of research is designed based on the principles of constructing GT. Every part of the research methodology is completed in referring to these principles and reported in the following.

3.5.2.1. Sampling Procedure

Theoretical sampling is well matched with constructing GT. However, before theoretically sampling concepts to develop categories, the researcher needed to sample people in initial sampling. To achieve this goal, the researcher went to places and people who were teaching English language skills (specially writing skill) in IELTS preparatory courses. Among the private English language institutes, he selected institutes with the primary focus on teaching IELTS skills. So, language institutes were sifted and specialized ones were found to be more helpful in achieving the purpose of the research. Therefore, IELTS writing teachers who had great experience in the top IELTS teaching institutes were selected. Since finding the best cases to participate in this research was a difficult job and needed knowing experts of the field very well (that was not possible for the researcher), he asked his colleagues, language principals, and already interviewed participants (snowball sampling) to introduce the greatest IELTS writing teachers.

Then, using snowball sampling helped the researcher to find teachers that finding them by the researcher himself was not possible. Hancock, Windridge, and Ockleford (2007) state that snowball sampling relies on referrals and it is a kind of sampling that one participant recruits others. They also add that this kind of sampling helps researchers to create informal networks that might be difficult to access participants in other ways. Mason (2002) proposes that snowball sampling is a method that you begin with one person or one sampling category and ask for similar or known types which are in touch. In this study, whenever it was needed the researcher asked participants to introduce other teachers that they knew in the field of teaching IELTS writing.

When some categories were developed, the later stages of the investigation necessitated sampling theoretically to develop and refine these categories. Theoretical sampling directed the researcher where to go to find relevant data for fulfillment and refinement of established categories. To be more specific, he asked questions from previously interviewed participants to explain more about their statements or to explain their ideas about the presented concepts by other participants. Also, sometimes he needed to find new teachers who would be more helpful in developing theoretical concepts. Thus, he interviewed them and posed accommodating questions to fulfill the existed gaps in the previous data. As a result, he could refine and develop the properties of categories based on the already collected data.

Theoretical sampling continued till categories were developed and their properties were determined. In other words, when categories were saturated theoretical sampling was finished. The researcher found that new data do not spark new dimensions or properties for categories; thus, he stopped gathering data and quitted theoretical sampling. At this time he had well developed categories that no new properties could be added to them and they were refined different times.

3.5.2.2. Participants

According to the principles of theoretical sampling, 13 IELTS teachers participated in the current investigation. All of these participants had a high level academic degree in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). 3 participants had Ph.D. in English language teaching, 1 of them was already accepted in the Ph.D. program, and 9 participants had an M.A. degree in TEFL. Additionally, all of them had enough experience in teaching writing skills to the candidates of IELTS test. These teachers teach writing in the top IELTS institutes of four cities of Iran, including Tehran, Mashhad, Gorgan, and Semnan.

Table 1: Participants' demographics

Interviewees	Age	Gender	Degree in TEFL	City	Years of experience
1	29	Female	M.A.	Semnan	6
2	30	Male	M.A	Semnan	5
3	35	Female	Ph.D. candidate	Semnan	9
4	45	Male	Ph.D.	Tehran	14
5	50	Male	M.A.	Tehran	16
6	48	Male	M.A.	Tehran	13
7	35	Male	M.A.	Mashhad	9
8	48	Male	M.A	Gorgan	16
9	52	Male	Ph.D.	Mashhad	15
10	45	Male	M.A.	Gorgan	12
11	35	Male	Ph.D.	Tehran	8
12	27	Female	M.A	Semnan	6
13	54	Male	M.A.	Gorgan	18

3.5.2.3. Data Collection

Among the different methods of collecting constructing GT data, the researcher used intensive interviews and field notes to collect his data. Although he intended to observe participants' classes, none of the participants agreed on this. They excused and explained their reasons for disagreement as principals' denying and students' disapproval.

Intensive interviewing, as it was explained from the Charmaz's (2006) point of view, helped the researcher to ask open-ended nonjudgmental questions. In this research, the researcher interviewed participants face-to-face and interviewing process was audio-taped for further steps of the study. To record the interview process the researcher needed to get participants' permission. Because of some misunderstandings, some of them did not give the permission firstly; but, the researcher explained the reasons for audio-recording and ensured them that their identities and voices would not be exposed and finally, they gave the permission for audio recording. Then, the face-to-face intensive interviews were conducted and audio-taped.

The first interview question was: What techniques do you personally use in teaching IELTS writing? But, as the process of interviewing and analyzing the data was continued cyclically, other questions were asked in supporting the answer of this question. Thus, other questions emerged from the first analysis of the interviews to deepen the collected data. Other questions were: do you teach grammar in IELTS writing classes? Why do you teach grammar? What criteria do you use in selecting grammar points? Do you teach vocabulary in IELTS writing classes? Why do you teach vocabulary? What criteria do you use in selecting vocabulary? Do you use IELTS answer samples in teaching writing? What kind of samples do you use? How do you use samples in teaching writing? Do you use prefabricated phrase? Why? How? Do you use technology in teaching IELTS writing? Why do you use technology? How do you use technology? What techniques do you use in teaching the graph writing task?

During the interviews, the researcher listened to the interviewees carefully and wrote down important notes. He asked questions to find more about their experiences. He also questioned how and why of interviewees' claims. Because the questions were open-ended, he could understand the details about the participants' ideas and experiences. Interviewees explained their ideas and experiences and wherever their statements needed clarification, the researcher posed new questions.

From the first seconds of the meeting, the researcher wrote down all essential explanations about the place of the classes, teachers and institutes' experience and resume, important statements and ideas by the participants, and samples of used-writing-tasks and students' writings. These field notes helped the researcher to enrich data collection because if some parts of the statements were not understandable, these

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notes would help him to better understand the data. Finally, all of the field notes were transcribed into the word files to be analyzed easier in the later stages.

3.5.2.4. Data Analysis

Just like the differences between the nature of qualitative and quantitative studies, the process of analyzing the collected data is different in these two methods. Although quantitative data can be analyzed by applying softwares like SPSS, qualitative data cannot be analyzed by computers. This idea is also supported by Berg (2001) who comments that qualitative research needs much more time and it is impossible to analyze its data by running computer programs. However, as stated by Creswell (2012), computer softwares can provide you some features (storing, organizing, labeling, and searching through the data) to facilitate the analysis of the data, but before analyzing the data, researchers need to organize and transcribe the data.

In the current investigation, the researcher, organized the data by storing all types of the data in separated folders based on the name of each participant. Then, he transcribed the gathered data by both interviews and field notes and stored the audio file, the transcribed file, and the field-note file in a folder. In the next step, to prepare the data for analysis, all of the transcribed files were copied in a single word document. This helped the researcher to search, label, highlight, and color words more conveniently for data analysis.

By reading the data different times the researcher extracted some initial codes. Initial coding was open to all possibilities, so the researcher could code concepts freely. He also could revise the initial codes to fit more appropriately with the data. So, the initial codes were temporal and reading data different times caused changes in the initial codes. Initially extracted codes were embryonic and needed to be developed by collecting new data.

The next analytic step was focused coding. During this stage the researcher selected those initial codes which were the most frequent and important ones. This would help the researcher to select the categories which were the best representations of his data; in other words, selected codes during focused coding could categorize the data

completely. Through constant comparative methods, the researcher compared previous data to already collected data to develop categories and by comparing data to the established codes he refined codes. He also used axial coding to relate categories to their subcategories, and determine how, why, and what of each code.

3.5.2.5. Establishing Credibility

Coding procedures were revised different times to ensure the development of appropriate and consistent categories. Further, the researcher should ensure that accurate findings and interpretations have been developed. This means that the accuracy and credibility of the findings should be determined by the use of strategies such as triangulation and member checking (Creswell, 2012). Member checking involves participants to check the accuracy of the findings after the data is given back to them (Creswell, 2012). By the use of member checking the researcher ensured the validity of developed categories and whether these are what participants meant or not. To do this, found categories were given to the participants to check and affirm their responses, views, and experiences.

3.5.2.6. Illustration of Coding Procedures

In this part an illustration of how the collected data were coded is discussed. For example, in the following an extract from an interview is presented and the researcher read it different times during open coding.

> In the site of IELTS, some guidelines for band scores are explained. I use these guidelines and explain who will receive 6 and who will receive 8 and how they should write to receive a specific score. Four factors such as task response, coherence and cohesion, grammatical version and accuracy, and lexical resources are considered to score IELTS writing skill. I explain each of them for the

learners. For example, I tell them task response means that you should completely answer the question and you should avoid presenting unrelated information. After I explained all of the factors I apply them in a writing to make learners acquainted with them by the use of this sample. Then, I ask them to write based on these scoring criteria and finally I check whether they have regarded these factors or not.

