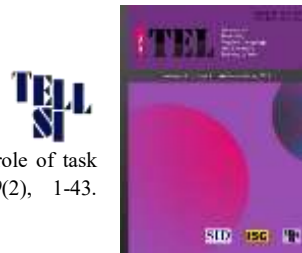


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Research Paper

Enhancing IELTS Writing: The Role of Task Sequencing and Corrective Feedback

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Abstract

This study, which is part of a larger one, investigated the combined effects of task sequencing (TS) and corrective feedback (CF) on IELTS writing scores. To reach this aim, 113 intermediate EFL learners were chosen and assigned to two groups. They took a pretest at the onset of the study. Each group performed task sets in the opposing orders: simple-to-complex (S-C) and complex-to-simple (C-S). Participants' errors in the first set of tasks were given CF by error codes (ECs), while the errors in the second set were only underlined. Participants in both groups were asked to enhance their tasks based on the CF. They took a post-test at the end of the treatment. The pretest and posttest scores were calculated based on IELTS writing band descriptors. The Analysis of Variances (ANOVA) was administered to compare participants' performance before and after the treatment. Among the four types of treatments (S-C-ECs, C-S-ECs, S-C, Underlining, C-S-underlining), the results exhibited an outperformance by the group that did the tasks in S-C order and received ECs. Findings had implications for IELTS writing preparation courses.

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1. Introduction

It is posited that task sequencing (TS) enhances writing performance (Abdi Tabari et al., 2024). Previous studies indicate that specific TS can influence writing complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) (Allaw & McDonough, 2019). These metrics serve as technical indicators of an individual's writing capabilities. They are widely recognized in the field of language education and have been routinely employed to assess the impact of various instructional interventions.

According to Ozdemir (2024), language learners' linguistic development is generally evaluated in terms of CAF. The complexity metric identifies the learners' development in employing linguistically complex structures. It is gauged by metrics such as T-unit length, sentence length, and dependent clauses. Accuracy shows the grammatical correctness level of T-units in the text, and fluency reflects the number of words in a text. Though, as noted by Saeedi (2023), the learners' processing capacity is limited; therefore, reaching a balance in form and meaning, which refers to CAF, seems to be problematic for them.

However, such measures are not tangible for students, and more concrete indices are needed to inform them of their progress. The IELTS (International English Language Testing System) exam is a familiar test for Iranian language learners. IELTS presents reliable evidence of test takers' English

language proficiency. This test is held by organizations such as the University of Cambridge, the British Council, and - International Development Program of Australian Universities (Jafary et al., 2023).

IELTS is designed to measure examinees' proficiency in English. It measures listening, reading, writing, and speaking, providing a score from 0 to 9. Study programs overseas entail a minimum IELTS score for applicants. The writing component of the IELTS consists of two tasks. The first task requires candidates to interpret visual data, while the second task involves composing an essay on a given topic, typically involving a discussion. As noted by Monjezi and Mashhadi (2021), in spite of the attention given to L2 learners' responses to feedback, the issue of feedback has not attracted due attention among IELTS candidates.

Task complexity, as a characteristic influencing writing, has been examined by Robinson's (2001) triadic componential framework, through resource-dispersing (R-dis) and resource-directing (R-dir) elements. Manipulating task complexity through R-dir elements directs a learner's focus towards the form of language, whereas R-dis elements divert the learner's attention towards non-linguistic factors (Jin & Yan, 2024). As a result, R-dis and R-dir elements must exert distinct influences on the IELTS writing tasks.

The R-dis and R-dir elements were collectively employed to form the SSARC (Stabilize, Simplify, Automatize, Reconstruct, Complexify) model of TS (Robinson, 2010). Robinson advocates for the arrangement of tasks from S-C, recommending that R-dis elements be adjusted prior to R-dir elements (Lambert & Robinson, 2014). The model outlines a methodology for TS by aligning the learner's interlanguage with the newly acquired material.

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Numerous studies have examined the model's effectiveness in forecasting language development (Kim, 2023; Malicka, 2020). While the findings offered empirical validation for the model, they fell short of presenting its application. For instance, Allaw and McDonough (2019) proposed that CF be integrated with TS to ensure that the outcomes reflect the classroom environment.

According to some language researchers (Benson & Dekeyser, 2019; Karim & Nassaji, 2020), CF is essential in a writing curriculum. Feedback can be categorized into various types depending on its emphasis (Rahimi, 2021). For instance, indirect and direct CF are two classifications that indicate an error or provide the correct form (Nguyen, 2021). Additionally, explanations may be included alongside the marked errors to elucidate the mistakes. This form of CF is called metalinguistic feedback (Ellis, 2009) and can be delivered through error codes (ECs).

For CF to be effective, it is essential to consider the current and potential knowledge of the learners (Bitchner & Storch, 2016). The feedback provided allows learners to identify the discrepancies between their existing proficiency and the desired linguistic structures, thereby facilitating the development of their interlanguage (Kim & Emel'yanova, 2021). In essence, the provision of CF can support learners (Bitchener & Storch, 2016; Shintani & Aubrey, 2016) in integrating the target structures into their interlanguage in writing.

