Research paper

Iranian EFL Learners' Perceptionsof Collaborative versus Individual Testing

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Abstract

Due to students' frequent complaint about anxiety they experience during taking individual tests and novelty of collaborative testing method not only in Iran but also all around the world, this study tends to examine the perceptions of Iranian EFL learners on using collaborative testing instead of individual testing in EFL classes. To yield this result, the researcher adopted a collaborative test as the formative test during the semester that is not only new among Iranians but also, in most countries (if not all) in language teaching around the world. To get the best outcome, two different instruments have evaluated learners' perceptions: a semi-structured interview and an attitude questionnaire. A group of 60 intrmediate English learners from two language institutes was chosen. They were supposed to take exams every session. Group members have been interviewed about their point of view toward collaborative testing and its impact on them and their peers in the group. The results of analyses from attitude questionnaire which has been triangulated by data from the interviews showed that most respondents agreed with the items in learner's perception of collaborative tests. They were willing to have traditional testing replaced by group testing which includes less stress and yet higher learning and better social skills. The results of this study can be of importance to policy makers and teachers to employ this new testing method in designing EFL curricula.

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Introduction

The emergence of cooperative learning has changed the way we teach and learn in modern educational settings (Tran, 2013). This transition is clearly seen in teachers' instructional methods, whereas testing methods have not caught up. In other words, traditional testing is still the primary testing method in most disciplines. Traditional assessments have traditionally been administered individually, which appears to be at odds with cooperative learning, which has been employed as the primary strategy for teaching in various disciplines, especially in EFL context.

Using collaborative testing (CT) can be a solution for the mentioned mismatch. This testing method which is called by different terms in literature, namely cooperative testing, paired testing, double testing, group quiz /examination and dyad testing is defined as a cooperative learning strategy where students work together on a test (Lusk & Conklin, 2003; LoGiudice et al., 2015; Rieger&Heiner, 2014). Collaborative testing can be taken in two stages which is comprised both individual and collaborative tests (Bloom, 2009; Eaton, 2009; Haberyan&Barnett, 2010; Sandahl, 2010; Leight,Saunders, Calkins & Withers, 2012). This type of testing has been welcomed by students (Patiwael, Douma, Bezakova, Kusurkar&Daelmans, 2021; Eastwood, Kleinberg&Rodenbaugh, 2020; Caboral-Stevens & Fox, 2020).

Cooperative learning which has been considered as the root of CT is a well-known term in language teaching. Having its antecedents in peer-teaching and monitoring, it heavily drew on Vygotsky (1978) learning theories and peer scaffolding. Furthermore, according to Olsen and Kagen (1992), cooperative learning is a group learning activity designed in such a way that learning is based on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups, therefore, both cooperative learning and collaborative testing which is deemed an extension of it are founded in the social constructivism theory (Witt, Gerdin, De Haan& Bergman 2022).

This type of testing has been used in some disciplines particularly nursing and medicine (Mahoney& Harris-Reeves, 2019; Levine, et al., 2018).In Iran, Rivaz, Momennasab and Shokrollahi (2015) examined nursing students' perception of of taking tests collaboratively which came out to be highly positive. But Literarure review showed little-if any- trace in EFL/ESL environment.

Considering all said above, the reason behind conducting this study is to employ collaborative testing in EFL environment for the first time in Iran to examine students' perception of this novel testing type to hopefully remove the mismatch between teaching and testing methods. To best pay off, an ongoing effort is required. Testing as an ongoing process which is a persistent component of teaching can come to an aid. Traditional testing which is based on solo work inculcates the main priority of competition while the CT emphasizes the role of cooperation. By sticking to traditional testing method, assessment is regretfully confined to an evaluation tool sending messages against cooperative techniques, although it holds subliminal multifarious potentials. Making the best of every single moment of teaching

including testing sessions will help to first harmonize teaching and testing method and second to prioritize cooperation over competition utilizing cooperative techniques. This would-be solution backfires when it has been applied improperly whereas it could modify some misconduct with appropriate reforms.

The potentials in collaborative testing method posit that to maximize the outcomes of the cooperative teaching method (CLT) which include requiring cooperation rather than competition; utilizing a restructured testing system will come to an aid. The prospective alteration must harmonize testing approach with teaching method, minimize the drawbacks of competitive atmosphere and diminish the consequence of traditional solo-test taking on students' future life.