On initial coding stage by reading this part of the data different times the researcher decided to code it as "Teaching Writing Based on Scoring Criteria" since the practitioner is explaining about how he teaches writing skills by clarifying some criteria which affect writing score. Moreover, in the axial coding stage the researcher read the data again and determined some dimensions to this category. The specified dimensions are as follows: what criteria should be clarified in this technique? How should practitioners apply this technique in their classes? And why this technique is important? The answers to these questions determine the dimensions of this category.

The criteria such as task response, coherence and cohesion, grammatical version and accuracy, and lexical resources determine one dimension of Teaching Based on Scoring Criteria. Applying these criteria in a piece of writing and giving it to students to raise their consciousness and asking them to apply them in their own writings is another dimension for the category. To discover why these criteria should be practiced, the researcher noticed the interviewee's reference to the site of IELTS which means IELTS examiners consider these criteria to be important in scoring. Finally, since this category constructed and represented an important part of the data, the researcher developed it as an important category in his study.

3.5.2.7. Procedure

The current study used qualitative methods of research to explore and explain useful techniques and strategies in teaching writing skill for the IELTS test. It also constructed a theory by the use of grounded theory. The researcher theoretically sampled the participants of the study. He went to some of the best IELTS teachers with

the high-experience and the sound knowledge of English language teaching and got the permission to interview (intensive interview) them and record their voice. Then, after interviewing three or four participants, he analyzed the data. Consequently, some initial codes were extracted from the participants' statements. These codes, represented techniques used in teaching IELTS writing. So, subsequent questions were posed and in the next interviews he followed to find the answer of these questions to saturate his categories. Data collection and data analysis were not linear; instead, they were cyclical and after analyzing the presented concepts by three or four participants the researcher analyzed the data and analyzing the data head him in collecting the relevant data. Thus, the interviews became more structured after each analysis. Also, the most important and frequent initial codes were sifted and formed the focused codes. During this stage the researcher went to the earlier or new participants to develop or refine these categories. Additionally, categories were related to their subcategories, and the core category was determined. Finally, through member checking found categories were affirmed by the participants.

CHAPTER

FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1. Overview

The findings of the study are presented are in the current chapter. This study discovered 13 categories that in each category some useful techniques and the rationale behind the use of these techniques are clarified. One of the techniques was teaching writing based on scoring criteria in which candidates discover how to write to get their desired scores. Moreover, teaching elements such as discourse markers, conjunctions, grammar, and vocabulary were discovered to be effective in teaching IELTS writing skills. Additionally, there are some other techniques such as presenting the samples of writing, teaching prefabricated phrases, teaching how to think and write in target language, explaining the structure of writings, brainstorming, and   techniques for teaching graphs which are discussed in the following.

4.2. Presenting the Samples of Writings

Having sufficient writing skills is highly associated with reading sufficient samples of writings. Reading the standard samples of writings helps learners to master writing skills. As a matter of fact, some teachers believe in exposing learners to adequate samples of writings to achieve the improvement of learners' writing skills. In support of this statement one of the interviewees, Mona, says:

> One of the techniques that I use to improve learners' writing skills is using samples. Since reading is the basis for writing and it helps them to write more effectively, I expose candidates to different samples of writing answers and they should read plenty of these samples. The more they are exposed to the samples, the stronger their writing skills will be.

Although the importance of reading samples of writings is obvious, some practitioners start with students' writing problems and try to remove these problems by

requiring and teaching them to write; while, they should present some samples of writings to make students acquainted with writings. Mohammad, one of the interviewees, supports this idea as follows:

> One of the some IELTS teachers' mistake is starting by working on writing and mentioning the learners' writing problems in the first place. But in my view, before engaging learners in writing, we should present some samples of writings and students should read these samples to be acquainted with the structure of writing. In other words, teachers should work on receptive skills prior to productive ones.

Furthermore, samples are useful in eliminating problems in basic writing skills. They can help learners in eliminating the problems of punctuation, spelling, and dictation. Basic writing skills are the foundation of skillful writing, which is necessary in advanced levels such as IELTS test. Thus, eliminating the problems related to basic writing skills, which exist among language learners is important. Hence, the use of samples can help solving these problems in learners' writings. Furthermore, reading activities outside IELTS classes is helpful for the improvement of some basic writing skills such as dictation. In support of this statement Mina, one of the interviewees, says:

> I think the use of samples helps language learners to eliminate the problems in basic writing skills. They should read enough samples to raise their awareness about basic writing skills. For example, if I see an IELTS candidate has punctuation problems, I ask him or her to read some samples of writings. As a result, his or her punctuation skill will be improved by seeing the use of punctuation in different sample answers. Moreover, some of the problems

related to basic writing skills such as dictation, cannot be solved in IELTS classes; however, it should be overcame through reading texts outside IELTS classes.

Samples are assisting in discovering the basic rules of writings. Moreover, they help language learners to discover different parts of writings. Akbar, one of the interviewees, believes that:

> The first technique to overcome writing problems is giving samples. Through reading samples, students discover the basic rules of writings and they learn how to write effectively. For example, they are acquainted with the ways of writing a topic sentence for each paragraph and the supporting sentences for each topic sentence.

Reading some samples of writings is beneficial in learning the whole structure and organization of writings. More specifically, samples can help learners to discover what a good piece of writing looks like, how it starts, how its body continues, and how it finishes. All of these can be learned through reading the writing samples. One of the interviewees, Reza, supports this claim as follows:

> I use the existing samples in IELTS books. These samples help learners to discover the structure of writing. For example, I give them some comparing and contrasting samples and make them acquainted with the structure of these kinds of writings.

The usefulness of reading samples in learning the structure and organization of writing was also supported by Ali, one of the interviewees, as follows:

> One of the tasks performed in pre-writing stage is reading three or four samples related to the topic. Among the different samples in IELTS books I select those skillfully written and qualified samples. I ask candidates to extract the structure and organization of these samples of writing answers. They should discover how they have been started, how their body is written, and how they are ended.

4.3. The Importance of Vocabulary and Grammar in Teaching Writing

4.3.1. Proponents

Teaching writing is not just about how to teach writing; instead, it needs some prerequisites such as grammar and vocabulary. Grammar and vocabulary are two important elements in language and the weakness in these two elements causes some difficulties in writing. Language learners may have the idea and the knowledge of producing a good writing, but they may be unable to write even a sentence because of the weakness in grammar and vocabulary. Mina explains about the importance of teaching grammar and vocabulary as follows:

> My experience in teaching writing reveals that most of the problems relate to grammar. I mean students want to write many ideas, but they are unaware of its grammar and vocabulary; therefore, practitioners should teach grammar and vocabulary. Some practitioners teach characteristics of a good writing, while students do not know the appropriate required grammar and vocabulary. I think writing is a secondary skill, not a primary skill. It means that learning

vocabulary and grammar precedes learning how to write. Some learners cannot write even a complete sentence, let alone to understand their teachers' explanations about conjunctions and discourse markers.

IELTS candidates have studied enough vocabulary and grammar rules. Nevertheless, they forget grammar rules and vocabulary and sometimes their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary are passive; consequently, they cannot use what they have learned. Hence, activating their background knowledge of grammar and vocabulary or even reviewing grammar and vocabulary in IELTS classes is helpful from the perspective of some practitioners. Taha, one of the participants, states that:

Language learners' writings have some problems related to grammar and word choice. Although they have studied enough grammar and vocabulary, they are unable to use them. For example, they know about "either/or" and "neither/nor" but they cannot apply them in their writings.

Grammar and vocabulary are also the prerequisites to write about each topic. Language learners should have these basics which enable them to use the required structures or vocabulary to write about a topic. In support of this statement Davood, one of the interviewees, claims:

Teachers should determine the required grammar and vocabulary for each writing. I determine these prerequisites and sometimes pre-teach them to ensure my students will not be stuck in the middle of writing for the sake of not having these prerequisites. As an example, for

a descriptive paragraph or essay they must know simple
present tense and I assure that they know it.

The effectiveness of grammar and vocabulary in writing is not deniable and no one can write effectively without the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Thus, to persuade and affect our readers, we need a sound knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. In support of this statement Arash, one of the interviewees, says:

Writing aims at communicating. Some students wrongly suppose that the purpose of writing is claiming about the structures that a writer knows. However, we write to inform or persuade our readers and to aim this, writers should have a sound knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

The necessity of working on grammar for the improvement of writing is also explained by other participants of the study. In the discussion about the importance of samples of writing Mohammad states:

After reading some samples, learners need structures of the language for learning how to write; in other words, they should write grammatically. They should know different useful structures which help them to produce an effective piece of writing.

