

Address : Tuesday Block No. 76 Rt/Rw 01/003
Jatitengah Village, Jatitujuh District, Majalengka
Regency, West Java


Email : arjjournal@gmail.com


Contact : 0821-4250-1527


Available at:

<https://journal.nahnuinisiatif.com/index.php/ARJI>

Volume 7 Number 2 Year 2025

 **DOI :** 10.61227

 **E-ISSN :** 2775-0787

 **P-ISSN :** 2774-9290

483 – 500

An Investigation into the Effect of Written Corrective Feedback on the Performance of Intermediate Writers of English

Articles Submitted :

2025-04-05


Articles Received :


2025-04-30

Article Published :

2025-05-03

 Maryam Vazifeshenas^{1*}

 ¹ Islamic Azad University, Sepidan Branch, Islamic Republic of Iran

 Email Correspondence : Vazifeshenasm1@gmail.com*

Keywords:

Corrective feedback, Second language writing, Oral corrective feedback, Written Corrective feedback.

Abstract: In the last three decades, several researchers have investigated the effects of corrective feedback on language learners' oral and writing performance. The mixed results of the empirical studies conducted by scholars throughout the world calls for more investigations to uncover the unknown aspects of corrective feedback. The present study attempted to disclose the benefits of written corrective feedback by comparing its effects with those of the oral corrective feedback. The present study focused on different writing components which are content, organization, language use, vocabulary, and mechanics. Thirty-four intermediate English language learners of two intact classes, who were selected based on convenience sampling, participated in this study. The students of one of these classes received oral corrective feedback and the students of the other class were provided with written corrective feedback. The results indicated that both oral and written corrective feedback improved second language students' writing ability. However, written corrective feedback was significantly more successful in improving the participants' writing ability. The findings also indicated that written corrective feedback was significantly superior to oral corrective feedback in the three areas of organization, language use, and mechanics. In the two areas of vocabulary and content, the differences were not significant, however.

Copyright © 2025 authors

This is an open-access article under the CC BY-NC-SA 4.0



This work is licenced under a Creative Commons Attribution-nonCommercial-shareAlike 4.0 International Licence



INTRODUCTION

One significant skill in both first and second language is the capability of a language user to convey his thoughts to his audience through written texts. Writing has always been regarded as an important skill contributing to students' language learning (Kessler, 2009). However, for many learners of English as second/foreign language, writing is considered the most difficult skill to acquire because it requires noticeable knowledge of second language structures, lexicon, and how to use them in the appropriate context in a coherent and cohesive manner (Vonderwell & Zachariah, 2005). The writer, moreover, has to have a cognitive empathy (Brown, 2007) to be able to appraise what her audience expects to read. These various but connected variables have made second language writing an intricate skill (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

Following the lead of those who believe that writing is teachable and learnable, the language educators can provide learners with facilities which can lead to the acquisition of second language writing ability (Waasaf & Marcovechinio, 2001). Teachers can help learners acquire second language writing ability by preparing them with the knowledge of lexicon and structures, at early stages. As learners improve, organizing paragraphs and combining them in a coherent and cohesive fashion can be taught and practiced in second language classes (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). In addition to teaching learners how to write, teachers can provide learners with corrective feedback which has been enshrined in the majority of second language acquisition models (Gas & Selinker, 2001). Teachers can provide their learners with feedback on their performance, which is the text here, to help them extend their interlanguage.

There has been a hot controversy over the benefits of corrective feedback in the realm of second language writing since 1976. Since then, some scholars have touched upon the issue which ended up with mixed results. It was in 1996 that Truscott (1996) published an article in which he not only rejected the effectiveness of corrective feedback but also called it harmful. He argued that in both theoretical and practical senses, the corrective feedback had no empirical support. He firmly suggested abandoning corrective feedback and relying on the students' experiencing with the target language to increase the accuracy. Some other researchers (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Ferris, 2003; Hyland, 2003; Hyland & Hyland, 2006) have supported the employment of corrective feedback in writing classes and have enumerated the cognitive, social and linguistic benefits of corrective feedback. This inconsistency in the results of different studies has motivated the present study.