Similarly, according to the SSARC model, learners can incorporate new materials into their interlanguage through the progressive completion of tasks (Robinson, 2022). This indicates that task sequencing-based scaffolding can

effectively provide learning opportunities (Abdi Tabari & Cho, 2022). Therefore, both TS and CF serve comparable purposes.

Most research on TS has focused on its impact on oral production (Lambert & Robinson, 2014; Malicka, 2020; Kim, 2023; Ren et al., 2023), and to the researchers' knowledge, three studies (Allaw & McDonough, 2019; Abdi Tabari et al., 2024; Abdi Tabari & Cho, 2022) have examined its influence on writing. Furthermore, there is a noted lack of research concerning indirect CF (Tang & Liu, 2018). Consequently, given the analogous roles of SSARC-referenced TS and CF in providing scaffolding for learning, along with the high reliability and validity of IELTS examinations and the recommendation by Allaw and McDonough (2019) to incorporate CF into TS research, it became imperative to explore the combined effects of TS and CF on writing. According to Javan Amani et al. (2024), feedback timing in writing tasks as a variable that affects the outcome of feedback has not attracted enough attention. Thus, the current study aimed to investigate the synergistic impact of TS and CF on IELTS writing. Due to the sanctions against Iran, IELTS is almost the only exam available for applying for study programs abroad.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The SSARC Model

Tasks serve as the fundamental components of a syllabus within a task-based syllabus (Malicka et al., 2014). Syllabus design entails decisions about the content and the sequence (Robinson, 2015). Establishing a framework for task-based syllabi would enrich syllabus development. Initial investigations into task-based approaches focused on subjective criteria for task selection

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(Candlin, 1987; Prabhu, 1987; Skehan, 1998). Subsequently, Robinson introduced the cognition hypothesis (CH), proposing that tasks should be organized based on their cognitive complexity to mirror real-world task requirements (Robinson, 2003). This hypothesis sheds light on the distribution of cognitive and linguistic resources during language processing (Robinson, 2005). In his later work, the Triadic Componential Framework, Robinson (2001) categorized variables that could affect task design (Levkina & Gilabert, 2014) into three main areas: task complexity, task conditions, and task difficulty. Task complexity refers to the cognitive demands of a task, depending on R-dis and R-dir elements. R-dis and R-dir elements serve to disperse and direct the learner's focus towards and away from linguistic forms, respectively (Robinson, 2001), with the intention of increasing the complexity of the task. Consequently, the task can be adjusted to align with the learner's interlanguage.

Relating R-dir and R-dis elements to the interlanguage facilitated the development of the SSARC model (2010). This model delineates stages for modifying task characteristics, enabling the learner's interlanguage to progressively adapt to the target feature (Baralt et al., 2014). In the initial stage of this three-stage model, tasks are designed to be easy concerning R-dis and R-dir elements, aiming to stabilize and simplify the learner's interlanguage. The second stage focuses on simplifying tasks solely based on R-dis elements to promote the automation of the interlanguage. In the final stage, tasks are made complex concerning both elements to reconstruct the interlanguage to the new material and stabilize that within it.

Since the introduction of the SSARC model, research on TS has increasingly examined its impact on language learning challenges (Kim,

2023; Robinson, 2015, 2022). Consequently, there has been a transfer in research focus from task complexity to TS (Jin & Yan, 2024). For instance, Kim (2023) investigated the influence of TS on oral CAF and reported inconsistent developments in CAF measures across different groups. The inability to compare sequencing groups, the varying number of elements chosen from R-dir and R-dis categories, and the diverse types of planning may hinder definitive conclusions from the study. In another investigation, Malicka (2020) examined the effect of TS on spoken CAF, revealing that the S-C group exhibited greater accuracy, fluency, and syntactic restructuring compared to groups that engaged only in simple, complex, or the most complex tasks. In this study, the C-S counterpart was overlooked. Additionally, the study did not impose a time constraint on task execution.

2.2 Indirect Corrective Feedback

Corrective feedback (CF) has been a subject of debate over the past few decades (Tang & Liu, 2018). While some research highlights its crucial role in second language acquisition (SLA), other studies present conflicting findings (Kim & Emel'yanova, 2021; Truscott, 1996). Nonetheless, the majority of researchers now agree on the positive impact of CF in SLA (Ha et al., 2024). As CAF measures provide an indication of writing progress, researchers have assessed the effects of CF using one or more of these measures (Chandler, 2003; Rahimi, 2021).

Corrective feedback has been categorized into various types according to different taxonomies (Ellis, 2009; Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Several scholars have described direct and indirect CF with nearly identical definitions in their studies (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Chandler, 2003; Abdi Tabari & Cho, 2022). Direct CF involves supplying the learner with the correct form,

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whereas indirect CF typically marks the incorrect form in a less explicit manner (Nguyen, 2021). Indirect CF may involve identifying the erroneous segment or identifying it along with a comment. The latter approach can aid learners in understanding the nature of their errors (Nassaji, 2016). More broadly, indirect CF has the potential to enhance L2 acquisition by promoting self-correction (Ferris, 2007).