4.3.2. Opponents

Although teaching grammar and vocabulary were discovered to be important for most of the participants, some of the participants believed that teaching grammar and

vocabulary is inappropriate for IELTS writing classes. Of course, they do not ignore the importance of grammar in general writing classes, but they believe that IELTS classes are not suitable to teach grammar and vocabulary. Their most important rationale is lack of time to work on basic skills instead of working on IELTS techniques. These teachers believe in teaching grammar and vocabulary whenever errors occur or when some new vocabulary or structures are required for writing. Akbar states:

> Learning grammar and vocabulary is a long-time process and it is not feasible in a short and limited period of time. In my classes, grammar is explained during correcting their written errors and I do not consider a separate part to teach grammar. Teaching grammar and vocabulary is exhausting in high-levels. Furthermore, it distracts students' attention from the explanations about how to write; in other words, they only pay attention to grammar rules and it is better to shortly explain grammar rules during the error correction process.

Some practitioners believe that teaching grammar and vocabulary is not suitable in IELTS classes because language learners have learned enough grammar and vocabulary and now it is the time to apply them. Amir, one of the interviewees, states:

> There is no need to teach grammar and vocabulary for IELTS writing because everyone who reaches IELTS level has learned enough grammar rules. I do not teach grammar and vocabulary as separate parts; instead, I explain them during the error correction process.

In IELTS classes, teachers can teach grammar based on candidates' desired scores and there is no need to teach grammar directly. Amir-Ali, one of the interviewees, states:

> I do not teach grammar directly; instead, I teach grammar based on the score candidates wish to receive in the IELTS test. If a person wants 7.5 s/he should use complicated structures besides managing ideas well. For example, in contrasting two things s/he can use 'but' or 'however' and these two differentiate their scores.

4.3.3. How to Teach Grammar and Vocabulary

As it was discussed above, some teachers believe language learners need vocabulary for writing. Thus, they pre-teach vocabulary to prepare candidates for writing. Pre-teaching vocabulary can be done through different techniques such as brainstorming, finding synonyms and antonyms, or listing the required vocabulary. Mina states:

> The way that I teach vocabulary depends on students' level. In low-levels I teach some pre-determined vocabulary. For example, I give some vocabulary in texts or sentences and ask language learners to find their synonyms and antonyms to extend their vocabulary. In high-levels such as IELTS, I use brainstorming technique and give them a topic and ask them to determine some categories for it. Based on these categories, they determine some vocabulary and write them under each category.

The required vocabulary can be listed and pre-taught. The usefulness of this technique is preventing learners from being stuck during writing process for the sake of not knowing vocabulary. In support of this idea Davood says:

> Based on the topics of writings, I may pre-teach the required vocabulary. First of all, I always localize topics and localization is one of my favorite techniques. For example, a topic asks language learners to write about a touristy city in Europe. Since they have never been there, I replace it with a local city that they have been to. After that, I list the vocabulary that they do not know about the localized topic.

Vocabulary need to be taught in their contexts. In the following Arash explains how he teaches and selects vocabulary.

> Vocabulary should be taught in its context. Furthermore, the register of writing determines what vocabulary should be selected. If we are writing formally, we should use formal words and vice versa. When I want to teach vocabulary, I use another criterion to select vocabulary. I select active words, not passive ones which are not that much useful. I tell my students that each word has different levels and the first time that you use a vocabulary you can use its common form, but if you want to use it frequently in a text, you should use its equivalences. For example, "make contributions to" can be used instead of "help".

Besides vocabulary another element of language is grammar. Grammar like vocabulary is important in writing and teachers have different ideas and techniques in teaching grammar. Sometimes forcing learners to use specific structures and vocabulary is helpful to apply learned materials and teachers assess whether students have learned the materials or not. Taha explains how he teaches grammar as follows:

> In my IELTS classes, firstly, I find the grammatical mistakes and correct them. Then, I introduce complex structures such as subordinate-clauses and if-clauses. I usually give candidates such structures and force them to use these structures in their writings. So, I present the structures, then they practice, and finally they produce these structures.

The idea of forcing language learners to use specific structures or vocabulary is also supported by other practitioners. Forcing language learners to use specific structures and vocabulary increases their creativity when they are trying to fit the specified structures or vocabulary in their writing. Davood explains:

> In writing sessions and exams I give learners, some specific structures and a determined number of vocabularies. They should use these structures and the half of the listed vocabulary in their writings. As a result, the applied structures and vocabularies are varied. Additionally, they deal with how to use these structures and vocabulary in a text or in a sentence; consequently, their writing creativity is increased and they are interested to continue this approach.

Grammar should aim at the production of language. Thus, learning grammar should be purposeful and those grammar rules which help the production of language should be more emphasized. In the following Arash explains how he selects and teaches grammar points.

> To teach grammar firstly I start by teaching how to write simple sentences; then, I move towards teaching combined sentences, complex sentences, paragraphs, and finally texts. I teach them those grammar rules which help them to produce sentences. When I teach these rules I prepare tasks which force them to apply them. For example, I ask language learners to compare two things and comparing things force them to use combined sentences and apply their knowledge of grammar. To prescribe grammars in teaching writing, I ask them to write an essay or a paragraph. After that, I check their errors and weaknesses and based on their errors, I decide what grammar rules should be taught.

4.4. Brainstorming

In addition to grammar and vocabulary, writing a text needs ideas. Writers should think about the required ideas and gather them before starting to write. This will help writers to think about what they are going to write and to be cautious about ideas before starting to write. This pre-writing stage assists writers in gathering their ideas, vocabulary, and structures. Gathering ideas provides the required information to be presented in a text and prevents writers from looking for ideas during the writing stage. Therefore, brainstorming seems to be an important skill for writers and IELTS writing teachers can instruct it as a vital technique. Mona, one of the interviewees, states:

> After I contextualize the topic and explain the circumstances, I ask learners to brainstorm. I explain to them to write down all the required ideas and vocabularies that they want to bring in the text. They share these ideas, check, and correct each other in their groups.

In brainstorming stage, learners think about ideas and write some sentences about the ideas, but they are not supposed to write all the details about each idea. This helps them to brainstorm lots of ideas and keep these ideas in their mind for writing stage. Amir supports this idea as follows:

> After explaining the topic and the structure of writing, I tell my students to brainstorm and think about the topic. For example, if they are going to write about a city, first they should think about the city, what they know about the city, and what information should be written about it. They can write about the population of the city, the weather, the geographical position, and et cetera. After determining the supporting ideas, I ask them to write one sentence for each idea. For example, they should write one sentence about the population of the city and so on. After writing a sentence for each idea, they should learn to connect these sentences and change ideas into a text.

Some teachers wrongly suppose that all of the brainstormed ideas should appear in the texts. However, this is an incorrect way of brainstorming because brainstormed ideas should be classified to prohibit too much of scattered ideas in a text. Arash explains classifying brainstormed ideas as follows:

After brainstorming, brainstormed ideas should be classified. For example, if a language learner has brainstormed thirty ideas, about ten or twelve ideas are useless and only eighteen ideas will remain. For a five paragraph essay, language learners only need three ideas, but they should not delete these ideas to reach three ideas. They should divide these eighteen ideas into three groups, but each group should have only one main idea which can include other ideas like an umbrella. Now these main ideas are the topic sentences of paragraphs and other ideas are the supporting sentences.

In the brainstorming stage content, writing style, writing format, and target audience can be discussed. Teachers can inform learners to think about and deal with these matters before starting to write. Mani, one of the interviewees, states:

I determine three stages in writing classes, including think, act, and polish. The first stage, which is thinking stage is similar to brainstorming. I explain all the things that should be done in this stage. I explain style, format, formality, language, target audience, and content one by one. Furthermore, in this stage they think about the topic and supporting ideas which they want to write in the text.

Brainstorming has been discovered to be an important stage before starting to write. Activating the background knowledge of writers is one of the reasons for the importance of brainstorming. Reza, one of the interviewees, explains the importance of brainstorming as follows.

If I want to say about the techniques of teaching writing, I can mention brainstorming as a useful technique in writing. In this stage I ask learners to think and freely write whatever comes to their minds. Thinking about ideas and writing them down helps students to activate their background knowledge and they will start to write without any limitation and stress.

4.5. Teaching Prefabricated Phrases

Teaching prefabricated phrases has some proponents and opponents. In the following, the reasons of both groups are discussed and some extracts from their interviews are presented.

4.5.1. Proponents

Proponents of teaching prefabricated phrases believe that these ready-made phrases are helpful and enhance the quality of writing. As a result, language learners will receive a higher score in the IELTS writing module. Mona is one of the proponents of teaching and working on prefabricated phrases and she explains:

Both of IELTS writing tasks need special phrases. There are some prefabricated phrases and I teach them and tell my students to apply them in their writings. For example, I tell them to learn and use a list of special phrases for writing a complaint letter. The use of these prefabricated phrases increases their scores in the IELTS writing test.