Review of Literature

Theoretical Underpinnings of Collaborative Testing

Collaborative testing is a social constructivist technique based on the principle of social interdependence (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Individuals, according to this point of view, are active actors in a never-ending learning process that happens as a result of interactions with others and the environment (Clark, 1998; Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Mishra, 2014). A child who has no prior knowledge of mathematics, for example, can be taught simple addition (e.g., 1 + 1 = 2) by interactions with a teacher. This knowledge can expand over time to include more difficult, linear information (such as summing fractions) as well as non-linear information (e.g. subtraction, multiplication, division). Such progress would, once again, be dependent on interactions with educated social actors like teachers and parents. As seen by this example, prior to social contact, knowledge is non-existent and is constantly formed and rebuilt. While this is a simplified example, the same assumption holds true for all formal and informal learning contexts, no matter how large or little (Mishra, 2014).

The conceptual roots of social constructivism inspire a variety of modern teaching practices, including group work, peer marking, and simulation training, to name a few. In light of this understanding, it may be claimed that collaborative testing promotes learning by providing students with chances to actively grow, reconstruct, and enhance their knowledge through interactions with others.

Collaborative testing is gradually becoming more common at some institutions. For example, two-stage exams are now used at the University of British Columbia in over 20 courses across physics; chemistry; biology; math; statistics; Earth, ocean, and atmospheric sciences; computer science; forestry; and land and food systems. They occur in a variety of class formats as well, from 450-student, first-year lectures to graduate-level classes with fewer than five students (Gilley & Clarkston, 2014).Although it is not a long time that group tests have been adopted as testing method, ample of research body exist to support the efficiency of this kind of testing across disciplines and populations.Various benefits are assigned to cooperative testing which can be classified to different categories.

Moore (2010) listed four advantages and two disadvantages of collaborative testing. The four benefits were as follows: the chance for conversation to boost comprehension, the possibility to improve overall test grade, the opportunity for cooperation and teamwork, and improved individual accountability. Three of these benefits were comparable to those mentioned by Zipp(2007) for cooperative tests. In addition, the results os a study on physical therapist education students done by Merlo, Edigerand Sasaki (2022) confirmed the above positive impacts as well as an insight students reported to have developed into test taking strategy.Overall, the advantages of cooperative exams appeared to outweigh the disadvantages according to studies which have been carried out.

Although the impact of collaborative testing was never negative on course grades, it occasionally exhibits inconsistency, ranging from no effect to a statistically significant improvement (Haberyan & Barnett, 2010; Stelzer & Coll-Reilly, 2010). According to Zipp (2007), just 3.8% of pupils outperformed their peers individually. He used a 'pyramid test,' in which pupils first took an exam individually and then the same exam with their learning group of six. The test was described as an active learning experience in the study, with small groups discussing and debating exam answers. During the course, four similar examinations were administered, followed by a final exam comprised of questions from the previous four assessments. Only 3.8% of the students performed better individually than their group on the four examinations utilizing the 'pyramid exam' indicated above. Merlo, Ediger& Sasaki (2022) reported better performance of students with a 12%-increase in the mean score.

Collaborative testing has been found in studies to be an effective instructional method for improving student learning, attitudes toward the subject matter, and/or student retention in classes (Applegate 1995; Bloom 2006; Breedlove, et al., 2004; Considine, et al., 2006). While corroborating prior findings, they emphasized the importance of promoting deep rather than surface learning by emphasizing the favorable influence of collaborative testing on students' learning. according to Cortright, Collins, Rodenbaugh, and DiCarlo (2003), Collaboration assessment increased student retention of course knowledge.

Empirical Studies

According to Wilder, et al. (2007), who focused on staff and students' perceptions of collaborative testing, students' perceptions of their learning and critical thinking were good. According to an examination of students' reactions to collaborative testing, 59 percent believed it improved learning, 85 percent thought it was worth the extra time allotted to the exam, 60 percent thought it encouraged critical thinking, and 83 percent thought it should be continued. Faculty noted that the technique boosted knowledge, allowed students to go beyond competitiveness, and provided for more rapid feedback on student learning requirements.