Early research on indirect corrective feedback (CF) yielded inconsistent findings, with studies by Robert and Ferris (2001) and Chandler (2003) demonstrating varied outcomes. More recently, Tang and Liu (2018) highlighted the relative scarcity of investigations into indirect CF, pointing to a significant gap in the literature. Their study, which examined the effects of indirect coded CF (with some participants receiving additional comments), reported measurable improvements in learners' writing skills. However, the simultaneous focus on structural and content errors may have complicated the interpretation of these results.

In a separate investigation, Karim and Nassaji (2020) analyzed CF in writing by providing indirect feedback through underlining errors, either alone or combined with explanations. While their findings indicated minor accuracy improvements for both direct and metalinguistic CF, the small participant groups limited the strength of these conclusions.

Given the existing gaps in CF research, particularly concerning IELTS writing, this study seeks to explore the potential impacts of task sequencing (TS) and two types of CF on IELTS writing performance. The following research questions guide this inquiry:

RQ1: What is the combined effect of task sequencing (S-C vs. C-S) and error codes on IELTS writing?

RQ2: What is the combined effect of task sequencing (S-C vs. C-S) and underlining on IELTS writing?

3. Method

3.1 Study Design

The research employs a quasi-experimental approach involving two treatment groups to examine how task sequencing (TS) and corrective feedback (CF) collectively influence IELTS writing performance. In this design, the independent variables consist of two task sequencing methods (S-C and C-S) along with two forms of indirect CF (error underlining and error classification). The dependent variable being measured is participants' IELTS writing scores.

3.2 Participants

This study involved 113 second-year undergraduate students from Shahid Ashrafi University, ranging in age from 19 to 25 years (mean age = 21). Participants were divided into two classes according to their pre-selected schedules. The cohort consisted primarily of individuals with English teaching experience, with only 24 exceptions. All participants attended a weekly 90-minute advanced writing course. Prior to the experimental treatment, they completed 13.5 hours of classroom instruction. Results from the Oxford Quick Placement Test (UCLES, 2001) confirmed their homogeneous language proficiency levels. Notably, none of the participants had previously taken any IELTS preparation courses before the study commenced.

3.3 Materials and Instruments

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Guided by Abdi Tabari and Cho's (2022) approach, two task sets were developed in alignment with the SSARC model, incorporating both *R-dis* (resource-dispersing) and *R-dir* (resource-directing) dimensions from Robinson's Cognition Hypothesis (CH). For *R-dis*, planning time was manipulated, while *R-dir* complexity was controlled through the number of visual elements (pictures). There were two task sets (Appendices A & B) in which participants described travel destinations depicted in images (set 1), and participants contrasted everyday activities with holiday versions using pictured scenarios (set 2). Tasks were reviewed and validated by an experienced English teacher (8 years' experience). Tasks were ordered based on the SSARC model the way depicted in Table 1.

Table1

SSARC-referenced task design

	SS	A	RC
R-dis	+ Planning	-Planning	-planning
R-dir	+ few elements (two pictures)	+few elements (two pictures)	-few elements (four pictures)

Note: from Abdi Tabari and Cho (2022)

3.4 Procedure

Prior to the main study, the tasks were piloted with 13 upper-intermediate learners to assess implementation feasibility, determine optimal planning durations, and establish appropriate task completion times. Based on pilot

results, the 113 participants were subsequently divided into two classes (56 and 57 students, respectively) for the formal experiment.

All participants completed a pretest before the intervention, with the time allocation determined by pilot performance data. The pretest topic "your best travel experience" was strategically selected to align with common IELTS Writing Task 2 themes. This choice reflects the exam's tendency to feature general subjects like travel, holidays, and leisure activities in its essay prompts.

The 113 participants were evenly distributed between two class sections (N=56 and N=57). Prior to the experimental treatment, all students completed a pretest, with the time allocation calibrated according to performance data from the pilot study. The pretest prompt "Describe your best travel experience" was deliberately selected to reflect the genre of topics typically found in IELTS Writing Task 2, which commonly features general subject matter including travel narratives, holiday experiences, and leisure activities.

Several weeks after preparatory instruction covering punctuation rules, transitions, coherence and cohesion, essay structures, and paraphrasing techniques, during which British Council writing correction codes were introduced for feedback, participants began the experimental intervention. The treatment involved administering two task sets in contrasting sequences: Group 1 received tasks in a Simple-to-Complex (S-C) order, while Group 2 followed the reverse (C-S) sequence. After completing each set, participants submitted their writing to the researcher, who provided distinct feedback types for each phase using British Council error classification (EC) codes with comments (Appendix D) for the first task set, followed by simple underlining for the second set. The researcher processed all submissions by group separately, with representative feedback samples documented in

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Appendix C, including visual examples of the error coding system. This phased approach ensured systematic delivery of corrective feedback while maintaining consistency across experimental conditions.