Furthermore, prefabricated phrases keep language learners away from translating phrases into the target language. When they translate their native language

phrases into the target language phrases they write unsuitable phrases; while, they can simply learn fixed patterns in the target language and use them in their writings. Mani explains:

> Learning how to write with special features such as formality or informality requires avoiding translation of phrases. We should let learners to learn prefabricated phrases which causes learning English by English structures and phrases not by translating our Persian ideas into English. To prevent the interruption of Persian, we are forced to use some fixed phrases. I prevent listing prefabricated phrases and asking students to learn the list; instead, I introduce them one by one during different sessions of writing and students learn them gradually.

Expressing ideas in the target language is simplified through prefabricated phrases and writers may have fewer difficulties during writing. In support of this idea Arash states:

> Prefabricated phrases are helpful. Language learners may have an idea in their minds and to write that idea they think in their mother tongue. Consequently, they apply complex translated structures with many words to express that idea and they experience a formidable task; while, they can use prefabricated phrases and express this idea very easier and prevent from the interruption of mother tongue. Of course, I should add this point that the use of these prefabricated phrases should be under control because the examiner may notice that the writer has memorized these phrases and this will cause loosing

marks. To overcome this problem, learners should use a variety of prefabricated phrases.

4.5.2. Opponents

Arash's statement about using prefabricated phrases clarify that although he is a fan of teaching prefabricated phrases, he warns teachers to control the use of them. The fact of losing marks has caused many teachers to disagree with teaching prefabricated phrases. They doubt that using prefabricated phrases is beneficial in order to receive high scores in IELTS writing module, because IELTS examiners consider negative scores for a writer who memorizes and copies these phrases. Taha explains about using prefabricated phrases as follows:

> Using these clichéd phrases is one of the red lines of IELTS. Unfortunately, some IELTS teachers do not consider this. In IELTS writing module three groups of examinee receive zero; while the lowest score is one not zero. Those who are absent, those who turn in a white paper, and those who write based on memorization. Memorizing and coping is one of the red lines of IELTS and for this reason I do not work on these clichéd phrases.

Prefabricated phrases lead learners towards memorization, which is not desirable for IELTS examiners. Amir-Ali is another opponent of working on prefabricated phrases.

> I do not advise the use of prefabricated phrases since they lead learners towards memorization. Candidates can easily memorize these phrases and use them in their writing. If

examiners find out that memorization is outstanding in candidates' texts, candidates will lose scores.

Opponents of teaching prefabricated phrases believe that although these phrases are suitable for general English language learning classes, they are not suitable for IELTS writing module. Amir is also an opponent of teaching prefabricated and do not suggest using them for IELTS writing module. He has the similar reasons to other opponents.

Some IELTS writing teachers propose students a list of prefabricated phrases to be used in their writings. However, I do not accept this approach since writing takes the form of a copied text. Consequently, examinee's writing scores will be decreased. Although these phrases may be useful for general writing classes, they are not applicable for IELTS writing classes.

4.6. Teaching Writing Based on Scoring Criteria

IELTS examiners consider some factors to score a written text. Some of the most important factors can be mentioned as task response, coherence and cohesion, grammatical version and accuracy, and lexical resources. Examinees have the chance of receiving high scores in writing by considering these factors in their writings. Likewise, IELTS writing teachers should consider these factors and they should inform students about these factors and their effects on scoring. Arash supports this idea as follows:

In the site of IELTS, some guidelines for band scores are explained. I use these guidelines and explain who will receive 6 and who will receive 8 and how they should write to receive a specific score. Four factors such as task

response, coherence and cohesion, grammatical version and accuracy, and lexical resources are considered to score IELTS writing skill. I explain each of them for the learners. For example, I tell them task response means that you should completely answer the question and you should avoid presenting unrelated information. After I explained all of the factors I apply them in a writing to make learners acquainted with these factors by the use of this sample. Then, I ask them to write based on these scoring criteria and finally I check whether they have regarded these factors or not.

Tina also explains about scoring criteria and she briefly introduces some of them.

Scoring criteria of the IELTS writing module regard some factors. One of these factors is related to understanding of the question or task response. Other factors are managing ideas and writing as informative as possible. Memorization-based and clichéd writings lose scores. Writing their own sentences and using the best structures are other crucial criteria.

Each scoring criterion considers an area in writing and it determines a score for that part. As a result, language learners can focus on specific areas to receive their desired score. Additionally, determining the desired score assists IELTS teachers to decide what areas should be worked on. Amir-Ali sustains this idea as follows:

To overcome language learners' problems in writing and helping them to get through writing tasks in IELTS, first we should find out which score they wish to get. Different factors are considered to score a text. If a language learner has a weakness in one of them, other factors may cover this area. To help them in achieving their desired score, I give them a writing test and determine their weaknesses. Based on their writings, I can decide how and what to teach in order to reach them to their desired scores. I bring some writing samples of those who had got the desired score and check how they have written and I teach them to write similar to that writing.

Another technique related to the scoring criteria involves comparing written samples which have received different scores. Teachers can bring some samples with different scores and compare or ask students to compare them. Candidates can find about the reasons which have caused different scores. Tina explains:

I explain to them those factors which affect writing score. After that, I give students two samples with different scores and ask them to find the reasons for the differences in scores. Then, I ask them to write a text and I score it based on the criteria. I determine their mistakes and ask them to correct them. For example, I tell them your writing is not informative enough, your structures are not well built, or there is too much redundancy.

Some teachers have an inductive approach and instead of explaining the criteria and then bringing samples, first they present samples and then they explain the criteria. In support of this idea Mani explains:

One of the possible techniques in my classes is comparing two samples with different scores. When we compare them, a question may come to students' mind that why their scores differ. I explain to them the reasons. For example, I tell them about cohesion and coherence. They can see how sentences support topic sentence and how paragraphs support the topic in a high scored text. By seeing some samples they can better understand cohesion and coherence.

4.7. Teaching Conjunctions and Discourse Markers

Conjunctions and discourse markers connect phrases and sentences together to form a well thought-out writing. They help writers to have a written text with high-level structures. Furthermore, conjunctions and discourse markers provide a reasonable plan inside texts and readers can follow and understand texts better. For example, conjunctions can compare and contrast two phenomena and discourse markers can be used for different purposes such as expressing the effect of a cause, adding something to previously mentioned ideas, the consequence of time, and et cetera. Amir explains how to teach conjunctions as follows:

Most of the students are acquainted with conjunctions such as "and" and "but". However, a person who wants to succeed in IELTS writing skill, s/he should go further and learn other conjunctions such as although, however, and not only/but also. We should tell them to use conjunctions in a higher-level to increase their scores. I give them two sentences and ask them to connect them with a suitable conjunction. I explain that if two sentences are similar, they should use conjunctions like "and" and if they are in

contrast, they should use conjunctions such as "but". I also
tell them the place of conjunctions in sentences.

Conjunctions should be learned by their functions and the way they are used in sentences. The functional learning of conjunctions helps learners to learn them meaningfully. Arash supports this idea as follows:

The provided tasks to learn conjunctions are designed in a way which forces my language learners to use them. For example, giving a task that requires the use of "and" and "but" in order to compare and contrast two persons. Since they have learned the required grammatical knowledge, they should be able to apply it.

Conjunctions can be taught inductively. Students can learn conjunctions by finding them in a text and inferring about the rules of their usage. Tina explains:

The best way of teaching conjunctions is presenting some examples. Another task to teach conjunctions is tracing them in a newspaper and circling them. I may ask them to rewrite a part of a newspaper and circle conjunctions in their writing. After that I will ask them to explain their use in the context. For example, they should explain what is the difference between "but" and "and" in the sentences.

Discourse markers have the ability to build attractive texts. They can tie sentences to each other and make coherent texts. Reza supports this idea as follows:

After correcting grammatical mistakes, the written texts require revision in order to attract the attention of readers. To aim this, teachers should work on discourse markers. By the use of discourse markers language learners should make a connection between sentences. A list of discourse markers for each kind of writings can be provided and language learners should use them in their writings. Therefore, they will have an attractive text which is well organized too.

Written texts for IELTS writing module should be grammatically well-built. Additionally, they should be rich and discourse markers can provide this richness. Davood states:

In addition to writing a text with suitable grammar and vocabulary, IELTS test takers should consider fluency and the richness of their writing. One of the ways of enriching a text is using appropriate discourse markers to increase the efficacy of that writing.

The use of samples in teaching discourse markers is also a valuable technique. In this way language learners can see how and under what conditions other writers have used them. Taha points to this technique during his explanation about students' problems in writing.

Another serious problem in students' writings is the use of discourse markers. Solving this problem is not a complicated job. Teachers can easily provide them with some samples and highlight discourse markers in these

texts. Explaining their importance and use for two sessions will help students to overcome this problem.