The success of collaborative testing is assigned to different factors. They include: positive atmosphere and less test anxiety, feeling of having a higher chance of success and immediate feedback (Dallmer, 2004). The other reason can be immediate feedback whichcan foster learning. Students should gain more from collaborative tests when they interact with peers as

a 'community of learners,' supporting 'knowledge structure elaboration,' and increasing individual awareness of personal learning processes (Wood, 2009).

Some teachers investigated the intake and improvement of high versus low - achieving students throughout the implementation of collaborative tests, and the findings suggested that poor performers benefited more from the collaborative exam than high performers (Dahlström, 2012). This was not surprising because, if cooperation involves learning from one another, poor performers should have more to learn from high performers than vice versa.

Dahlström (2012) reported performance improvement but surprisingly not in the repeated questions but in new questions. In this sample, an unexpected trend emerged: whereas both low and high performers performed better on new questions, high performers performed worse on repeated questions.

Mahoney and Harris-Reeves (2019) looked at how collaborative testing affected overall performance and higher order thinking challenges. With the exception of the top achievers, the data showed that pupils fared better generally on the collaborative exam. Furthermore, regardless of academic ability, students fared better on higher order thinking tasks when they worked together. This enhancement was consistent across academic ability, suggesting that collaborative testing enhances higher order thinking even when past academic accomplishment is considered.

LoGiudice and Heizand Kim (2021) conducted a study in which 79 first-year introductory psychology students participated in a course where they consented to take two tests in two groups of individual and collaborative testing. Students in collaborative testing were randomly assigned in groups of 3 to 4 and were asked to answer a multiple-choice-question quiz that they were informed about in advance. But the second test was a surprise posttest whose questions for half of the students were the same as the first quiz while for the rest different questions were designed. The results showed that the students who took exams collaboratively performed better in the posttest. In addition, the results of a 4-item questionnaire applied at the end of the study revealed that students experienced less anxiety and they enjoyed taking tests in groups although they wished to have the chance to take tests individually first and then collaboratively to discuss their answers with their peers.

A study was carried out by Patiwael, et al. (2021) in which physical education students participated in 8 tests of which four were taken in traditional format while the other four were taken collaboratively. The students were given a perception questionnaire at the end of the period in which they evaluated autonomy and thinking for themselves as the most positive aspect of this test-taking system. They, additionally, believed that thanks to the discussion they had with their group mates, their competence has raised.

In a research done by Witt, et al. (2022), 80 junior-level baccalaureate nursing students participated in a program in which they were supposed to take four exams in two phases. In the

first phase, they took the tests individually with the help of notecards they had prepared from the content of the course and immediately retook exams collaboratively in small groups of four or five. In the second phase, all students took both tests collaboratively while they use their notecards for the first time and wrote the rationales of their answers then. The results showed positive impact of collaborative tests on students' content retention.

Caboral-Stevens and Fox (2020) used collaborative testing and evaluated students' satisfaction with taking tests collaboratively. The result showed that the majority of participants evaluated collaborative testing highly useful. They also believed that their critical thinking increased while their test anxiety level decreased. Students also reported better social skills owing to collaborative tests.

Ahmadpour and Yousefi (2018) practiced a different form of assessment-peer evaluation-in EFL classes where the students were assigned in groups of three and after narrating a picture they had been shown, their group mates or students from other groups evaluated them and gave them feedback. The results showed that peer assessment and discussion was effective for students' acquisition of simple past tense structure.

The review of literature has shown that peer assessment has been used in EFL classes (Ahmadpour&Yousefi, 2018) while there is still no trace of collaborative tests in EFL curricula. Peer assessment includes feedback given by peers on the performance of their classmates while collaborative testing is when students work in groups to complete a test. However, collaborative tests are almost unknown to Iranian teachers and learners. There are scarce examples of using collaborative testing in Iran. One of these attempts was when researchers, Rivaz, Momennasab and Shokrollahi (2015) employed collaborative testing method in nursing classes in Shiraz. The results of this study confirmed better performance in test as well as positive attitude of learners toward collaborative test-taking method.

Therefore, adopting collaborative tests as a novel testing method which is in harmony with cooperative learning, the predominant teaching approach in EFL/ESL classes seems to be essential. This testing method which has been used in nursing and medical classes in Iran has never been used in EFL classes. Therefore, adopting it to know student's perception of this testing method would be helpful for further studies in this area.

