

# **The Effect of the Pamphlet of Study Skill on Iranian Pre-Intermediate EFL Learners' Writing Skill**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to consider the effect of the pamphlet of the study skill on writing texts of Iranian Pre-Intermediate EFL students in a private institute in Isfahan. To achieve the intended purpose, an Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered to 100 learners in a private English language institute and 60 pre intermediate learners were selected as the participants of the study. They were divided into two groups randomly. The experimental group (30 students) and control group (30 students). Both of the groups were asked to a test as a pre-test and post- test. Afterwards the experimental group was taught a pamphlet about the skills of writing during 20 sessions. Then, the data of the study was statistically analyzed with using SPSS software. The results showed when the students in the experimental group learned the skills of writing a good text, they could write the different kinds of texts. They could organize and develop the paragraphs very well and they could also use appropriate linking words in different types of writing texts.

*Keywords:* *Writing Skills, Writing Texts, The Pamphlet of Study Skill, Pre- Intermediate EFL Students*

## **Introduction**

Writing as a productive skills, is an important communication instrument that offers the permanence of information communicating feelings and thoughts. Writing is regarded one of the most difficult abilities for EFL learners to acquire due to its neglect in the educational process and its difficult nature (Du, 2020). Given that it involves both cognitive and physical processes, it is the most difficult and recent language talent to master. The hardest skill that pupils struggle with is this activity. Due to the fact that EFL learners are rarely given the opportunity to write in English, English writing has been seen to be a challenging skill for them to learn (Patience, 2020).

It is believed that writing is significant and regularly employed in people's everyday life, whether as an individual (for example, when writing an application letter, sending texts, and

publishing research findings) or as a part of society (for example, when dealing with workplace concerns). Since having the strong writing abilities is important, writing is also taught in formal education. There are several definitions of writing that vary based on the various methods used to teach writing. Three approaches of teaching writing include the product- and text-oriented approach, the process- and cognitive-oriented approach, and the genre-based method (Yi, 2009).

In Text-oriented Approach, writing is considered as the ability of producing “a contextually” (Hyland in Yi, 2009) correct forms of language. Writing is defined as developing thoughts and then applying specific revision and editing practices to bring them to maturity in a specific context (Nunan in Yi, 2009). Teachers following cognitive-oriented approach encourage their students to consider writing as a creative practice to discover the true self (Berlin in Yi, 2009). They encourage their students to focus on their own real voices and practice journal writing as a self-discovery (Johns, 2009). Based on the cognitive-oriented approach, writing is defined as the ability of expressing oneself. Finally, in accordance to genre-based approach stresses on awareness of the reader. In this approach, successful writers are defined as those who consider readers’ expectations and knowledge and attempt to seek a balance between their writing goals and satisfy a specific discourse community functionally.

### **Literature Review**

Writing is considered as a productive skill that encompasses cognitive processes including purpose expression, idea composition, problem-solving, and critical thinking (Ginting, 2019). Despite the importance of writing to learning, several studies have shown that language learners have poor writing skill compared with other language skills (Kouhpeyma & Kashefian-Naeeni, 2020). Iranian language teachers have greatly improved their teaching skills over the last several decades as a result of the introduction of new techniques and methods for teaching foreign languages, particularly with regard to teaching students to write in a foreign language. However, there is a lot to look into.

Writing, which is considered as the most difficult of the four abilities, is not often taught well in EFL settings. In order to advance considerably more quickly, EFL learners need have a basis from which to draw lessons from their experiences. In this regard, growing body of research have delved into the impact of incorporating various writing techniques and methods. For instance, Sahebkhair (2018) also conducted an experimental study to investigate the effect of self-assessment portfolio, as a learner-centered method, on Iranian EFL learners’ writing performance. The results revealed that the experimental group that enjoyed a self-assessment guide significantly outperformed the control group. The researcher also reported that the participants in the experimental group consistently used critical thinking skills and established a strong sense of responsibility in their education.

Aghayani and Janfeshan (2020) examined the impact of self-directed learning on Iranian pre-intermediate and intermediate EFL students' writing performance. The study's findings showed that the self-directed learning approach significantly improved the writing skills of both pre-intermediate and intermediate students. The findings also showed that pre-intermediate and intermediate students who were taught using a self-directed learning approach performed higher

on the posttest than students who received the same content using the traditional teaching techniques for writing classes.