4.8. Teaching Candidates How to Think and Write in Target Language

One of the problems in the English language learners' writings is thinking in their mother tongue. Consequently, structures and expressions are translated into the target language while these structures are not acceptable in English. Therefore, IELTS teachers should approach techniques which make contributions to learners in a way to think in the target language. As a result, they will be able to write English structures and expressions. During this research, interviewees introduced different techniques, for example, Amir explains his strategy to overcome this problem as follows:

> One of the problems in the students' writings is using a translated form of structures and expressions because they think in their mother tongue. They directly translate Persian sentences and expressions in English; as a result, they cannot write English. My strategy is leading them to think in the target language. Leading them towards using existing English idioms and expressions makes benefits for them. Besides, I tell them to prevent translating expressions; instead, they should find useful English expressions that are suitable expressions. I add, how a native speaker uses an expression is important and you should try to use expressions in that way, not by translating them.

In addition to learning how native speakers use a special expression, language learners should know about the context which the expression is used. This will prohibit rote-learning and memorizing expressions. Mani expresses:

Iranian language learners write English sentences and expressions with English words but Persian structures. The source of this problem turns back to thinking in Persian. To teach expressions and chunks we should not let language learners to think in Persian, we should let them to learn chunks and expressions in English and the way English native speakers use them. In each writing session, I pragmatically teach some expressions related to the text. I try to teach them in their contexts; as a result, students will be able to use expressions in an original way.

To think in the target language, a language learner needs to start from the basic elements of language such as small expression, phrases, and sentences and approach more complex sentences. This approach increases their self-confidence and helps them to learn how to think in and use the structures of the target language. Davood states:

One of the most common mistakes is focusing on Persian structures and until they think in Persian, correction is useless. Making the task easier is one of the applied strategies in my classes. For example, I shorten the size of the writing and start with shorter texts. I ask them to think in English and write as much as they can, but not more than their abilities. Whatever they go further they can produce longer sentences.

Although thinking in and negative transfer of mother tongue ruins the target language structures in writing, it can be controlled to raise students' consciousness. Consequently, they will positively transfer ideas into the target language. Arash supports this idea as follows:

I am optimistic about thinking in mother tongue. For me, thinking in mother tongue does not threaten language learners; so, I let them to think in this way. In other words, since the transfer happens unconsciously, preventing them to receive help from their mother tongue seems pointless. However, teachers should control thinking in the mother tongue to not be a necessary tool, but a helpful tool for language learners. Instead of preventing them to think in the target language, I teach them how to transfer it positively. I raise their consciousness and explain about the existing differences between the structures of native and target language. I use the famous book named *common mistakes in English* and explain the structures which may be transferred negatively. For example, some language learners may write " I can explain about it". I inform my students that in contrast to Persian "explain" does not need "about" in English.

4.9. The Importance of Ideas in Writing

Writing a text can be interrupted for different reasons. Previously, one of the reasons was explained as not having sound knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. The other reason was discovered to be thinking in mother tongue. However, overcoming these problems do not guarantee in writing a good text. Another important asset in writing is idea. Lack of ideas is so much challenging and interrupts writers during the process of writing. Tina supports this idea as follows:

Lack of ideas is a problem in writing and in contrast to speaking, lack of ideas can interrupt writing. During the writing process writers see what they have produced, and

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they like to make it better. As a result, they cannot embark on writing.

IELTS writing teachers should use assisting strategies to overcome this dilemma. One of the most important techniques is leading learners towards thinking about the topic and finding the supporting ideas. Furthermore, it is suggested to prevent learners from thinking about grammar, spelling, structure, and punctuation in this situation. Mani explains his approach as follows:

In this circumstance I tell them to think about the topic. For example, the topic is *Nature*. Now what can you say which is related to *Nature*? They express the related ideas such as greenhouse gas, global warming, and pollution one by one. Without any explanation, I tell them these are the supporting ideas. After that, it is the time for action stage and picking their pens up and embarking on writing. At this stage they should only write ideas, but grammar, punctuation, format, style, and spelling are not important because they will be considered in the polishing stage. One of the logical reasons for ignoring these items in the action stage is setting learners free to easily bring their ideas. As a result, they will not be stuck when they want to write a text with 250 words.

IELTS teachers believe that in order to write a text candidates can obtain ideas only by finding a few words related to the topic. Sometimes they have ideas, but they are incapable of managing them. Thus, IELTS practitioners should teach candidates how to manage ideas. Arash states:

A 250 words IELTS essay does not require many ideas and thinking only about three or four ideas suffices. Meanwhile, for IELTS examiners presenting ideas is not important and what is important is managing ideas. During the process of managing ideas they will obtain ideas spontaneously. As an example, when I say "I do not like something for three reasons" I only need three ideas and for each of them I should only think about one word. I teach them how to manage ideas and write a paragraph with each word. If they are going to write about the causes of divorce, they can think about two causes and it is finished. I tell them your essay is finished and now you need to manage ideas to expand it by written language. We cannot claim that students lack ideas, they have ideas and recognizing and managing them among the different existing ideas in their minds is important.

Additionally, discussing the topic of the essay is helpful and it can raise ideas in writing. Ali supports this idea by the following statements:

Lack of ideas causes difficulties in producing the content of a writing. Sometimes candidates have not the required concept to write about a topic. Therefore, we should apply some helpful strategies to overcome lack of ideas. My strategy is providing the situation for a discussion about the topic for 5 to 20 minutes based on the available time and students' abilities in the discussion. After raising ideas, we write them in the form of words and classify them. In other words, we draw a concept map for ideas in a group work activity.

4.10. Writing as a Process

Writing can be viewed by two different approaches one of them is writing as a product and the other is writing as a process. Product-oriented writing is concerned about the learners' final papers; whereas, process writing concerns about the procedure in which a text is produced. Writing as a process involves students in a process which has some stages and students' performance in these stages is more important than the final product. Ali states:

> We have two approaches towards writing. Our approach can be process-oriented or product-oriented. I personally believe in process-oriented writing. Process-oriented writing consists of three stages which are more important than the final turned-in paper. I believe that the stages of writing are more important and we should work on all of them, including pre-writing, writing, and post-writing.

Mani is also one of the defendants of process-oriented writing and explains the importance of pre-writing, writing, and post-writing stages as follows:

> I consider three stages in writing, including think, act, and polish. These three stages are equal to pre-writing, writing, and post-writing. I involve them in these stages and I tell them to do what at each stage. For example, in thinking stage they think and plan about what they are going to write and manage their ideas. In the action stage, they just write the first draft and ignore other items. In the final stage, they polish and revise their drafts. During the writing stages, I am not concerned about how their final draft will be, instead I am concerned about how well they perform these stages.

Since IELTS writing tasks are not concerned about the production of sentences or phrases, IELTS writing module should be worked as a process not as a product. Moreover, IELTS writing tasks needs working on all of the writing stages. Advocating teaching writing as a process, Arash states:

Learning writing can be achieved in two different ways. In the first path language learners learn to write a word, phrase, sentence, and maybe a paragraph. This path is used for the purposes apart from writing itself, such as answering questions. The second path is beyond the sentence and paragraph level. In this kind of writing, language learners are involved in writing a text, report, or a letter. All of these kinds of writing are three to five and maybe more paragraphs. When we have more than one paragraph, organizing paragraphs and the process of writing becomes crucial. In elementary levels writing is viewed as a product and producing sentences or phrases is important. However, IELTS writing module is a process and the process of writing is necessary for IELTS writing examinees.

Writing as a process is not familiar for IELTS candidates and this causes loosing marks. IELTS teachers believe that students learn process writing principles faster than learning basic writing skills. As a result, if they have suitable basic writing skills such as grammar, spelling, and vocabulary they can learn strategies of writing as a process easily. Supporting this idea, Akbar believes:

In IELTS writing module the process of writing is important. The process of writing has three stages named

planning stage, writing stage, and revising stage. These stages are dissimilar in different kinds of writing. Although IELTS candidates have learned paragraph writing, most of them are incapable of receiving an acceptable score since they are not familiar with writing as a process. Nevertheless, language learners can easily be acquainted with writing as a process, but it takes them a long time to overcome their problems in basic writing such as grammar.

4. 11. Technology and Writing

These days technology has been used widely all around the world. Language learning has been benefited by technology and language learners use it in order to learn the elements and skills of the language. Writing as one of the language skills can gain benefits from technology in different ways. Technology provides tools to type words in computer programs and these programs can check spelling and suggest correct spelling, presents some synonyms for each vocabulary, and check grammar. Technology also has provided channels to communicate and exchange information. Furthermore, the internet is a powerful tool for searching topics and necessary information to gather ideas for writing. In this study, we follow the use of technology in two different kinds of writing, including general writing and IELTS writing.