According to Molsbee (2013), faculty members who observed the collaborative testing group work saw that certain students monopolized the discussion of questions and responses, while others did not participate. It was also discovered that groups with one individual dominating the conversations scored lower as a group than those with free discourse amongst all members. These teacher notations do not support the concept of collaborative testing, which allows students to gain collaboration skills such as cooperation, consensus building, and clear communication of ideas.

Collaborative testing can provide the students not only with development in understanding of the course material but with motivation increase to read class materials (Slusser& Erikson

2006). For teachers who always try to intrigue students to study more, collaborative testing can be a very useful pedagogical technique.

Given all benefits mentioned above, collaborative testing is recognized as a valuable pedagogical tool is worth being applied in the class. The present study aimed to pursue the perceptions of Iranian EFL learners on collaborative testing. To address this aim, the following research question is posed:

- What are Iranian EFL learners' perception of collaborative testing?

Methods

Participants

A total of 33Iranian EFL learners within the age range 16-32 who came from two private language schools formed the sample of the study. They were selected based on convenience sampling.In an attempt to reduce the effect of socio-economic and individual personality factors, the classes were chosen from two different language schools where the students from different social and economic status enrolled. These language schools whose textbook were different-English Result and American English File- have adopted the same teaching method, communicative language teaching (CLT) in which cooperation plays an important role. These classrooms were selected from those being offered as intermediate level classes for female students.

Instrumentations

The instruments of this study consist of a 21-item questionnaire and ansemi-structured interview.

Questionnaire

The perception questionnaire was design by Moore (2010) to extract learners' attitudes towards collaborative testing. It consists of 21 likert-type items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The reliability of this questionnaire reported by Moore was .76.in this study, Cronbach alpha was used to estimate its reliability and the results indicated an index of .81.

Interview

The interview consists of 7 open-ended questions ranging from issues such as students' observation of their own and their group members' (peers) performance to the effectiveness of collaborative testing. The interview questions were borrowed Fushino (2010) to give students the opportunity to express their opinion more freely. The rationale underlying the interview questions assumed to be the fact that one could make a reasonable decision about his own and another one's orientation.

Data Collection and Procedure

The main study wasconducted in the following sequence. The participants were given the treatment for 6 weeks when they took six exams collaboratively. The teacher did not change the material and used the same material the language institutes had offered. In this study, the researcher employed communicative language teaching for her classes as it has always been

the demand of most language institutes in Iran. The treatment included tests which were taken collaboratively and accounted for 40% of students' total score.

To take these exams, in each session, the students worked in groups of three whose memnbers were chosen by the teacher to answer the questions of the tests designed by the teacher from the content taught previous session. In other words, in every collaborative test, students experienced working with different group mates (Their groups were not permamnent during the study). During the tests, the students discussed the questions and tried to reach a consensus because they were supposed to hand in one answer sheet for the group. The garde of this paper was given to every member of the group.

At the end of the research period, the students were given a 21-question perception questionnaire. Finally, the researcher interviewed21volenteersfrom the participants of the study.

Results

Descriptive statistics were used in order to investigate the students' perception of collaborative testing. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of attitude questionnaire

Questions	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.I think collaborative tests must be a component of the class.	33	2.00	5.00	4.083	.88992
2. I enjoyed the process of collaborative tests.	33	1.00	5.00	4.021	1.11211
3.Taking tests collaboratively, I feel more accountable to my group mates.	33	2.00	5.00	4.133	.97143
4. I think all members of the group tried their best to learn as I did.	33	2.00	5.00	3.866	.99424
5. I believe that group test score is absolutely fair.	33	1.00	5.00	3.566	1.12903
6. Taking the tests collaboratively, I learned much more in this class.	33	1.00	5.00	3.733	1.18855
7. Group tests helped me to have a higher retention of what I had learned in the class.	33	1.00	5.00	3.666	1.22287
8. Because I knew that the tests are given collaboratively, I study more for the tests.	33	2.00	5.00	3.632	.97379
9. I think I did much better than the others in the group.	33	1.00	5.00	3.431	1.09545
10. I preferred to rake the tests individually.	33	1.00	5.00	3.233	1.37674
11. I am much more confident for taking the tests collaboratively.	33	2.00	5.00	3.833	.73968
12. Collaborative tests helped me to learn better in the class.	33	1.00	5.00	3.666	.95893
13. While we were taking the tests collaboratively, we had a lot of discussions and interaction.	33	2.00	5.00	3.933	.90719