In another study, Kouhpeyma and Kashefian-Naeeni (2020) examined the effect of reflective writing including using Portfolio, peer-assessment and self-assessment on Iranian EFL learners' writing performance. The results demonstrated that reflective writing did not play any significant role in learners' writing performance.

Focusing on content and coherence as the two aspects of writing, Hailu Anshu and Yibre Yesu (2022) investigated how collaborative writing affected the paragraph-level writing skills of EFL students. To this end, the researchers divided the participants into two groups, experimental and control, each including 44 Grade 11 students. For a period of 12 weeks, participants in the experimental group were required to practice writing paragraph-level assignments collaboratively, while those in the control group were required to perform the identical activities individually. The results showed that, compared to students who performed the writing tasks independently, those who performed the writing tasks collaboratively made more notable increases in the content and coherence of the paragraphs they generated following the training. Additionally, it was observed that the experimental group's participants had a favorable attitude toward collaborative writing.

Conducting a mixed-methods study, Thi Ngoc Hoang and Hoang (2022) explored the impacts of regular Google Docs collaboration on Vietnamese EFL students' English academic writing skills. The researchers found that generally, online EFL course in academic writing significantly enhanced participants' overall academic writing skills. Concerning individual parts of academic writing, task response and lexical resources saw a substantial improvement, although cohesion and coherence, as well as grammatical range and accuracy, did not see a dramatic change. These students recognized the significance of Google Docs-based collaboration in improving their English academic writing abilities, but they had conflicting feelings about how much they enjoyed working together on the platform.

Because of the significance and challenging nature of the writing skill, several studies explored the problems and difficulties of EFL learners in writing. This is exemplified in the research undertaken by Baghaei and Sadighi (2015) who investigated the prepositional errors in Iranian TEFL postgraduate students' writing. They found that participants mostly substituted the preposition "for" instead of "to" in their writing.

Derakhshan and Karimian Shirejini (2020) also conducted a mixed methods research to evaluate the perception of Iranian EFL learners regarding the most prevalent writing challenges.

The findings indicated that most participants believed that grammar and punctuation should be taught in context and linked with the other four skills. They also argued that instructors should employ proper punctuation in their own writing and openly teach it to their students. Furthermore, it was considered that by utilizing mnemonics, pupils might better remember word spelling.

Bulqiyah et al. (2021) conducted an explanatory research to explore the perspectives of twenty-one undergraduate students regarding difficulties of essay writing. Based on the results obtained from quantitative and qualitative data, the researchers concluded that there are several categories in which students' problems with essay writing may be divided: emotional issues that arise from lecturers' and students' attitudes during instruction and learning, cognitive issues with

writing perspective, language transfer, and the writing process, as well as linguistic issues with lexico-grammar, vocabulary, and essay structure are all addressed in the essay writing course.

In an investigation into strategies and problems of Iranian EFL Learners' summary writing, Mallahi (2022) concluded that the content of participants' writings was much better than their form (coherence and cohesion). Compared to the other summary writing styles, they used evaluation strategies the most in the creation of their papers. Additionally, there was a moderate correlation between writing proficiency, the quality of the summary, and the application of strategies. The findings showed that the quality of the summary writing and the methods used varied significantly across student writers with high, moderate, and low skill levels.

Even though there has been a lot of work done on the writing skills of EFL learners, the use of pamphlets of study skills in writing is still mostly unexplored. Thus, this line of research is ground-breaking in many ways and will help us better understand the potential effect of using the study skill pamphlet on Iranian pre-intermediate EFL students' writing.

## **Methodology**

### *Participants*

Sixty learners who studied English at a private English language institute in ZarrinShahr in Isfahan participated in this study. All participants were pre-intermediate EFL learners and their ages ranged from 15 to 35 years old (male and female). To gauge the level of the participants, Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was run. The participants whose scores of the OPT test were between 21 and 30 were considered pre-intermediate and selected to partake in the study. The OPT test was conducted to 100 EFL learners and 60 learners, who were categorized as pre-intermediate based on the test results, were chosen as the participants of the study. After selecting the participants, they were divided into the control and experimental groups for conducting the study. The experimental group received the treatment but the control group did not.