4.11.1. Technology and General Writing

As it was previously discussed technology is a useful asset in writing. Moreover, the findings of the present study reveal that technology is more efficient for general writing classes. In the following Mina explains how she uses technology in her general writing classes

Technology is useful in general writing classes and I use it for different purposes. For example, I use it to play movies or listening files in order to activate learners' background knowledge of the topic. Additionally, I use social networks and present my students a topic and ask them to write about it and when I receive their text I correct them and turn them back. Of course, social networks are not suitable for all classes and there are some limitations. I also use weblog as an important tool in presenting useful information and students can write their views about it and I correct their mistakes.

Social networks such as telegram are easy and costless messengers which can send and receive messages from places far away. Hence, language teachers can apply these messengers and send the topic and receive students' writing. Additionally, teachers can correct mistakes and all the members of that channel can see this process and learn from others. Davood supports this idea as you can see in the following extract from his interview:

I have created a group of my students in telegram program and we are all online one day a week for an hour and students chat about a topic and I correct their mistakes. After that, I ask them to write about the discussed topic. Then, I correct mistakes and put the corrected form of their writings in the group.

Using online chatting should be purposive and if it is not it should be stopped. Technology is used in order to increase learning and if we use it purposelessly language learning will not be achieved. Some of the English teachers use online chatting programs, but they do not correct students' mistakes. This is not only helpless in

language learning, but it also causes students to learn mistakes from each other. Mohammad states:

> In my writing classes I play videos and students should summarize them. Moreover, I use telegram and we are online at a specified time and we talk about special topics and they write their views about that topic. I believe that it necessitates correcting them and if we do not correct them using telegram and such social networks should be stopped.

4.11.2. Technology and IELTS Writing Module

IELTS writing tasks differ from general writing tasks and technology cannot be used similarly in both settings. One of the most important obstacles to apply technology in IELTS classes is time limitations. Advocating this idea, Akbar states:

> IELTS courses are time-limited and teachers have not enough time to spend on basic skills. As a result, most of the assisting technological materials in general writing cannot be used for the sake of time limitations. However, these materials can be used in order to foster basic writing skills.

Technology has provided word-processor as a valuable program for writing. Word-processor checks spelling and grammar and provides synonyms. However, IELTS examiners do not allow it and they prefer handwriting since these abilities assist candidates in the exam session. Therefore, word-processor becomes a useless technology for IELTS writing courses. Taha states:

Using word-processor for the sake of spelling check ability is forbidden and students should strengthen and habituate to handwriting. I do not accept those writings typed at home under the best circumstance; instead candidates should write in front of my eyes since they do not have that ideal situation in IELTS exam.

Teachers believe that word-processor is important for elementary students whose spelling is weak. Advocating this idea Arash claims that:

Word-processor is not used in my IELTS writing classes. It is only helpful for those who are weak in spelling. As a result, word-processor does not suit IELTS writing courses. What we need in these courses is thinking and ideas. I know IELTS candidates who have received high scores without using technology.

4.12. Explaining the Structure of Writings

Up to now, the need of grammar, conjunctions, discourse markers, vocabulary, and ideas was discussed. All of the mentioned items seem to be useless when they are not applied in an appropriate format. Writing format determines the starting and ending points of writings. Furthermore, the format of writing clarifies introduction, body, and conclusion for each kind of writings. Mani explains:

When we want to teach the writing module, we should introduce an overall format of writing for language learners. They should know the fact that all kinds of

writing such as letters, essays, articles, and reports have unique formats. Nevertheless, before introducing the format of each one, I tell my students that all of them have an overall format. I explain that all kinds of writing have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Furthermore, to help learners in overcoming the structure of essays, each session I work on each kind of writing and explain the details related to its structure.

IELTS writing teachers can increase the efficacy of candidates' writing by introducing them some phrases related to each part of the writing. This helps them to consider the format of writings more effectively. Mona explains how she introduces the format of essay-writing in task 2 of IELTS as follows.

I explain the structure of writing in task 2 of IELTS or essay-writing. I tell them that their writing should have introduction, body, and conclusion and how they should write each part. I introduce some special phrases for each part of essays to help them making their essays more effective. For example, I introduce "according to what I said" for the conclusion part.

Teachers can introduce different parts of writings and explain each one to make students aware of writing format. Tina states:

I explicate the format of writings and say: "you should be aware of the writing format and your writings should have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion". I add that when you write conclusion be conscious of keeping the both

> sides (agreeing and disagreeing) and do not directly
> express your point of view. Then, I explain other parts in
> the structure of essays.

The format of writing is worthwhile for IELTS writing module because IELTS examiners consider it for scoring. As a result, language learners should learn how to write in a determined format. Moreover, teachers can use samples of each kind of writing to teach its format.

> All kinds of writing have their own format and since
> IELTS examiners consider the format of written texts,
> language learners should pay attention to the format of
> writings. However, I do not directly explain the format of
> writing, instead I give them some samples for each kind of
> writing and they will inductively learn its structure and
> format. Additionally, when they write a text they receive
> my comments about how to revise different things which
> one of them is the format of their writings.

4.13. Techniques in Teaching Graphs

One of the IELTS writing tasks is graph description in which examinees are required to analyze and describe graphs. During the task they need to compare and contrast the statistical information of graphs. Interviewees presented different techniques and strategies in order to handle this task. The important basic skill to master graph writing was discovered to be comparison and contrast. Mohammad supports this idea as presented in the following extract from his interview.

> To perform well a graph writing task we need the
> prerequisite skill for it. The basis of graph description is

comparison and contrast. If IELTS candidates want to master graphs, they should master comparing and contrasting two things; for example, comparing and contrasting two objects and writing similarities and differences. Consequently, they will be able to compare and contrast two phenomena in a graph.

When students mastered the basic skill of comparing and contrasting, teachers can assure the usefulness of starting specific techniques to foster graph writing task. Presenting some standard samples by highly scored examinees is one of the techniques. These samples, as it was discussed for other types of writing, can present the layout, structure, and principles of graph writing task. Tina explains:

If students have the basic sub-skills of graph writing they can write descriptions of graphs very precisely. One of the techniques which I apply is giving the sample answers of graph writing task. These are rich and helpful materials to learn about graph writing task. Thus, candidates can learn the structure and the rules required for the task.

Both graph writing sample questions and answers are useful to teach graphs and IELTS practitioners need to apply both of them to train successful candidates in the writing module. Mona explains:

First, I present some graph writing sample answers and then I ask students to carefully read the question. After giving some materials and presenting some inputs in order to qualify their writings I give them some sample answers to these questions. Now they can better understand the

structure of the task and understand how to write to be successful. Finally, I ask them to compare their writings with the samples to see the differences.

Besides these techniques, another useful technique is using instructional movies on describing graphs. Reza explains this strategy as follows:

Teachers can bring instructional movies on graph description. These movies can help students to learn which parts of the graphs are important and what parts should be compared and contrasted. These movies directly show them graph analysis. Additionally, they are much more motivating than teachers' explanations.

Another strategy which is somehow helpful to decrease the anxiety of graphical analysis and description is breaking the whole task into smaller part. In other words, teachers can demand less functions and they can focus on specific parts of a graph. Supporting this idea, Amir states:

I tell them to write some sentences about the graph and explain that what this graph shows them. For example, a graph with some statistical information is presented. First, I just ask them to write one sentence about each part of the graph or about important parts. I point to a specific part and ask them to write a sentence about the statistic of that part (for example, the statistic of selling cars in 2003) and continue this action in different parts. When they wrote about all parts they should connect them with already learned conjunctions.

Besides all of these techniques, students need some elements which are helpful to build a well-designed text and they act as the building blocks of the writing. These elements are some specific expressions in order to explain the graphs. Akbar explains the usefulness of these elements as follows:

> To explain different changes or to compare and contrast statistical information about different parts of a graph, students need some vital expressions. Without them their sentences are meaningless. For example, students can use an expression such as "radical change" to talk about a great change or using "steady" in order to express no change at all or "gradual" for slow and regular changes in the statistics.

Some expressions are the prerequisites in teaching graph writing and their use should be clarified for a better application of them in graph description. Mona explains:

> To describe graphs, IELTS candidates need some special expressions which help to describe graphs more qualified. I write the required expressions on the board and explain the way and the place of their application.

Raising candidates' consciousness of what causes receiving and loosing marks is important. Teachers should explain important points about graphs to develop graph writing skills of candidates, which increase their band score. Reza states that:

Graph writing task requires teachers' explanations more than essay-writing task. Teachers should explain to candidates how to write in order to improve their scores. For example, candidates should be aware of ignoring unimportant things. Teachers should explain that if the numbers for different items are similar, there is no need to write all of them separately; instead, they can write all of them in a sentence and they should just mention important information and changes in the graphs.

