Teacher's Corrective Feedback in Paragraph Writing in Terms of Accuracy: Teacher's Comments Vs. Error Marking

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
	The aim of this paper is investigating whether teacher's corrective feedback (Teacher's comment vs. error marking) caused any differential effects on the paragraph writing in term of accuracy by Iranian EFL learners. The participants were divided into two groups. Experimental group1 and experimental group 2 forty learners in intermediate level formed two groups, 20 learners in each group. One experimental group did not receive teacher's comment in terms of grammar during four alternative weeks; the other group received teacher's comment. The statistical analysis indicated that the second group performed better than the group which did not receive teachers' comment in terms of accuracy in paragraph writing. Therefore, these results suggested that teachers' corrective feedback has pedagogical value, and teachers' corrective feedback promoted learners' grammatical accuracy in L2 writing more effectively.

1. Introduction

The general background against which this research has been conducted is about the concept of corrective feedback in foreign language learning. Teaching writing is an important skill and a helpful activity for students if it is done in a way to provide the students with error feedback which can be a beneficial experience for the student if the teacher shows strong points as well (Alghazo, 2009; Namaziandost, Neisi, & Banari, 2019; Namaziandost, & Çakmak, 2020; Sawalmeh, 2020). Alghazo (2009) believe that despite the fact that many studies have been conducted to examine this issue, every teacher is still following his or her own way of error feedback. They feel that there is still a need to conduct studies in different institutional contexts to see whether they have the same error feedback or not. Error treatment is one of the key issues in second language writing faced by both teachers and researchers. There has been a controversy as to whether error feedback helps second language learners improve their accuracy and overall quality of their writing (Kener, 1991; Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, & Sepehri, 2018; Sawalmeh, 2019; Truscott, 1999; Ferris, 2002). Truscott (2004) had a strong view against error correction. He argued that all forms of error correction are ineffective and harmful and should be avoided. He also emphasized that although most second language students desire grammar correction, teachers should ignore it. Bitcher (2012) pointed out that it was still too early to have a conclusive answer to the question of whether error correction is effective in improving the accuracy of second language learners at all levels. As a result of that, teachers cannot dismiss students' strong desire for error feedback. However, there seems to be growing evidence that some methods for providing corrective feedback may be more effective than others (Ferris, 2002). The significant role of direct corrective feedback on students' linguistic error is supported by other students (Bitcher, 2012, Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Bitcher & Knoch, 2008, Shakibaei, Shahamat, & Namaziandost, 2019; Sheen, 2007) that have reported on the short-term effectiveness of written corrective feedback.

Bitcher (2012) assert that between the two common kinds of feedback, peer feedback and teacher feedback, learners are in favor of teacher feedback. They found that some students do not have sufficient knowledge to give feedback, and therefore, students

hardly learn from one another. Teachers can provide learners with feedback either directly or indirectly (Hendrickson, 1984; Robb et al., 1986; Ferrs, 2002; Namaziandost, Razmi, Heidari, Tilwani, 2020). Direct feedback refers to a kind of feedback in which the teacher simply marks the error, but does not correct it.In providing indirect feedback, some teachers tend to mark mistakes to indicate the precise location and type of error, ad it becomes the students' task to diagnose and correct the mistake, while others provide un-coded feedback that simply locates the error without disclosing the error type (Namaziandost, Alekasir, Hassan Mohammed Sawalmeh, & Miftah, 2020).

There is another type of correction which derives from Krashn's Monitor Model which developed in the late 1980s and emphasized the role of self-monitoring and self-correction. He states that self-correction occurs when the learner uses the Monitor to correct a sentence after it is uttered. This paper attempts to prove the hypothesis that teacher written corrective feedback followed with comment is effective and helpful in improving student writing. Unlike many previous studies which had a control group, this study involves two Experimental groups one group receiving teacher corrective feedback with explicit corrective comments and second group receiving no corrective feedback.
However, the author attempts to examine to what extent classroom discourse management in the form written corrective feedback vs. error marking determines writing accuracy performance in EFL writing courses among intermediate level of language proficiency learner.

Based on the aforementioned points, the purpose of this study is to explore one of the important aspects of language teaching and learning which is related to both learners' writing accuracy and their response to different types of feedback in writing courses, that is, written feedback and error marking. If the results show the effectiveness of applying the corrective feedback in writing there will be no doubt that corrective feedback is one of the possible strategies to help teachers in managing writing classrooms to increase learners' writing accuracy.