### *Instrumentation*

The pre and Post-test measured the learner's English writing skills. The test contained three questions about writing: a thank you letter to their aunt (35- 45 words), a letter to a friend (100 words), and a story (100 words). This test was for measuring the participants' writing skill like the use of correct words according to the texts, punctuations, parts of speech, and skills of developing and organizing a text. To make sure about the validity of the test three experts were consulted to express their opinions about its validity. The test was used as both the pretest and posttest. Three teachers checked these tests and the average of these marks was determined for this evaluation. There was a pamphlet that was used in the experimental group. This pamphlet involved writing skills. The writing section was 20 pages long and covered a variety of writing texts. Each session lasted for fifteen minutes of instruction. Each section included a general definition and some tips for enhancing that skill. This booklet's material was inspired by the Study Skills book (Yorkey, 1996).

## Procedure

In order to reveal the effect of the pamphlet of the study skill, the study included two experimental and control groups. The proficiency level of the participants was determined by administering an OPT at the beginning of the study. Based on the level of proficiency, 60 of Iranian EFL pre-intermediate learners participated in the study. A pretest that contained 3 questions was distributed and the students answered them. Then for the experimental group a pamphlet that included 20 pages was taught during the term. After that a post test was distribute and the students answered the question.

## Results

All of the participants in this study were pre-intermediate English language learners. However, steps were made to compute the descriptive statistics of their proficiency test results, determine the mean score, confirm their homogeneity, and confirm that they were proficient at the pre-intermediate level.

*Table 1.* Descriptive Statistics of the Placement Test

Proficiency Test		Statistic
Mean		33.16
95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	32.46
	Upper Bound	35.14
5% Trimmed Mean		32.27
Median		34.00
Variance		7.07
Std. Deviation		2.66
Minimum		31.00
Maximum		40.00
Range		9.00
Skewness		-.03
Kurtosis		-.09
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As shown in Table 1, the learners' mean score was 33.16, and the trimmed mean was 32.27. The distribution's new mean is computed without taking into account the high and low extreme

scores to arrive at the trimmed mean. The absence of extreme scores, or the fact that such extreme values could not significantly affect the mean score, is shown by a tiny gap between the mean and the trimmed mean.

According to Table 1, the median value was 34.00, while the distribution's standard deviation was 2.66. As could be observed, the range was 9.00, with a minimum score of 31.00 and a maximum score of 40.00. Additionally, the distribution's skewness and kurtosis values were found to be -.03 and -.09, respectively, indicating that it was slightly negatively skewed and very little flatter than a normal distribution.

In short, a group of homogeneous learners whose scores on the OPT ranged between 30.50 and 35.82 were selected as the participants of the study (in this case 60 out of 100 learners). The 60 selected learners were then assigned to two groups of 30 participants before the intervention began. For good measure, and in order to further assure the homogeneity of the learners in the experimental and control groups, the OPT scores of the two groups were compared by means of an independent-samples *t* test. The results of the *t*-test analysis are demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of Independent Samples t-test Comparing Proficiency Scores of Experimental and Control Groups

Test	Groups	<i>N</i>	Mean	St. Deviation	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed)
OPT	Experimental	30	32.73	1.99	-.86	58	.14
	Control	30	33.59	3.33			

According to Table 2, the experimental group learners ( $M = 32.73$ ) obtained a lower mean score on the OPT compared to the control group learners ( $M = 33.59$ ). Nonetheless, to find out whether this difference was large enough to be of statistical significance or not, the researcher had to consider the *p* value represented in the *Sig.* (2-tailed) column. It is worth mentioning that the *p* value smaller than .05 (which is the pre-specified significance level) indicated a statistically significant difference. In Table 4.2, the *p* value was found to be larger than the significance level (i.e.,  $.14 > .05$ ), which means that the observed difference between the OPT scores of the explicit group and implicit group learners was not statistically significant, and it could thus be concluded that the two groups had a roughly similar proficiency level at the outset of the study. This approximate equality of the two groups in terms of their placement test scores is graphically illustrated in Figure 1:

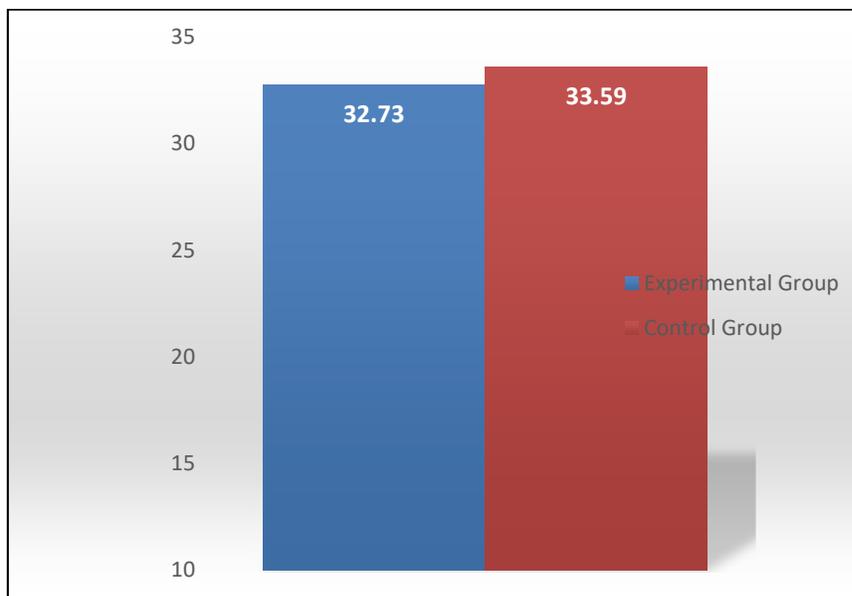


Figure 1. Experimental and Control Group Learners' Mean Scores on the OPT

It could be easily seen in Figure1 that concerning the OPT scores, the experimental group learners obtained a slightly lower mean score compared to the control group learners; nonetheless, the difference between the two groups was not found to be statistically significant.

To compare the pre and post-test writing scores of each of the two groups, and thus to find out the amount of writing improvement each group experienced, paired samples *t*-test was performed twice: once to compare the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group learners, and once to compare the pretest and post-test scores of the control group learners. The results of the *t*-test analyses are demonstrated below.

Table 3. Paired Samples *t*-test Comparing Pre and Posttest Scores of Experimental and Control Groups

Groups	Tests	<i>N</i>	Mean	St. Deviation	<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed)
Experimental	Pretest	30	6.00	2.61	-19.50	29	.000
	Posttest	30	13.93	3.18			
Control	Pretest	30	5.36	3.28	-16.33	29	.000
	Posttest	30	8.20	3.50			

For the experimental group, a change from 6.00 on the pretest to 13.93 on the posttest was witnessed. For the control group, the change was not that noticeable; the learners in this group improved from 5.36 to 8.20. Anyway, the improvements the two groups experienced were both statistically significant since the *p* values for both these analyses were lower than the significance level (i.e., .000 < .05). The conclusion, thus, could be that both experimental and control group improved significantly from writing pretest to post-test. This is also evident in the Figure below:

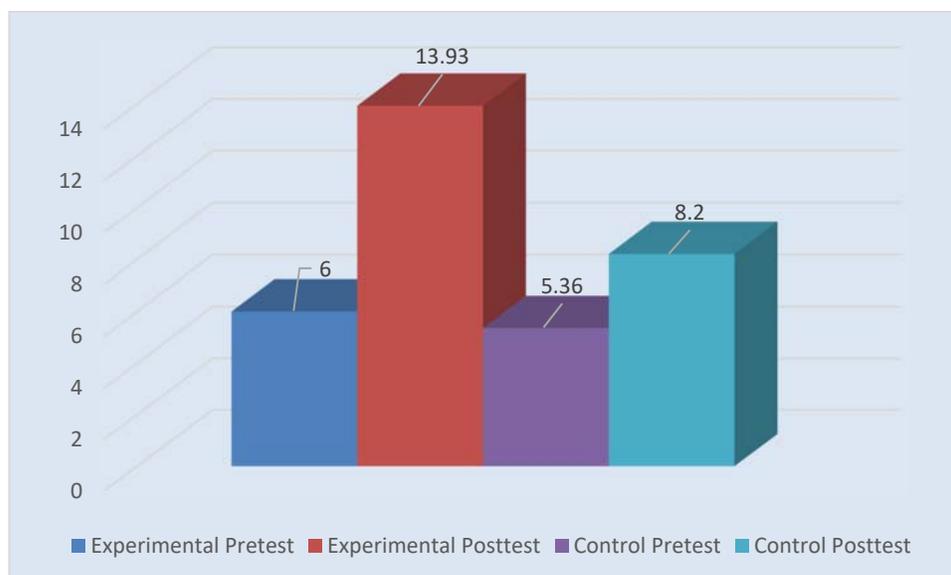


Figure 2. The Mean Scores of the Experimental and Control Group Learners on the Pretest and Posttest

The bar chart shows that the performance of the learners in the both experimental and control groups improved from pre to post-test, and that the improvement was more for the experimental group learners. Now the question is whether the degree of difference in the improvement between the experimental and control group learners was significant. To find an answer to this question, between-group comparisons were conducted, the results of which could be found below.