4.14. Correction

When the writing job is finished, the correction of the written text becomes essential. Although there are some controversies about how to correct writings, the current study discovered some useful techniques for error correction and giving feedback. Some of the interviewees believe in direct strategies for error correction. They believe that English writing teachers should directly correct all mistakes and they prefer strict strategies. The importance of students' attention to what has been presented and discussed previously is the rationale for direct error correction. They believe that when an important grammar rule has been presented for different times, there is no requirement for further explanations. As a result, they use strict strategies and ask the reasons for making mistakes on what have been taught previously. Supporting this idea, Akbar says:

Some teachers believe in partial error correction to prevent from negative effects on students' confidence. However, I do not follow this approach and correct all of the mistakes. They should face reality and understand what kind of mistakes are available in their writings; moreover, they understand how they can use the presented techniques and explanations.

Strict reaction to students' mistakes was also discovered to be a useful strategy. Reza is one of the interviewees who uses this strategy to reduce the repeated errors in language learners' writings.

> While correcting written errors, the repetition of errors related to already-explained points should be seriously reacted. For example, when I have explained a grammatical rule, they should never use it mistakenly and if they do it, I will react rigorously. I think this can be a technique to stop repetitive and common mistakes, because our students become more sensitive about these errors.

While the previous approach towards error correction focuses on direct strategies, another approach considers self-confidence as a vital element for writing. The present approach uses different strategies to raise the level of self-confidence in language learners and increase the quality of their writings. One of the strategies is changing the name of error correction to stop labeling it as a de-motivating process. Ali supports this idea and explains how he uses classmates' suggestions as important tools to improve the quality of writings.

> In post-writing stage I ask language learners to copy their writings and give the copies to their classmates. Other learners should consider writings based on language, organization, content, and punctuation and tell their ideas. First suggestions are not supposed to be about negative points, instead positive points should be highlighted to motivate learners. In the next stage, other students should offer some suggestions to improve the quality of their

peers' writings. Asking for suggestions means correcting errors, but the name has changed to cover error correction in a more motivating name. Suggestions are mostly related to grammar and punctuation, but to offer suggestions for content and organization students need our help.

Peer correction is also an essential tool to reduce the anxiety of language learners from being corrected. Peer correction is assisting because language learners are more convenient and more interested to learn how to write. Mona supports this idea as follows:

After writing the text, it is the time to check each other's. I believe that they can learn more from each other. I clearly list what should be checked and they should read each other's' papers and see whether their peers have regarded these criteria or not. These criteria are grammar, cohesion, coherence, and punctuation, which are considered in correcting IELTS candidates' papers.

Another strategy for error correction was discovered to be "changing it". In this strategy, students check their papers and change them whatever they can to make attractive writings. Mani is using this strategy and in his interview he expresses:

In my writing classes, the polish stage is the comparison between act stage and think stage. Language learners should check whether they have written what they have thought or not. Furthermore, they should check formality or informality. For example, they cannot use "that's awful" in a formal text. In the polish stage, I introduce a

phenomenon named "change it". They use this phenomenon as much as they can to vary their structures and vocabulary, make the correct use of punctuation, and use suitable collocations. They polish their first draft different times to make a perfect and attractive writing.

Some of the writings need too much correction and if a teacher wants to correct all of the mistakes, it ends up with over correction. Over correction is again demotivating and destructs candidates' self-confidence. Mina explains:

> Over correction is one of the things which writing teachers should be aware of that since it destructs learners' self-confidence, especially IELTS language learners which are going to take a high-stakes test. To prevent over correction, my strategy is using abbreviations for each mistake. For example, I use G to refer grammatical mistakes or P to refer punctuation. When I use these abbreviations their writing will not be full of feedbacks which reduce their self-confidence. Since correcting these mistakes is time consuming and useless, they should correct their papers based on the abbreviations at home. I also use another strategy which is correcting only one sub-skill of writing for each session. For example, one session I only correct grammatical mistakes and the next time I correct mistakes related to dictation and so on.

The idea of preventing over-correction is also supported by other interviewees, but with a little difference. Davood explains his strategies as follows:

I underline the mistakes and put a question mark next to them. This mark has been agreed on and when they see it, they know they have studied this point before and they should re-study it again. Another way to prevent over-correction is writing a short comment beside the mistakes. For example, I write *'passive'* and it means the sentence should be written in the passive form. In the next writings I check to see whether these mistakes have been repeated or not; and if they did I explain them on the board.

CHAPTER

FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1. Overview

In the following chapter, firstly the findings of the study are compared with previous studies in the form of a discussion. During the discussion the results of the present study, which are in line with previous studies will be discussed by regarding the similarities and differences. Secondly, some areas for further research are suggested.

5.2. Discussion

Using GT method of research aided the extraction of applicable techniques in teaching writing in both IELTS and general courses. Using intensive interviews, the researcher discovered techniques and strategies both supported and unsupported by previous studies. Findings about the techniques and strategies supported by the review of related literature have superiority over previous findings mostly caused by the nature of the research method. The research method not only made contributions to discovering effective techniques and strategies, but also discovered how and why of them, which serve the field of teaching writing more applicably. Furthermore, the research discovered some techniques which have not been discovered by previous studies.

Techniques such as presenting samples of writing, teaching grammar and vocabulary, brainstorming, teaching prefabricated phrases, teaching conjunctions and discourse markers, teaching writing as a process, applying technology in writing, and correction techniques were discovered by the current study and they are in line with previous studies. In the following, the findings of the present study and previous studies are compared in favor of these techniques.

A deep analysis of the gathered data uncovered the importance of presenting the samples of writing. The findings show that reading samples of writing helps the improvement of writing sub-skills such as spelling, punctuations, organization, and the structure of different types of writing. This finding is in line with the related literature since some studies (Ambe, 2008; Bagheri & Zare, 2009) found that presenting samples of IELTS writing answers promotes IELTS candidates' writing skills. Likewise, some

other studies (Al-Mansour & Al-Shorman, 2014; Mermelstein, 2015; Tsang, 1996) discovered that teaching writing is highly affected by extensive reading.

Teaching grammar and vocabulary was discovered to have some proponents and opponents. The proponents of teaching grammar and vocabulary believe that these are essential ingredients in writing a text and most of the writing problems are caused by lack of knowledge in vocabulary and grammar. However, other participants believe that although these are essential ingredients for general writing, teaching them is problematic in IELTS classes. They believe that IELTS candidates have a sound knowledge of grammar and vocabulary and this is exhausting for them. However, most of studies in the literature revealed the importance of teaching vocabulary and grammar in writing (Decarrico, 2001; Frodesen, 2001; Fu, 2009; Rajabi & Dezhkam, 2014).

The current study also discovered some techniques about how to teach grammar and vocabulary such as forcing students to use specific vocabulary and structures, teaching vocabulary and grammar in their context, and pre-teaching of vocabulary and structures. These findings were not supported by previous studies and they were new in the body of knowledge. The study also discovered the priority of teaching communicational grammar rules over non-communicational ones.

Brainstorming was discovered to be as another important technique in teaching writing. The findings indicate the importance of brainstorming in order to activate background knowledge and gathering ideas. Moreover, classifying brainstormed ideas was discovered to be important. As well, the review of related literature supports the effectiveness of brainstorming technique in writing skill (Khalaf-Ibnian, 2011; Mahdian-Mehr, Aziz-Malayeri, & Bayat, 2016; Maghsoudi & Haririan, 2013); although, Hashempour, Rostampour, and Behjat (2015) found that brainstorming is not effective on writing skills.

Additionally, the difference between the findings of present study and previous studies (e.g. Khalaf-Ibnian, 2011; Mahdian-Mehr, Aziz-Malayeri, & Bayat, 2016; Maghsoudi & Haririan, 2013) was in the affected areas by brainstorming. While the present study indicates activating background knowledge and gathering ideas as the results of brainstorming, other studies reveal the improvement of content and organization, mechanics of writing, and language use as the result of using it.

Another important finding of the study was teaching prefabricated phrases to prevent translating them from the mother tongue, help expressing ideas easily, and enhance the quality of the writing. However, some of the participants believed that teaching prefabricated phrases should be avoided for IELTS students since they cause clichéd writing and this is not accepted for IELTS examiners. Although none of the previous studies have investigated teaching prefabricated phrases in IELTS, some studies have found their usefulness in general writing (Heidarnezhadian, Aliakbari, & Mashhadi, 2015; Ghonsooly-Hazare, Khaghaninezhad, & Shahriari-Ahmadi, 2010).