In the subsequent session, participants received their annotated tasks. Having been previously trained in the error correction (EC) system, they were instructed to write revisions directly beside each marked error. During this same session, each group completed their second set of tasks, which followed the identical sequencing (S-C or C-S) as their initial implementation. For this phase, feedback consisted solely of error underlining without explanatory comments, mirroring the previous administration format. Participants again engaged in the revision process, this time writing corrections above the underlined errors, maintaining consistency in the feedback-response protocol across both task sets.

One week later, participants took a post-test asking them to write about their best travel experience. In preparing the test, the participants were given one of the IELTS essay writing topics, namely their holiday experiences, and they were asked to write an essay of at least 250 words (IELTS word limit) in 40 minutes. The timing was set according to the piloting. Another reason for selecting this topic was its comparability with the pretest topic.

After the treatment, the researcher and two English teachers scored the tasks based on IELTS writing band descriptors. The writing pre- and posttests were similar to IELTS writing essay tasks concerning the topic and word limits. The interrater reliability was calculated to be 0.91. Finally, to compare the pretest and posttest performance, an ANOVA test was performed.

4. Results

The present study sought to investigate the combined effects of TS and error codes as well as underlining on IELTS writing scores. In so doing, the participants' IELTS writing scores were compared before the treatment. Table 2 compares the descriptive statistics of the pretest scores of the four groups.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the Pretest Scores

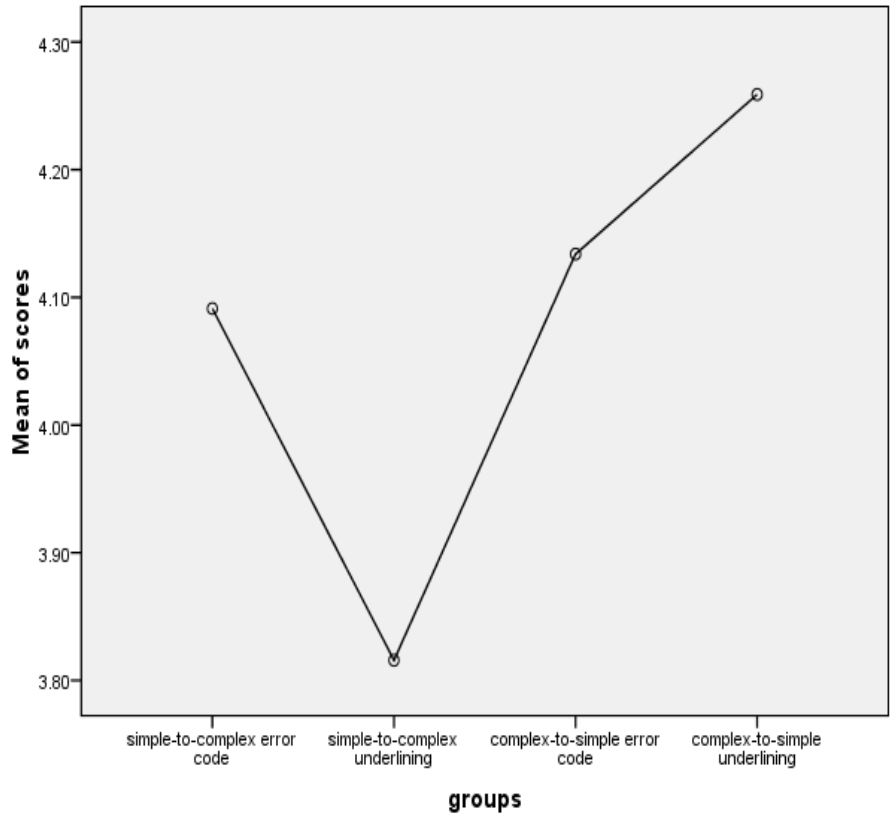
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
simple-to-complex error code	57	4.0912	1.46059	.19346	3.7037	4.4788	1.00	7.70
simple-to-complex underlining	57	3.8158	1.12055	.14842	3.5185	4.1131	2.00	7.50
complex-to-simple error code	56	4.1339	1.15401	.15421	3.8249	4.4430	1.00	6.50
complex-to-simple underlining	56	4.2589	1.28626	.17188	3.9145	4.6034	1.00	6.50
Total	226	4.0739	1.26483	.08414	3.9081	4.2397	1.00	7.70

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Figure 2

Descriptive Statistics of the Pretest Scores



It is obvious that there are some differences among the pre-test scores of the four groups; however, it is not clear whether the difference is significant or not. An ANOVA was run, and the Table 3 presents the results.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of the Posttest Scores

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
simple-to-complex error code	57	4.8421	1.24340	.16469	4.5122	5.1720	2.00	7.50
simple-to-complex underlining	57	4.4386	1.20294	.15933	4.1194	4.7578	2.00	8.00
complex-to-simple error code	56	3.7321	.89931	.12018	3.4913	3.9730	2.00	6.00
complex-to-simple underlining	56	3.5000	1.00905	.13484	3.2298	3.7702	1.50	5.00
Total	226	4.1327	1.21750	.08099	3.9732	4.2923	1.50	8.00