Literature Review

With regard to corrective feedback, several benefits are enumerated in the literature. The first one deals with learners' affective variables; Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) have stated that the employment of teacher feedback can increase the motivation of language learners. When a learner finds his written product unattended, his motivation to work harder, to learn more, and to achieve higher standards will be ironed out. There are some researchers who have found teacher feedback a precious means to extend

learners' grammatical ability (e.g., Ashwell, 2000; Chandler, 2003). Furthermore, some researchers believe that the provided teacher feedback can increase the written communication ability of learners in academic settings. Furthermore, as Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) assert, the absence of teacher feedback can imply this conception that editing is a luxury task which is not needed but can be done if desired. They argue that teacher feedback can enable learners to get familiar with the editing skills which are necessary while writing an important text.

Some scholars (Ellis, 2008; Gass, 1997) argue that exposing learners to a set of input is not sufficient and correction should be done to help learners notice different features which can remain overlooked. The major proponents of this viewpoint can be put in the category of Interactionists (e.g., Gass, 1997; Long, 2007). They believe that through interactional feedback, learners notice the gap between their interlanguage and the second language system. Some researchers (e.g., Trahey & White, 1993; White, 1991) who believe that positive evidence is not sufficient for acquiring a second language urge the employment of corrective feedback to setting and in some occasions resetting the parameters which are compatible with the second language grammar.

In addition these studies which provided theoretical and empirical support, some other studies have also investigated the usefulness of corrective feedback in the second language writing literature. Here we investigate those studies conducted in the third millennium.

Sheen (2007) investigated the effect of focused written feedback. The students were intermediate English language learners. The students were divided into three groups of direct feedback, direct and metalinguistic group and the control group which received no feedback. The findings of the study indicated that both direct correction feedback and direct correction plus metalinguistic explanation feedback were successful in reducing the participants' English article errors. Comparing the two experimental groups, Sheen found that direct correction plus metalinguistic explanation feedback group students performed significantly better than those in the direct correction group.

In another study, Truscott and Hsu (2008) conducted a study to investigate the written corrective feedback on students' revision and learning. The participants of their study were 47 students from different colleges in Taiwan. The participants of this study were put into two groups of experimental and control. The participants wrote narrative texts and were provided with unfocused indirect feedback. In the two texts analyzed as the post-test, the students of the experimental group outperformed those in the control group. However, the researchers concluded that the written corrective feedback was of no use.

In another study, Bitchener and Knoch (2009) investigated different written corrective feedback types. In their 10-month study, fifty-two ESL students participated in writing classes. The participants were divided into four groups. Three experimental groups and a control group were included in this study. The treatments were direct error correction and oral metalinguistic feedback, direct error correction with written

metalinguistic feedback, direct error correction and no feedback. Bitchener and Knoch found that the three experimental students who received direct feedback performed significantly better than those who did not receive any feedback. Although the differences between the three experimental groups were not significant, those groups who received metalinguistic explanation were slightly better than the only-direct feedback group.

The study conducted by Sheen, Wright, and Moldawa (2009) is another research done to uncover the unknown aspects of written corrective feedback. The participants of their study were 80 students who were of intermediate English language ability. The students were put in four groups of focused written feedback, unfocused written feedback, writing practice, and control group. The results indicated that the students in the focused corrective feedback group performed significantly better than those in the other groups. In their conclusion, unfocused corrective feedback was demoted.

Binglam and Jia (2010) also conducted an investigation to delve into the written corrective feedback issue. The participants of their study were 44 sophomore students. The participants were put into two groups of experimental (n= 25) and control (n=19). In the experimental group, the students were provided with the correct form of the erroneous item accompanied with the metalinguistic explanation. However, in the control group, the students were given the direct feedback along with a general commentary. The participants were asked to write six essays during the experiment. The findings of this study indicated that the experimental group was considerably more successful in writing accurate texts. They concluded that the combination of direct written corrective feedback and metalinguistic explanation could be the best practice to get rid of accuracy-related errors in the students' written products.