2. Background

Previous studies on students' views about error feedback (Ferris,1995; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Komura, 1999; Leki, 1991; Roberts,1999; Ziafar & Namaziandost, 2019) have consistently showed that L2 learners really expect and value teacher feedback on their writing. Some of these studies have also investigated students' preferences for different types of feedback. For instance, Komura (1999) and Leki (1991) have shown that students prefer indirect feedback with error codes or specified labels to direct teacher correction (that is, providing the learner with the correct form of the error) or errors which have been marked but not labeled (Namaziandost, Sawalmeh, & Izadpanah Soltanabadi, 2020; Nosratzadegan, Seifoori, & Maftoon, 2017; Sawalmeh, 2013). With respect to the students' preferences for receiving feedback on certain writing aspects, Hedgcock and Lefkowitz' (1994) study of EFL and ESL college students revealed that EFL college students prefer and value teacher feedback and corrections on grammatical, lexical, and surface-level features more than those on content and style, whereas ESL students prefer feedback on content to feedback on form. Their participants also expressed moderate preferences for the use of error codes, and both disliked the teachers' use of the red pen. Radecki and Swales (1988) surveyed 59 ESL students' attitudes towards feedback on their written work. They concluded that ESL students expect their teachers to correct all of their surface errors; otherwise, they would lose their credibility with their students. In a survey of 100 ESL students' preferences for error correction, Leki (1991) found that learners believe that good writing is an error-free task. The results of the study also showed that the learners expect and want all their errors to be corrected.

Among Iranian projects, some works related to corrective feedback have been investigated: Mohmmad Zadeh, (2007) in her thesis, The Effect of Different Types of Corrective Feedback on Pre-University Students' Writing Grammatical Errors, at Isfahan University showed that applying corrective feedback can improve students' writing accuracy. Conducting her research at the beginning, she used NELSON TEST over pre-university students to assign their level of language proficiency. Then, she divided her 60 students into four groups: three experimental groups and one control group. Experimental groups received direct, indirect and oral feedback on different grammatical categories, respectively. The post Hoc test results proved that those students who received oral corrective feedback performed more accurately on different grammatical categories. The different point between this project and mine is that I want to incorporate conference feedback which contains both oral and written feedback in my project. Another research conducted by Naeini (2008) was to explore the effects of form-focused instruction and feedback type on learning. The learners in treatment group received corrective feedback in the form of prompts, including clarification requests, repetitions, elicitations, and meta-linguistic clues while the learners in the control group received the same instruction as the experimental groups without any kind of feedback. The participants were assigned different tasks in order to use the aimed structures during the 15 treatment sessions (30 hours). The analysis of the data done through correlation coefficient and t-test indicated the outperformance of the participants in experimental group over the performance of the participants in control group. Another research conducted by Alizadeh and Sadeghiy (2012) reviewed contrasting viewpoints on the nature and efficacy of teachers' corrective feedback in L2 writing. A comparison of opposing views in this regard that teachers' corrective feedback strategy does not result in students' writing accuracy. The paper also revealed that teachers' written comments are often time-

consuming, vague, contradictory, unspecific and idiosyncratic. Besides, teachers' comments most often deviate students' attention away from their own writing to teachers' purpose in writing. Most teachers' comments treat students' first drafts as final or finished drafts, the result being that surface-level features are given priority over higher-level concerns such as clarity, development and logic. While casting doubts on the claims of pro-corrective feedback group, their paper offered strategies for the better use of teachers' corrections and comments And also, Marzban and Sarjami (2014) in their paper about Collaborative Negotiated Feedback versus Teacher-written Feedback: Impact on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' Writing came to this conclusion that participants of the experimental group, who were exposed to collaborative negotiated feedback, outperformed the other group. The triangulation of three different sources; Pre/Post-test comparison, the questionnaire and interviews provide evidences in support of the efficacy of Collaborative Negotiated Feedback.

3. Method
This was a quasi-experimental study with one independent variable and two dependent variables. The independent variable in this study was the teacher's written corrective feedback type. This variable comprised two levels, namely teacher's comments and error marking. The dependent variables in this study were writing accuracy conducted among two groups of 20 language learners studying at Sadra language institute. All participants took (NELSON TEST) a standard English proficiency test for placement purposes and were placed as intermediate level. During this four-week period, the teacher asked the students to write twenty paragraphs with the same topic. Teacher marked students' errors in one group and marked the errors and gave comments in the second group. Then the teacher conducted a test parallel to the pretest in order to find out their development in writing. Students' accuracy in writing was measured over a four-week period by means of a pretest posttest design.