14. Taking the tests collaboratively helped us to have a good interpersonal relationship.	33	3.00	5.00	3.933	.69149
15. During taking tests collaboratively, I got completely involved in discussions.	33	1.00	5.00	3.730	1.06997
16. The impact of this method of testing was the same as the other testing method.	33	2.00	5.00	3.433	1.00630
17. This testing method was really interesting for its process and innovations.	33	1.00	5.00	3.766	1.04000
18. Collaborative tests got me to study more for tests.	33	1.00	5.00	3.466	1.04166
19. Group tests made the class more enjoyable.	33	1.00	5.00	3.743	.97320
20. Taking group tests, some students got good marks with no efforts.	33	1.00	5.00	3.643	.99943
21. As I knew that the tests were going to be given collaboratively, I studied less.	33	1.00	5.00	2.951	1.27982

As Table 1 shows, item 3 indicating that collaborative testing provided more accountable tgroupmates obtained the highest mean score (M = 4.13, SD = .97). Item 21 indicating that collaborative tesing made learners study less(M = 2.95, SD = 1.27) was the lowest mean score among the participants.Overall, the results indicate that learners had positive attitudes towards the effectiveness of collaborative testing in enhancing their language achievement. Therefore, Iranian EFL learners showed a positive attitude towards the use of collaborative testing in their classroom in order to enhance their language achievement.

Concerning the results of interview, the first interview question wanted to explore how the participants evaluated their peers' roles in the group. They were asked to talk about positive and negative points they observed. The data obtained from students' answers to this question was analyzed and the results have been presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for the first interview question

Answers	Frequency	Percentage
All my group mates played active roles in group improvement	15	71.4
Some group members played an active role but some others didn't	6	28.6
Total	21	100.0

According Table 2,seven learnersor 70 percent of the respondents believed that all group members played an important active role and were all accountable to the group so that by encouraging their peers as well as correcting their mistakes, they tried to improve their group performance and help their group mates. On the other hand 28.6 percent of the respondents believe that some group members were active while the others shrink their responsibilities.

The second interview question was: "How do you evaluate the relationship among the group members?" the obtained data from the participants' answers was analyzedand the results are presented in Table3.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics for interview question number 2

Answers	Frequency	Percentage
Agreement and cooperation was one of the important elements could be observed among group mates	19	90.4
Some group members were oblivious about their group mates	2	9.6
Total	21	100.0

According to the above table, about 90.4 percent of the respondents believed that students were all cooperative and liked to help their peers in the group to get them improved. They never made fun of each other and they even helped each other eliminate their misunderstandings and mistakes. But 6.9 percent of the participants believed that some group members ignored the existence of some members and got involved in a two-person discussion.

The third interview question tended to explore students' evaluation of the group members' interdependence. The obtained data was analyzed and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Descriptive statistics for interview question number 3

Answers	Frequency	Percentage
They cooperate with each other to learn better and believed that they need each other to succeed	19	90.4
Some group mates did not cooperate and felt they could independently succeed	2	9.6
Total	21	100

According to the above table, 90.4 percent of the respondents believed that group members cooperated with each other to learn better so they had positive and constructive relationship. They believed that they wanted every single member of the group to succeed. They were all supportive and nobody was alienated from the group. The sense of positive interdependence and support could be clearly observed. The other 9.6 percent of the participants believed that students did not cooperate because they felt they could do everything independently and they did not need the others' help.

The fourth interview question wanted to explore the participants' beliefs about the review of the group process in the groups. The obtained data was analyzed and the results have been presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Descriptive statistics for interview question number 4

Answers	Frequency	Percentage
We did not have enough time for reviewing the group process so we did not do it	15	71.4
We sometimes did that	16	28.6
Total	21	100.0

According to the above table, 71.4 percent of the respondents believed that they did not have enough time for group processing so they did not do that but 28.6 percent believed that they sometimes have group processing. The analysis of the participants' answers is presented in tTable 6.

Table 6

Descriptive statistics for interview question number 5

Answers	Frequency	Percentage
It is important and assists in removing learning problems	3	14.3
It is important and assists in increasing cooperation and interaction as well as social skills which will be improved	6	28.5
It is important and assists in better learning	10	47.7
It is important and assists in boosting self confidence	2	9.5
Total	21	100.0

According to the above table, it can be said that all respondents believe that group work was important. 14.3 percent of the participants believed that it assisted in learning removing learning problems. 28.5 percent of the respondents believed that it assisted in increasing cooperation and interaction and improved social skills. 47.7 percent of the respondents believed that it assisted in better learning and the 9.6 percent believed that it boosted learners' self confidence.