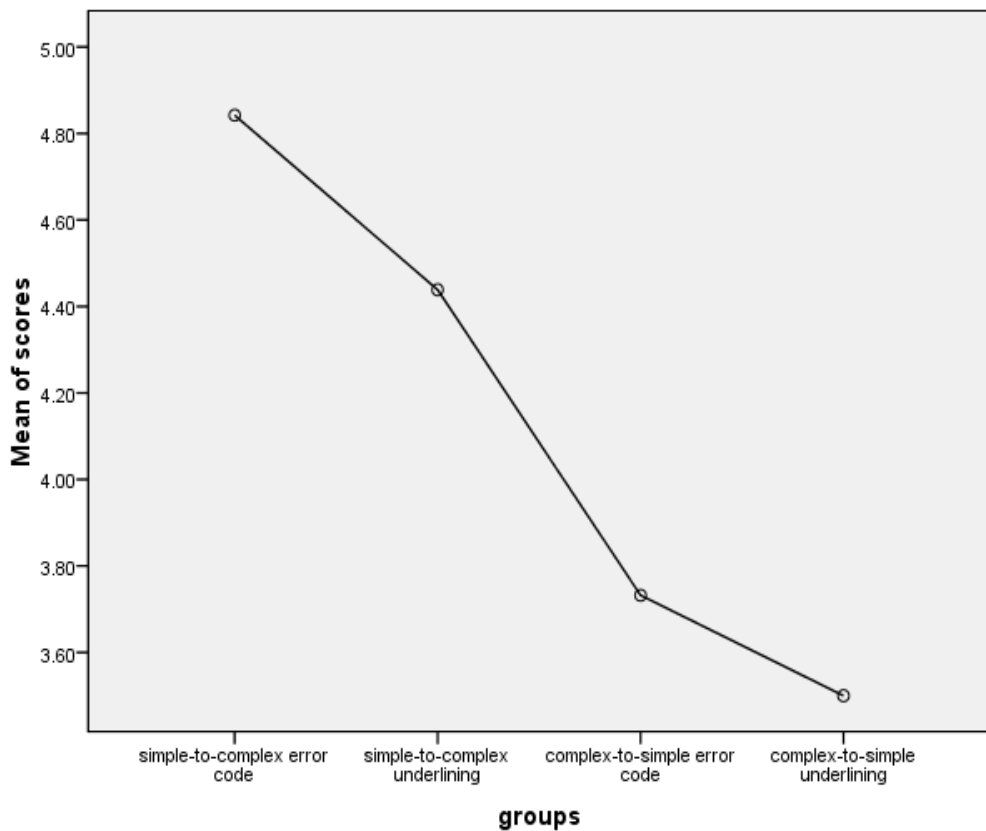
Table 3 shows differences among the post-test mean scores of the participants who received ECs and underlining as feedback in S-C and C-S order. The results show that the participants to whom the tasks were presented from S-C order outperformed the other group, with the error code obtaining the highest mean. Figure 2 depicts the mean difference.

Figure 3

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Descriptive Statistics of the Posttest Scores



As depicted in Figure 3, the post-test mean scores of the S-C group were higher than C-S group; however, to ensure whether the difference was significant, an ANOVA was run. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Results of ANOVA of the Post-tests' Mean Scores

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	65.422	3	21.807	18.058	.000
Within Groups	268.096	222	1.208		
Total	333.518	225			

The results revealed a significant difference among the posttest scores of the participants. However, it is still unclear where the difference exists. In order to locate the significant difference, a Post-hoc Scheffe's test was run. Table 5 presents the results.

Table 5

Results of Post-hoc Sheffé Test on the Post-tests' Mean Scores

(I) groups	(J) groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
simple-to-complex error code	simple-to-complex underlining	.40351	.20585	.051	-.0022	.8092

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	complex-to-simple error code	1.10996*	.20676	.000	.7025	1.5174
	complex-to-simple underlining	1.34211*	.20676	.000	.9346	1.7496
simple-to-complex underlining	simple-to-complex error code	-.40351	.20585	.051	-.8092	.0022
	complex-to-simple error code	.70645*	.20676	.001	.2990	1.1139
	complex-to-simple underlining	.93860*	.20676	.000	.5311	1.3461
complex-to-simple error code	simple-to-complex error code	-1.10996*	.20676	.000	-1.5174	-.7025
	simple-to-complex underlining	-.70645*	.20676	.001	-1.1139	-.2990
	complex-to-simple underlining	.23214	.20768	.265	-.1771	.6414
complex-to-simple underlining	simple-to-complex error code	-1.34211*	.20676	.000	-1.7496	-.9346
	simple-to-complex underlining	-.93860*	.20676	.000	-1.3461	-.5311
	complex-to-simple error code	-.23214	.20768	.265	-.6414	.1771

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The asterisk besides the values in the mean difference column shows significant differences. As shown, there is a significant difference between the performance of the participants who received ECs from S-C task order and those who received tasks in the converse order. However, there was not any significant difference between the performance of the those who received underlining as feedback from S-C order. These all mean that presenting tasks from S-C order along with ECs was the most fruitful.