### Between-Group Comparisons

As stated above, to see whether there was any significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the degree to which they could improve their writing skills, these two groups were compared. At the beginning of the experiment, the students in the two groups were compared in terms of their pretest scores to determine if their levels of writing proficiency were equivalent, and then at the end, their writing posttest scores were compared to find out whether there were differences between the two groups or not. For both these analyses, independent-samples *t* test was run.

Table 4. *Independent-Samples t-test Comparing Pretest Scores of the Learners in the Two Groups and Their Posttest Scores*

Tests	Groups	<i>N</i>	Mean	St. Deviation	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed)
Pretest	Experimental	30	6.00	2.61	-.82	58	.41
	Control	30	5.36	3.28			
Posttest	Experimental	30	13.93	3.18	6.63	58	.000
	Control	30	8.20	3.50			

Table 4 shows that there was no significant difference between the writing pretest scores of the participants in the experimental ( $M = 6.00$ ) and control ( $M = 5.36$ ) groups ( $p = .41$ ). On the other hand, on the writing posttest, the learners in the experimental group ( $M = 13.93$ ) managed to

significantly outperform their counterparts in the control group ( $M = 8.20$ ),  $p = .000$ . This boils down to the conclusion that providing the experimental group learners with the intervention in the form of teaching them how to deal with their stress and anxiety in a foreign language classroom helped them improve their writing skills significantly. This result could be vividly seen the following bar graph:

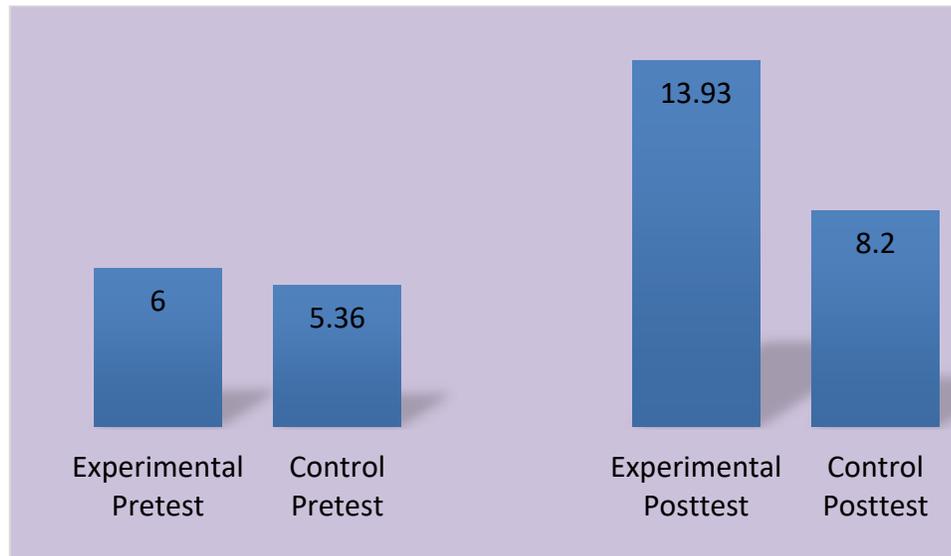


Figure 3. Comparing Experimental and Control Group Learners' Pretest and Posttest Scores

The pretest scores of the experimental and control group learners were not considerably different, but the experimental group's post-test scores significantly exceeded those of the control group learners due to the treatment they received (i.e., strategies of how to cope with stress and anxiety in a foreign language classroom).

## Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to explore the effect of the pamphlet of study skill on the writing texts of Iranian pre-intermediate EFL learners in a private English institute. Given that not enough research has been conducted to demonstrate the influence of study skill pamphlets on writing skill in Iran as an EFL environment, the researchers decided that further research was required.