The sixth interview question wanted to explore how participants evaluated themselves and their group mates in doing group tasks. The obtained data from the respondents' answers were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Descriptive statistics for interview question number 6

Answers	Frequency	Percentage
In group work, group mates helped each other to improve and increase the sense of usefulness	4	19.1
Group work helped group members to find out their weak points as well as better learning which occurred	5	23.8
Group work helped to reduce stress and led to higher motivation in group members	5	23.8
Group work which is an inevitable component of group tests leads to higher self confidence in my group mates	7	33.3
Total	21	100.0

As the Table 7 displays, 19.1 percent of the respondents believed that in group work, group mates helped each other to improve and increase the sense of usefulness. 23.8 percent believed that group work helped group members to find out their weak points as helping them learn more effectively. The other 23.8 percent believed that group work helped them reduce their stress and led to higher motivation but the highest percentage, 33.3 percent, were those participants who believed that group work led to higher self confidence.

The seventh interview question wanted to probe the participants' opinion about the impact of group tests on them and their group members. The analysis of the obtained data from the answers of the participants is presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Descriptive statistics for interview question number 7

Answers	Frequency	Percentage
Accountability increase	12	57.1
Self confidence increase	3	14.2

Ability increase and improvement	2	9.5
Anxiety increase	1	4.7
Time mismanagement	2	9.5
No impact was observed	1	4.7
Total	21	100.0

According to the above table, it can be stated that 57.1 percent of the respondents believed that accountability increased in group work. 14.2 percent believed that self confidence increased. Because of getting involved in cooperative work, 9.5 percent of the respondents believed that students were more capable of doing what they wanted to do and also group testing improved their abilities. On the other hand 4.7 percent of the respondents stated that their anxiety increased and 9.5 percent believed that time management was a problem in groups testing. Finally, 4.7 percent of the respondents believed that group testing did not have any impact on their group mates.

Discussion

The results of analyses from attitude questionnaire which has been triangulated by data from the interviews showed that most respondents agreed with the items in learner's perception of collaborative tests. The language learners considered collaborative testing, this new testing method, more enjoyable and less stressing than conventional testing method. The other point which cannot be overlooked is the fact that the majority of students stated that they never ditched studying for the reason that the tests were given in groups. It means that group tests do not tempt students to avoid studying yet in some cases students confirmed that because they wanted to shoulder their share of burden and to prove that they are effective group mates, they even studied more. In addition some of them mentioned that they did not want to lose face in the group so they studied even longer.

All in all, the majority of students confirmed that they liked and enjoyed this method of testing and they prefer to have this test as a permanent component of their class schedule. The other point which surprised the researcher was students' opinion about fairness of grades. They stated that the grades of collaborative tests are fair enough to be relied on. The best point which should be taken into account is that they believe their learning and retention as well as their social skills and interpersonal relationship have been improved through collaborative tests. To conclude, it can be said that about 50% of the student agreed that tests should be taken collaboratively.

It was also stated that group work is important to every single member because it helps to solve whether learning or interpersonal problems and the majority of students believed that not only did they value group work but also it was important to their group mates. In addition the students considered a boost to interaction, social skills cooperation and learning which can be sonsidered as other reasons for adopting group work. Besides what social group can assist, self confidence which is a fruit of sense of helpfulness is the other result of this type of study which

cannot be overlooked. Plus all is said above, students ascertain that they were more motivated to study and learn.

The other point that is worth mentioning is the opportunity of raising discussion as well as participation which has been mentioned by the students in the interviews and confirmed by Moore (2010). Moore determined four different advantages for collaborative testing which includes: the opportunity for discussion to increase understanding, the opportunity to increase the overall grade on the exam, the possibility of cooperation and teamwork, as well as enhanced individual accountability Three of these benefits were comparable to those mentioned by Zipp for cooperative tests (2007).As collaborative testing has never been used in EFL classes in Iran, this study was conducted to examine students' perception of collaborative testing method. Two instruments, a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview, were used. The results from the questionnaire confirmed positive attitude of students towards taking tests collaboratively. This result was triangulated by questions of interview. The majority students confirmed that they liked and enjoyed this method of testing and 83% of them would prefer to have this test as a permanent component of their class schedule. The students even believed that although all group members were given the same grade regardless of their contribution to the group, the grades were fairly contributed. All in all, about 50% of students stated that the tests should be taken collaboratively to best pay off. This result is in agreement with the results of the research done by (LoGiudice, et al., 2021; Sessa& Court, 2005; Heglund& Wink, 2011).