4. Discussion

The present research intended to investigate the effect of task sequencing and error codes on IELTS writing scores. The results revealed an outperformance in the participants of the S-C group who received ECs. Since IELTS is an internationally recognized test and is valid and reliable (Mohamed, 2020), it could be considered a standard test reflecting students' writing ability. As a result, it could manifest the effect of the treatment well. The outperformance in the post-test could, accordingly, indicate benefits in the treatment. The reason could be the planning time and the lesser demand for the beginning task. This is in line with the SSARC model, which suggests that sequencing tasks from S-C gives participants the scaffolding opportunities for rehearsal, which attracts learners' attention to target-like structures. Moreover, enhancing cognitive complexity along the resource-directing factor improves attention to form-function associations and results in a more sophisticated interlanguage (Robinson, 2010). Furthermore, sequencing tasks from S-C can foster mental processing and help develop specific schemas for the transfer of content for writing performance.

Regarding the corrective feedback, the clarity of the CF and its appropriate challenge level could explain its effectiveness. Employing appropriate CF,

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according to Patra et al (2022), improves learner performance and enhances learners' confidence in reaching their goals in educational settings. This leads to an increase in effort, efficiency, and self-confidence. One more justification for the present results is that, according to Mosek and Gilboa (2016), if the teacher uses CF accurately in their classroom performance, the learners' academic motivation and enthusiasm increase.

The results of the study were in line with Abdi et al. (2024)'s study that different task complexity manipulation affects writing. They were also consistent with Mohammad and Alwi (2023) that sequencing tasks from S-C had improved IELTS writing performance. Since TBLT research in writing has reached out to affective factors (Abdi Tabari & Goetz, 2024), the results of our study could be interpreted by the possible effects of affective variables. As a result, participants' higher writing scores in the post-test could be because they were prepared to perform the simple task at the beginning. The potential low anxiety pictured for this group could result from the clear CF they received. In the C-S and ECs group, the converse order of the tasks could bring about anxiety, hindering their performance in subsequent tasks. The findings corroborated Nguyen's (2015) finding that more complex structures are elicited from low-demanding tasks in IELTS writing. The reason for the effect size is probably the different model used. The findings were also in accordance with Zhan et al. (2024)'s study that task complexity does not affect lexical complexity significantly. The minor difference between the study by Zhan et al (2024) and the current one is probably caused by the participants' diverse backgrounds in their study. The participants in Zhan et al. (2024)'s study were undergraduate test-takers from a college in China who had passed the College English test band 4.

Contrary to our expectations, no significant improvement was observed in the C-S and underlining. Concerning the unpopularity of underlining and the claims made by Suzuki et al. (2019), we expected the IELTS writing to decline in the post-test, however, no particular pattern was seen in their improvement. The reason could be that involving both C-S sequencing and underlining confounds the result. Taking affective factors into account, underlining fails to address participants' expectations from CF. They could not realize the error and got frustrated as a result.

In justifying the findings, it can be said that the planning time provided in the S-C sequence allowed the participants to think through the task requirement and perceive the stem of the question. As a consequence, it was expected that students have a higher score in task achievement. In line with our expectations, the participants changed noticeably in terms of task achievement. Perhaps the most convenient element among those of IELTS writing band descriptors is the task achievement. The requirements of a task are clear in the question and perceiving them does not require a high proficiency. The elaboration of the topic will depend on its potentiality. In our case, *describing their favorite holiday*, and concerning the time, the case had much to diversify to various band scores. This may explain their improvement in this aspect of participants' writing.

With respect to CF, ECs seemed to have no particular effects on participants' development. The reason might be the participants' proficiency and more importantly homogeneity. The results, nevertheless, agreed with the research by Jafary et al., (2023) that found improvement in participants' response after giving CF. The different effect sizes could be because their study focused on the sole effects of CF on IELTS writing scores. The findings of our study could be affected by combining TS. However,

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concerning the facilitative effect of S-C, the inconsistency is most probably due to the non-challenging nature of the task or its becoming mundane as a result of the practice effect.

In the C-S group, no particular patterns were observed in terms of response. Concerning the anxiety caused by C-S sequencing, the lack of any patterns in the participant's development could be because they could not think through the task requirement well. The ECs could, as a result, not be perceived and the errors were not subsequently rectified. The results were in line with the study by Levkina and Gilabert (2014) showing no significant difference in participants' performance in different sequencing groups.

The participants' similar performance in both S-C and C-S was close to the results of Allaw and Mc Donough (2019) in which participants displayed the same performance in both sequencing groups. The possible inefficacy of CF could be because of the inadequacy of ECs in improving writing (Chandler, 2003). Displaying the same performance by participants of both groups could be elaborated on by Ferris and Robbert (2001) that ECs and underlining lead to almost the same performance.

Coming to lexical resources, the participants made noticeable progress in terms of using non-frequent words or not using inappropriate words based on context. The use of precise words or employing the right collocations could be because of the planning time provided in the beginning task. The planning time could give them the chance to develop more ideas. Each idea would need to be explained by certain vocabulary, and more ideas required a more diverse vocabulary.