3.1 Participants
The participants of this study were 40 intermediate EFL learners that were selected from among language learners at Sadra Language Institute in Esfahan in the summer of 2013. They were asked to do some tasks in paragraph writing during the term. All the participants took a Standard English proficiency test that was published by Pearson Longman publisher. In order to homogenize the participants, NELSON test was administrated on all participants. They were divided into two groups, experimental English group1 and experimental English group 2. The first group did not receive teacher's comment in terms of grammar, the teacher just marked their errors during four alternative weeks. The second, experimental group received teacher's comments.

3.2 Instruments
To answer the research questions two stages was done;1. three tests were conducted; placement test, pretest and posttest. The researcher decided to conduct the NELSON test as a placement test in order to ensure the student's general proficiency and to estimate the linguistic homogeneity of participants in terms of language proficiency. After ensuring about the homogeneity of participants, the researcher went to the next step. Idea Proficiency Test (IPT) test was utilized to address the research question. The pretest aimed at ascertaining that learners did not significantly differ from one another in their writing ability. The posttest also included some paragraphs to find out the effect of teacher's corrective feedback on students' accuracy in writing ability. This test was a parallel test to the pretest and it was held after conducting the experiment. The students were asked to write paragraphs and the researcher corrected their writing by underlining and giving comments to their writing.
2. Writing tasks and compositions to elicit student's errors. Care was taken not to include any topics that would dissuade the use of writing. Moreover, the topics were carefully written to encourage the students to use articles in their writing.

3.3 Procedure
The participants were selected from among language learners at Sadra Language Institute in Isfahan in the summer of 2013. Although, all 40 students who enrolled in *Topnotch 1* had passed *Topnotch Fundamental* in Sadra Institute, the researcher decided to conduct the NELSON test in order to estimate their linguistic homogeneity. After making sure that the selected participants were linguistically homogeneous, they were divided in to two groups. Data collection was started by giving pretest to the students in both groups. Researcher asked students to write a paragraph. The objective of this test was to know the student's accuracy in writing a paragraph before they took the program. The first group received written corrective feedback as a comment underlined the ungrammatical errors during four alternative weeks. The second experimental groups received only error marking without any comment. The writing activities were done in 25 sessions because in Sadra Institute every semester lasts 27 sessions ignoring two sessions for midterm and final test. Students attended classes 5 days a week. Every session was 90 minutes but just 20 minutes of the class was devoted to the project.

In order to check the effect of treatment, the researcher gave a posttest. She conducted a posttest in one separate session after finishing the project. The objective of the posttest was used to know whether the students made improvement on their writing paragraph or not. After conducting a posttest, the researcher made the analysis.

In this part, a description of how the data were collected and analyzed is presented. Each participant was exposed to all combinations of levels of two qualitative within participant factors: (1) linguistic error, and (2) time at four levels (week1, week2, week3, week4). In addition, there was a between-participants factor: comment and error marking. For each combination, participants' performances were analyzed on a quantitative variable: accuracy performance. Statistical procedures in this study included the descriptive analysis and referential statistics of the scores obtained on the writing pretest and posttest. Analysis of the collected data was fulfilled through the SPSS software. In the main procedure of data analysis, the descriptive statistics of the scores were calculated. Then a series of t-tests were run to compare the results obtained from both groups.

4. Result and discussion
To test the validity of the hypothesis, two groups of EFL learners were selected, 20 each. Then they underwent the experiment. At the end their writing performances were compared to find out about any possible differences. This chapter reports the results of the comparison.

4.1 The Results of the Writing Pretest
Before running the experiment, in order to make sure that the groups were homogeneous with regard to their writing ability, this researcher tested their writing ability by asking them to write a piece of writing about a specific topic. Then she compared the writings of the two groups.Table 1 indicates the descriptive statistics for the writing pretest, and Figure 1 illustrates the means in graphical form.