As the findings of this study showed in the pretest, they wrote the thank you letter very short and the message partly communicated to the reader. In this test the mean of the experimental group got 6.00 and the mean of the control group got 5.36. When the experimental group was taught with the mentioned pamphlet, a change from 6.00 on the pretest to 13.93 on the posttest was witnessed. For the control group, the change was not that noticeable; the learners in this group improved from 5.36 to 8.20. On the basis of the results the learners in the both experimental and control groups improved from pretest to posttest, but the improvement was more for the experimental group learners. There was no statistically significant difference between the writing pretest scores of the

learners in the experimental and control groups. On the other hand, on the writing posttest, the learners in the experimental group managed to significantly outperform their counterparts in the control group. This showed when students have enough knowledge, when they know different kinds of techniques and appropriate linking words, they can write each type of writing with the best structure. Thus, it became clear that the application of the study skill pamphlet enhanced the English writing skill of Iranian pre intermediate EFL learners.

Writing is a fundamental skill in mastering the English language. Brown (2001) identified writing in L2 as one of the four competence categories for teaching writing. According to Namaziandost and Shafiee (2018), writing is one of the most challenging language skills to master.

Previous research has shown that even at high levels of proficiency, Iranian EFL learners encounter considerable writing challenges (Baghaei & Sadighi, 2015; Derakhshan & Karimian Shirejini, 2020; Mallahi, 2022). Therefore, considering the difficulties that learners face in writing, EFL instructors must move beyond their limited and conventional roles and use innovation in their educational strategies, delivery methods, and instructional materials. Study skill pamphlets are considered as a type of instructional resource that aids students in developing their writing abilities. The findings of the current study further supported the importance of using this instructional resource in enhancing the writing skills of EFL learners. This result may be explained by the fact that the pamphlets of the study skill not only inform learners regarding different types of writing texts, but also offer some study skills tips, strategies, and recommendations for enhancing writing skill. In other words, study skill pamphlets are important study aids that give students concise, to-the-point information about writing skills. Study skills pamphlets may be a great, immediate help to EFL students looking to boost their writing ability. Thus, EFL learners can take the results of the study into consideration to improve their writing skill by employing study skill pamphlets. For EFL learners, the concise and straightforward material regarding writing abilities offered in the pamphlets may be enjoyable and simple to acquire and remember.

The present results may also be seen as evidence of the advantages of mixing various pedagogical strategies and resources, such as teaching study skill pamphlets in EFL writing classes. In fact, as the present study's findings suggest, using the study skill pamphlets in writing classes engaged students in an inquiry that enhanced their level of learning in English writing.

## **Conclusion**

Writing is a set of symbols used to represent the sounds, syllables, and words of a language. There are several mechanisms used in writing, including punctuation, word form, capitalization, spelling, and function. It's crucial that written communication spreads more widely than any other kind of media. Learners must thus possess strong writing skills to satisfy both their academic and professional obligations. Students should develop their writing skills, and teachers should encourage this by providing instruction in writing processes and writing standards, such as grammatical rules, and writing practice. Students today lack writing skills since they spend the majority of their time on smartphones and other technological devices that offer fast or ready-made outcomes that are accessible online. Instead of gaining language skills, they spend their free time looking up what others are doing. Naturally, pupils who are good writers are always effective in

communicating their ideas and achieving their objectives. They should practice writing for their many advantages and future success. The goal of the writing process is to educate students how to write coherently, with the right grammar, and in an acceptable style. This investigation was also not without limitations. First of all, taking time of the class for teaching the mentioned pamphlet interrupted their curriculum design. The researcher had to collect data during the classes and during two months. Secondly, the participants of the present study were limited to pre-intermediate learners. The reason was that the researcher believed pre-intermediate learners could judge better than lower levels. However, this study can be conducted in different levels of proficiency too.

English language teachers can use the pamphlet of study skills among elementary, intermediate, and upper intermediate English learners. This pamphlet can result in good scores and can close classmates to each other. Also it can give the students more motivation and attract them to learning English. The present study focused on teaching the pamphlet of study skills in writing courses. The effect of the pamphlet has not been considered on the other skills of languages in private English institutes (speaking, listening, and reading). In addition, this study investigated between the pre- intermediate students. Other studies can be considered on the other terms such as Intermediate, and upper intermediate. Also, the study was conducted in an Isfahan language center. The same research can be conducted in high schools and other cities with more participants.

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No, there are no conflicting interests.

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