The C-S group had an overdependence on memorized language, fixed expressions, and prefabricated chunks. The use of such words and expressions might be because they did not have time to develop ideas and select the appropriate vocabulary. As a consequence, they resorted to prefabricated chunks and memorized expressions to fulfill the task fast. The presence of the complex task at the beginning might have suffocated their novelty leading to the use of memorized chunks.

The results might be justified by the study on lexical resources in IELTS writing (Quoc, 2022), that productive vocabulary does not definitely affect participants' scores and the instructor should allow participants to have sufficient exposure to model tasks before assessing their production. It could be, therefore, concluded that students' underperformance in the C-S group could derive from not presenting an appropriate writing model at the initiating task. In other terms, in the alternative group, the first task could be regarded as a model task, but it did not apply to this sequence.

Combining CF with the design could enhance the effect. This might be elaborated on by the positive effect of CF on vocabulary (Mollakhan et al., 2013). Students might have been granted the chance of revising and improving their vocabulary by CF, and have elevated their choice of words.

Regarding coherence and cohesion, there was a significant improvement in participants' sentence linkage in the S-C group. Participants had to use more connectors to link the increased number of elements in the subsequent tasks. The provided planning time seemed to aid them in producing the appropriate connector in writing. This could have provided them with time to develop the right connectors.

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Previous research (Ahadi Kalashi & Maftoon, 2024;), found a significant effect on instructing cohesive devices in improving IELTS writing scores. As a consequence, we expected that participants make improvements in cohesion in the C-S group. Unlike our expectation, the alternative group showed no regular patterns in cohesion. The reason might have been that our expectations from that study were not directly relevant or that their studies had different definitions of cohesion.

Participants' outperformance in the post-test could also be attributed to the CF. participants could improve their errors thinking on the CF, and boost their production in the post-test. In particular, ECs could clearly address the erroneous part. This argument is partly based on previous studies (Yamaai, 2023).

The participants of the C-S group did not show any trackable patterns in their texts in terms of grammar. In other words, a miscellaneous combination of simple and complex sentences was used and it was not easy to generalize. In response to the last RQ of the study, the combined effects of TS and underlining on IELTS writing development, the findings about the response are discussed first. In the S-C group, the situation was the same as the previous RQ. The only difference was the type of CF. The results did not show a significant improvement in the task achievement by participants.

The reason for the lack of improvement could be because of the same situation created by sequencing in the previous question. The differentiating point, underlining, might have nullified the fostering effects of S-C sequencing. The reason could be the uncertainty it caused for participants, not addressing the erroneous part accurately. Anyway, it could imply the ineffectiveness of underlining as a type of corrective feedback in improving

writing. This was in congruence with Hasheminezhad and Mohammadnezhad's study (2012) that direct CF is more effective than indirect CF concerning writing improvement.

In the C-S group, in all tasks, the same information was used repeatedly. However, the response met the task requirements, and the main ideas were easily perceivable. There seemed to be no noticeable difference between the participants' performance with that of the S-C group. This may indicate the independence of task outcome from TS. The results are likewise the same when combining CF, implying the inefficacy of underlining in IELTS writing improvement.

The outperformance of the same participants with ECs could suggest the superiority of ECs to underling. This finding was in agreement with the study by Karim (2013). He found a preference for indirect CF in the form of ECs over marking the error without explanations. The reason was that ECs provided more information about the error and fostered students' understanding.

In terms of cohesion and coherence, the S-C groups had difficulty organizing ideas at first. Moving to the next tasks, the participants' messages became more connected, and fewer lapses were observed in their production. Like the previous elements, the effects brought about by S-C sequencing fostered cohesion and coherence. The participants' outperformance in the post-test was justifiable by the study by Golparvar and Rashidi (2021). They found that task complexity significantly affects the average length of a clause and subordination. Based on the IELTS writing rubric, many elements were closely related to CC.

In the alternative group, however, no regular pattern was observed, and participants' footsteps could barely be followed. The reason could be because the complex task that produces more complex structures (Salimi et al., 2011) is placed at the beginning of the task set. Participants, as a consequence, tried to meet the task demands. To give more details, they had to produce many ideas, but were not able to connect them professionally. The results were justifiable in the light of Yıldız and Yeşilyurt (2021), who found no improvement in deep cohesion and coherence of writing as a result of task complexity.

Combining underlining did not lead to improvements in participants' performance in this group as well. The study by Park et al. (2016) found that underlining is especially useful for spelling errors and errors involving particles. This could be the reason for the inefficacy of underlining in improving writing in our study, as it targeted global errors.

Concerning vocabulary, the S-C group, moving to the next tasks, precise vocabulary, and collocations use was increased. This finding could be explained by Ong and Jun Zhang (2010), who found that enhancing task complexity in terms of planning time could improve lexical complexity. In the alternative group, on the other hand, moving to the next tasks, there was an overdependence on memorized language and prefabricated chunks. The reason seems to be that placing the complex task at first made participants exhausted. They started using their memorized chunks instead of creating novel ones as a result.

Finally, regarding grammar, switching to the subsequent tasks, the participants' errors, which could have created difficulty for the reader, declined, while examples of complex sentences grew. This finding was in line with Jung (2020), who found a positive effect with TBLT and task complexity.