The other point which is worth mentioning is that students they never ditched studying because the tests were taken collaboratively. It means that group tests did not tempt Iranian EFL learners to abdicate their responsibility for studying to other group mates because they wished to prove themselves effective and also they enjoyed shouldering their share of burden. This outcome did not confirm potential problems discussed by Zipp (2007), Yuretich et al. (2001), and Giuliodori, et al. (2009). In other words, students were more motivated to study and learn which has been confirmed by Slusser and Erickson, (2006) and Sandahl (2010). Some of them ascertained that they even studied more because they knew they would be evaluated by their peers. They mentioned that they studied because they were worried about losing face.

Collaborative test taking method has also proven to be psychologically effective as it has appeared to be useful in terms of lowering the level of students' anxiety while taking tests (Pandy & Kapitanoff, 2011; LoGiudice, et al., 2021; Caboral-Stevens & Fox, 2020). The current study also confirmed this result. Even some of the students reported "no anxiety" experience during collaborative tests. In addition, the students believed that they were most self-confident.

The next point which was mentioned by students and cannot be overlooked is their opportunity to discuss answers and build up on their previous knowledge increased. This outcome was confirmed by some studies such as Moore (2010), Zipp (2007) andYuretich, et

al. (2001). Regarding social skills and accountability to the group, majority of students mentioned that their peers were accountable to the groups and had better social skills. Group work in collaborative test taking was also highly appreciated by students because they were able to solve both their learning and interpersonal problems while they were involved in group work. In addition the students considered a boost to interaction, social skills cooperation and learning which can have its roots in group work. These results are consistent with the ones reported by Caboral-Stevens and Fox, (2020).

In the present study, students' perception of their learning was positive as it was reported by Wilder, et al. (2007) who focused on faculty and students' perception of collaborative testing. Likewise, In the study done by Eastwood, et al., (2020), the students found collaborative testing effective in terms of learning discussion and LoGiudice, et al. qualitative study (2021) showed better students' performance on the posttest which can be an evidence of student's better learning when they took tests in groups.

The researcher observed conflicts among group mates twice which was reported in others studies as well. These students mentioned that some students were difficult to get along because they did not consider other's viewpoints and were trying to have the last word. The same complaint was made by subjects of another study where students reported frequent conflicts and problems with managing difficult personalities (Eastwood, et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Exams as tools of evaluation have been mainly taken individually in which cooperation and discussion are considered misconducts. However, this attitude is in total contrast with current teaching methods which are grounded in cooperative learning approach. This approach demands for a great amount of discussion and group work which can be realized through taking tests collaboratively. Using this method of testing, the mismatch between teaching and testing method can be hopefully removed.

Having implemented collaborative testing method in EFL classes, many different benefits were revealed. The first and foremost, students' attitude towards taking tests collaboratively were highly positive and they preferred to have individual being tests replaced by collaborative tests. Apart from that the positive impact of collaborative test taking on students' group work and social skills was confirmed by students which can be an effective step towards more harmonious curricula in which teaching and testing methods are moving forward in line with one another. The other benefits like, less anxiety level, better learning as well as motivation to study are the further reasons to adopt this method of testing. Despite the complaints about conflicts in groups, in summary, the advantages of employing collaborative testing outweigh the disadvantages.

Considering all the benefits of CT, teachers and policy makers can take advantage of this novel testing method to remove the mentioned mismatch and make the most of every single second of each session to fulfill instructional purposes. The testing method, then, can keep up with teaching strategies and methods.

For further studies, to consolidate the result which came out of student's opinion on better learning, a qualitative study should be undertaken on the impact of collaborative testis on student's performance using their grades before and after receiving the treatment. In addition, in this research, two-staged collaborative tests were adopted, other types of collaborative tests like one stage tests or the ones in which no consensus is required can be adopted to compare students' perception of each and choose the best one.

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