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics for the Pretest*

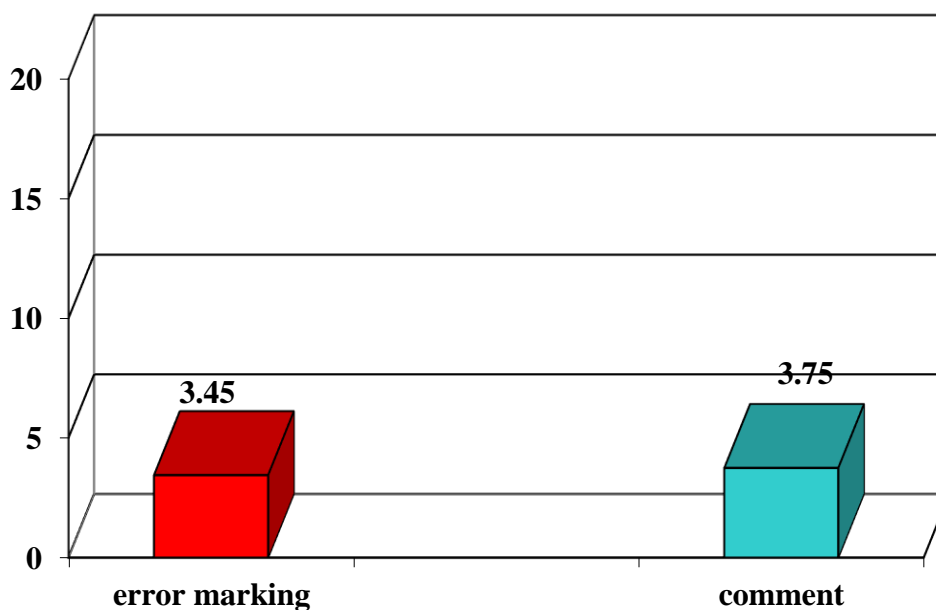| Groups	N	Mean	SD	SEM
Error marking	20	3.45	1.050	.235
Comment	20	3.75	1.118	.250

Figure 1. Graphical representation of the pretest means

The above table and figure show that there is a slight difference between the two means. However, in order to make whether or not this difference is significant, an independent-sample t-test was employed. Table 2 depicts the results of this t-test.

Table 2: *The Results of the t-test for the Pretest*

t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
-.875	38	.387	-.30	.34297	-.99432	.39432

According to Table 2, the amount of t-observed (t_{38}= .875) is only significant at the probability level of p= .387 which is not high enough to be considered meaningful. Therefore, it can be said that the two groups were homogeneous considering their writing ability.

4.2 The Results of the Writing Posttest
After completing the experiment, once again the researcher tested the students' writing ability to discover any possible difference between the two groups under investigation. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for the posttest, and Figure 2 shows the means graphically.

Table 3: *Descriptive Statistics for the Posttest*

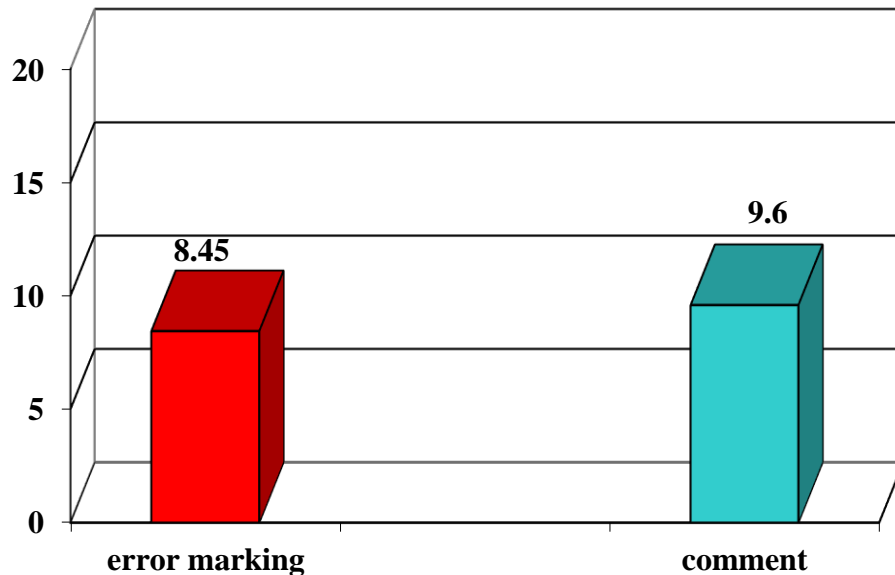| Groups	N	Mean	SD	SEM
Error marking	20	8.45	1.146	.256
Comment	20	9.60	1.930	.432

Figure 2. Graphical representation of the posttest means

By studying Table 3 and Figure 2, one can discover some difference between the means of the two groups. Another independent-sample t-test was run to find out if this difference was significant or not. Table 4 gives the results of this t-test.