Similar to prefabricated phrases, conjunctions and discourse markers were discovered to be beneficial for writing development by connecting phrases, sentences, and paragraphs in texts. The results also revealed the importance of using samples to acquire discourse markers and conjunctions, teaching them inductively, and teaching them functionally. These findings are in line with some previous studies that discovered the importance of teaching discourse markers (Ahmadi-Fatalaki & Nazari, 2015; Serajfard & Allami, 2012; Patriana, Rachmajanti, & Mukminatien, 2016). Nevertheless, the review of literature revealed nothing about the importance of teaching conjunctions and how to teach discourse markers and conjunctions.

Two approaches were discovered towards writing, a product approach and a process approach, this was supported by Coffin et al. (2003). Analyzing the data revealed that most of the participants believe in process-based approach since it focuses on all stages of writing as required for IELTS writing. Contrastingly, previous studies revealed that the integrating and balancing the use of both approaches is much more effective than using one of them.

Another important technique in teaching writing skill was discovered to be the use of technological tools such as messengers, social networks, internet, blogs, and word-processor. On the one hand, participants believed that technology is useful for general writing and more specifically the use of word-processor for basic writing skills development was highlighted. On the other hand, the use of such technologies was discovered to be useless for IELTS writing classes because of time limitations and the importance of handwriting in the IELTS test. The findings of the study were also supported by some studies that discovered the importance of computer-assisted writing programs such as word-processor (Abuseileek, 2006; Fang, 2010; Van- Leeuwen &

Gabriel, 2007); moreover, the review of literature revealed the importance of blogs in writing development (Armstrong & Retterer, 2008; Vurdien, 2012).

Finally, there were some results related to the techniques and strategies for error correction. The current study revealed two approaches towards error correction, one as direct error correction and the other as indirect error correction. Followers of the first approach believe that when language learners learn a point they should not use it mistakenly and they use strict strategies to overcome this problem. However, the follower of the second approach believe that self-confidence is important and to prevent destructing self-confidence we should use strategies such as peer correction, correcting mistakes by naming it suggestions not labeling it as error correction, preventing over correction by using abbreviations and other suitable techniques, and changing and polishing papers to make them more effective. Nevertheless, except peer correction technique which was supported by previous studies (Ketabi & Torabi, 2013; Paulus, 1999; Saito and Fujita, 2004; Xu, 2007) other discovered techniques for error correction were new in the present study.

The review of related literature indicates some areas of research which have not been discovered by the current study. One of the techniques which have not been discovered by the current investigation is collaborative writing in which students write as groups not as individuals. Moreover, the review of related literature revealed the usefulness of other techniques for writing skills development which have not been discovered by the present study. These techniques are dictogloss (Abbasian & Mohammadi, 2013; Kooshafar, Youhanaee, & Amirian, 2012), teaching writing based on students' learning styles (Ahmed, 2012; Jones, 1998), asking students to write journals and diaries (Tuan, 2010; Marefat, 1998), and using different genres of literature (Dehghan & Nosratzadeh, 2015; Lytle, 2011; Wessels & Herrera, 2014). Still, the review of related literature revealed the importance of task type on the writing skills of students that was not discovered in the present study.

Up to now, we discussed techniques and strategies which were supported or partially supported by previous studies and techniques which were discovered in the literature, but the findings of the study were not able to find them. However, there were some newly discovered categories such as teaching based on scoring criteria, teaching thinking and writing in the target language, the importance of ideas in writing,

explaining the structure of the writings, and techniques in teaching graphs. Strategies and techniques in these categories were not supported by previous studies and these are new information added to the body of knowledge. In the following, the results related to each category will be discussed one by one.

Teaching writing based on the scoring criteria is one of the important discovered techniques in teaching IELTS writing. The current study revealed that participants present samples with different scores; as a result, students can infer how they should write to achieve a desired score in IELTS writing. Additionally, teachers can inform students about criteria such as task response, coherence and cohesion, grammatical version and accuracy, and lexical resource which affect candidates' score in the writing module. Consequently, students learn how to write in order to achieve to a desired score.

The next unsupported technique by the literature review is teaching students how to think and write in the target language. Participants of the study introduced some strategies for how to think and write in the target language. These strategies include teaching and learning expressions and idioms, preventing rote-learning of expressions and idioms by learning about their contexts, starting with small elements of language such as idioms and phrase and going towards more complex structures, and raising learners' critical consciousness to prevent negative transfers caused by thinking in their native language.

Writing about a topic needs ideas and the present study revealed that lack of ideas or inability to manage ideas is somehow an obstacle to writing. It was suggested by the participants that IELTS writing teachers should teach students how to manage ideas to overcome this situation. Teachers can also provide a discussion in the class to activate or enrich students' background knowledge. Another important strategy helps students to achieve ideas only by thinking about three or more words related to the topic. In this strategy, they learn that ideas are embedded in the words and each word is an idea and thinking about that word provokes related ideas to it.

Another newly discovered technique is explaining the structure of different kinds of writing. Considering the structure of writings was discovered to be important for IELTS writing examiners. Thus, teachers should pay attention to teaching the

structure of the writings. In this part, participants believed that teachers can give some explanation about how to write each part and what phrases should be used for each part.

At least, the final undiscovered category by previous studies was techniques and strategies in teaching graphs. Graph writing task mostly needs comparing and contrasting skill as a basic skill. The results revealed that fostering comparing and contrasting skill as a vital technique for graph writing. The next discovered technique was presenting samples of graph writing, besides presenting and teaching useful expressions to describe different facts about the graphs. Additionally, some participants believed that since analyzing a graph is a formidable task and increases the anxiety, in the first sessions we can require them to write only one or two sentences for each part of the graph.

To conclude on this part, the current study discovered some categories which were in line with the previous studies, but some of the categories were new to teaching writing especially in IELTS setting. Of course, it seems worthwhile to mention this fact that the methodology of this study caused it to find new dimensions about the previously discovered techniques such as finding how and why of these techniques.

5.3. Implications for Practice

Because the results of this study are gathered by interviewing IELTS practitioners, the findings will be applicable in IELTS writing classes and also in general writing classes. The results of this study are useful for IELTS writing teachers, ELT teachers, ELT teacher trainers, and academic writing teachers. Moreover, IELTS candidates can use the explored techniques to improve their writing skills.

5.4. Suggestions for Further Research

Conducting this study like any other study had some limitations and it was impossible to study all of the related areas to the current study. As a result, the present study suggests some areas for further research. Researchers can provide a situation which empirically examines the effects of newly discovered techniques by applying

them in the classroom settings. Thus the following suggestions seem to be applicable for further research.

- Examining the effect of teaching based on scoring criteria on IELTS writing development.

- Examining the effect of each of the discovered techniques for how to think and write in the target language.

- Examining the effect of idea management techniques on writing development.

- Examining the effect of explaining the structure of writings on writing development.

- Examining the effect of each discovered technique in teaching graph on graph writing development.

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چکیده

دشواری فعالیت های نوشتاری وماهیت حساس بودن نتایج آزمون آیلتس، معلمین و دانش آموزان را به سمت کشف تکنیک های موثر در رایتینگ هدایت می کند. اگرچه یکسری تکنیک ها به طور مکرر کشف شده اند، اطلاعات ناکافی درباره این تکنیک ها وجود دارد. این مطالعه سعی دارد دیدگاه مدرسین مهارت نوشتاری آیلتس درباره تکنیک ها و استراتژی های موثر بر این مهارت را کشف کند. محقق با استفاده از روش نظریه مبتنی بر داده ها با مصاحبه گرفتن از۱۳ مدرس آیلتس، مفاهیم را به طور نظری نمونه گرفت. تمامی مصاحبه ها ضبط، رونویسی وبا استفاده از مراحل مختلف کدگذاری، تحلیل شدند. در یک فرایند چرخشی از جمع آوری و تحلیل داده ها محقق دریافت که آموزش چگونگی موثر نوشتن اول از همه احتیاج به فراهم کردن نمونه نوشته ها به عنوان یک قالب دارد. به علاوه تدریس عبارات پیش ساخته، نقش نما های کلامی، تدریس بر اساس معیارهای نمره دهی، و آموزش چگونگی تفکر و نوشتن به زبان مقصد به عنوان تکنیک های موثر بر تقویت مهارت نوشتاری شناخته شدند. بعضی از این تکنیک ها در بدنه تحقیق جدید می باشند و یافته های این تحقیق برای مدرسین مهارت نوشتاری آیلتس، معلمین آموزش زبان انگلیسی، مدرسین نگارش پیشرفته دانشگاه ها و شرکت کنندگان آزمون آیلتس قابل استفاده می باشد.

کلمات کلیدی: آیلتس، مهارت های نوشتاری، تکنیکهای نگارشی، استراتژی های نگارشی

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مهارت نوشتاری

نگارنده : سید اسماعیل صفائی

استاد راهنما

دکتر سید علی استوار نامقی

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