The participants of the C-S group did not show any trackable patterns in their texts in grammar. The finding could be argued by Kawaguchi and Ma (2019), who did not find developments in learners' interlanguage when exposed to complex tasks. The finding is also justifiable by Jung (2020), who claims that learners' grammatical development is dependent on their internal and external factors in a TBLT context.

Combining underlying with the design seems to have increased the efficacy of the intervention in the S-C group. This finding is in line with the study by Sermsook et al. (2017) that found improvement in the grammatical accuracy of EFL learners after receiving CF. The inefficacy of underlining as a CF type in the alternative group could be because the sequencing' effect might have overridden the CF.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The study aimed to examine the effects of TS and CF (ECs and underlining) on EFL learners' writing. The findings exhibited that sequencing tasks from S-C along with providing learners with ECs, can help EFL learners improve their writing. Ellis (2003) refers to the fact that there is not much research on how to order tasks optimally, but states that sequencing tasks in a way that they match the learners' developmental stages, and allow learners to select their resources to reach a desirable task outcome is vital.

Robinson (2010) presented the SSARC model of task ordering. According to this model, ordering tasks is done by having learners perform tasks simple on pertinent elements of the task first. Later, by increasing their cognitive complexity on other elements, the task is made complex. Such sequences result in increasing learning, as each task is different from the previous ones. It also provides an increase in the conceptual and communicative challenge of the task, helping learners to customize their interlanguage to the task outcome, and then creating the conditions for L2 development. In the present research, presentation of simple tasks prior to more complex ones improved the participants' communicative challenge as well as their interlanguage capability.

Considering the fact that tasks designed in S-C sequence provide a more effective way of targeting interlanguage development, in the classroom context, lessons should follow such a TS in order to develop these aspects of performance.

Robinson's SSARC model is proven as a reliable theoretical model for empirical studies in L2. In the present research, a clear framework was needed to classify tasks. A step-by-step model of task sequencing based on cognitive load was needed to design the tasks and conduct the treatment. With an interest in TS in TBLT, it is important to have a reliable model, and Robinson provides an appropriate one. Based on the findings of the present research, sequencing tasks from S-C tasks can be useful in the classroom context. The present research is significant in that it tested Robinson's SSARC model about task sequencing. The results of the present research provide empirical background and support for the CH in that it shows that sequencing tasks based on complexity level can be useful for L2 learners.

Moreover, this study can be a useful model in terms of reference for further research. The findings are also applicable to classrooms and for syllable design based on tasks. As the writing tasks were similar to the IELTS writing tasks in this study, the findings have some implications for IELTS candidates. In the Iranian context, sometimes IELTS teachers do not have a pre-determined course book, so they have to take some supplementary materials to class. IELTS candidates are of different levels of proficiency; therefore, sequencing tasks can help them match the tasks with the candidates' level.

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Appendix A

Task Set 1

Describe the travel destinations in the following pictures.

1		
2		

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Appendix B

Task Set 2

How would you do the activities implied by the following pictures differently on a trip?

1			
2			
3			



Appendix C

Samples of Error Correction

Underlining	Error Codes
<p>.....The.....traditional.....<u>fa</u>..... be.....tourist.....<u>attractive</u>..... are.....two.....famous..... fresh.....vegetables.....and..... master.....chefs.....</p>	<p>.....The.....traditional.....fa.....are..... be.....tourist.....attractive..... are.....two.....famous.....fa..... fresh.....vegetables.....and..... master.....chefs.....</p> <p>WF WF X</p>

.....Istahiani... accent and ...It has very Istahan is the suviniorIstahiani Peoples... accent and other... ...It has very nice Istahan is Berian the suvinior of Ista P SP
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First of all, in optional classes that long. That is why the chance to do.	First of all, in the summer optional classes that we go long. That is why the summer we chance to do.
---	--

<p>Everyone is way. If I had free time, I can play and have fun good <u>action</u> and I love it.</p>	<p>Everyone is free on holiday way. If I had free time, I would choose can play and have fun with my family good action and I love it. WW</p>
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Appendix D

British Council Error Codes

Code	Use	Example
WW	Wrong word	As our plane flew <i>on</i> the mountains, we saw snow.
WT	Wrong time	As our plane flew over the mountains, we <i>see</i> snow.
WF	Wrong Form	As our plane flew over the mountains, we <i>was seeing</i> snow.
WO	Word order	As our plane <i>over the mountain flew</i> , we saw snow.
SP	Spelling	As our plane <i>flue</i> over the mountains, we saw snow.

P	Punctuation	As our plane flew over the mountains: we saw snow.
X	Extra word	As our plane flew over <i>to</i> the mountains, we saw snow.
M	Missing word	As our plane flew over the mountains saw snow.
R	Register	As our plane flew over the mountains, we <i>observed</i> snow.
?	Not clear	As our plane flew over the mountains we saw snow.
!	Silly mistake!	As our plane flew over the mountains, we <i>seed</i> snow.
RW	Try rewriting	<i>Our vehicle flies, we snow find, over the mountains you saw it.</i>