Table 4: *The Results of the t-test for the Posttest*

t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
-2.291	38	.028	-1.15	.50197	-2.16618	-.13382

Table 4 indicates that the amount of t-observed (t_{38}= 2.291) is significant at the probability level of p= .028 which is high enough to be considered meaningful. Therefore, it can be concluded that the experiment produced different results in the two groups regarding their writing ability. By studying the means of the two groups, it can be said that the teacher comment group outperformed the error marking group. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that, "there is no significant difference between teacher's comments and teacher's error marking in students writing accuracy performance" can safely be rejected. The next chapter, that is, chapter five, presents the discussion of the results along with conclusion and implications of the study.

After completing the experiment, once again the researcher tested the students' writing ability to discover any possible difference between the two groups under investigation. By studying the means of the two groups, it can be said that the teacher comment group outperformed the error marking group. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that, "there is no significant difference between teacher's comments and teacher's error marking in students writing accuracy performance" can safely be rejected. The researcher interpreted the results of obtained data by comparing the students' writings achievement on pretest and posttest. In order to analyze the collected data, both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. Regarding the descriptive statistics, means, standard deviations, minimum grades and maximum grades were calculated. For the inferential statistics, a number of t-tests were run to find out if the two groups of students performed the same or differently. The findings of data analysis are mentioned here.

1. Experimental group one the student whose writings were corrected by teacher's comments out performed experimental group two the students whose writings were corrected by error marking in grammar.

2. Experimental group one the student whose writings were corrected by teachers' comments out performed experimental group two i.e. the students whose writings were corrected by error marking in punctuation.

3. Experimental group one the student whose writings were corrected by teacher's comments out performed experimental group two the students whose writings were corrected by error marking in word order.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Although writing ability is one of the most important outcomes of higher education, may L2 writers continue to struggle to produce writing that is linguistically accurate. While some researchers such as Truscott (1996, 1999, 2007) have claimed that error correction is ineffective or it may be harmful to learners, others have suggested that corrective feedback may provide some benefit to student in certain context (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Ferris, 2004, 2006). However, such researchers have struggled to find conclusive evidence of the value of corrective feedback. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to contribute to this line of research by examining one innovative approach to L2 writing pedagogy and its effects on improving L2writing accuracy. The underlying assumptions were that accuracy might improve if feedback were more manageable, timely. Truscott's review of studies by Semke (1984), and Sheppard (1992) concluded that corrective feedback does not have significant effect on improving L2 student writing. Given this limited range of studies, the present study sought to expand the base by investigating the classroom discourse management in the form of written corrective feedback and error marking effect on the accuracy performance in the new piece of writing. The results of the present study were similar to those of Ferries et al. (2000) and Robe et al (1986) in that there did not seem to be an immediate advantage of written corrective feedback and error marking in this study. Thus, if the teachers' primary goal in giving corrective feedback is to give students cues so that they can improve their writing, it may be adequate at least with some students to locate errors and correct them. In the following, the answer to the research questions will be discussed in details. The study also found that the overall accuracy of the participants varied across the four writing times. In other words, there was not a linear and upward pattern of improvement from one time to another. This, too, was not surprising as earlier research has shown that L2 learners, in the process of learning, may perform with accuracy on one occasion but fail to do so on other, similar occasions (Ellis, 1994; Namaziandost, Ahmad Tilwani, Mahdizadeh Khodayari, Ziafar, Alekasir, Pourhosein Gilakjani & Hassan Mohammed Sawalmeh, 2020). The study also found that there was significant effect for the interaction of time and type of feedback.

Corrective feedback is a complex phenomenon. This complexity is reflected in the controversies that surround such issues as whether to correct, what to correct, when to correct, and how to correct. In order to contribute to the need for further research on the value of corrective feedback to L2 writers on different error types (Roberts, 1999; Chandler, 2003; Bitchener, 2008), this study was designed to investigate: a) To what extent do teacher's comments determine writing accuracy performance in EFL writing in courses, and b) To what extent does teacher's error marking determine witting accuracy performance in EFL writing in courses. According to the results obtained, a significant difference was found between the learners provided with the teacher's

comments and the learners' reflection and those who just received the teacher's error marking. On the whole, the treatment process affected the participants' writing ability positively in that the students produced more organized writing in terms of using correct grammar, word order and punctuation, which made their writings more correct. Therefore, it can be claimed that the first type of the treatment (teacher's comment) affected the participants' performance in the experimental group 1.

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