In another study, Mubarak (2013) conducted a study to examine different dynamics of written corrective feedback in an EFL context. The study took 12 weeks. The participants were put in three groups of direct, indirect and control group. In the direct group, the participants were given the correct form of the deviant item. In the indirect group, the participants' errors were underlined. And in the control group, the participants were not given any specific feedback, but were given general commentary. Pre-, post- and delayed post-test design was used to examine the effect of these three treatments. The results of this study indicated no significant difference between the accuracy of the participants' performance in the short and long run.

Kassimt and Ng (2013), also, compared different types of corrective feedback. The participants of their study were ESL learners. The study took 12 weeks. The participants of the study were divided into three groups of focused indirect, unfocused indirect, and control group. The findings of this study revealed that the participants of both experimental groups were significantly better in target structure which was the accurate use of prepositions than those in the control group. However, they did not find any significant difference between the performances of the two experimental groups.

Sun (2013) investigated the effect of focused written corrective feedback on the acquisition of German case morphology. This investigation was conducted in a GFL (German as a Foreign Language) context at the University of Kansas. The participants of

this study were thirty three sophomore university students. The treatment conditions employed in this study were focused corrective feedback group, unfocused corrective feedback group, and no feedback group. The findings of this mixed-method study indicated that while the focused group improved significantly during the semester, the unfocused and no feedback group did not. Sun also concluded that the provision of feedback was not detrimental and brought positive attitudes to the program.

A point which can be easily traced while examining this brief literature review is the mixed results which can show how intricate this issue is. Several studies have found the employment of corrective feedback beneficial (e.g., Ahmadi & Shekarabi, 2014; Binglam & Jia, 2010; Ellis, et al., 2008; Kassimt & Ng, 2013; Lertcheva, 2014; Sheen, 2007; Sheen, et al., 2009), and some others have found the employment of corrective feedback useless or even harmful (e.g. Frantzen, 1995; Mubarak, 2013; Polio, Fleck, & Leder, 1998; Truscott & Hsu, 2008; Sheppard, 1992). In addition to this conflicting results which call for further detailed studies, a gap in the literature can justify the present study. To date, the study of the effect of oral and written corrective feedback on different writing sub-skills ability of second language learners has been overlooked. The present study attempts to fill this gap in the literature.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Thirty-four intermediate second language learners participated in this study. These learners were learning English as their Foreign Language. They were selected based on convenience sampling. As Ary, et al. (2010) put it, convenience sampling involves employing available cases for the investigation. This type of sampling is non-random. The participants were chosen from a Language Institute in Yasuj. There were four intermediate classes in this institute; two classes were randomly selected for the present study. In order to check their homogeneity, the participants took Oxford Placement Test (OPT), the validity of which has been reported in Allan (2004). The results indicated that the participants of the two groups were of the same English Language proficiency level ($t = .86, p < .05$). Although the participants were categorized in the intermediate by the institute, the Oxford Placement Test results indicated that the participants' scores ranged from 120 and 149 which is regarded as intermediate (Allan, 2004). Thus, all test takers were included in the test. The treatments were randomly assigned to the intact classes. The oral feedback group included 16 learners. Eighteen learners were in the written feedback group. The students' age ranged from 17 to 23. Both male and female second language learners participated in this study. To make sure that the participants were homogenous with regard to their writing ability, the participants took an IELTS writing task 2. The results of this study indicated that the mean scores of the participants of the oral and written corrective feedback groups were not significantly different ($t = 2.252, p < .05$). The mean scores of these students were not significantly different ($t_{\text{content}} = .53, t_{\text{organization}} = .62, t_{\text{vocabulary}} = .09, t_{\text{language use}} = .56, \& t_{\text{mechanics}} = .22,$

$p < .05$). Thus, it can be stated that both groups were at the same level when they started participating in this study.

Instruments

1. Oxford Placement Test

In order to check second language learners' English language proficiency, Oxford Placement Test (Allan, 2004) was employed. This test includes 200 items which are in the form of multiple-choice items. Different sections of this test are listening, structure, and vocabulary. The time limit of this test is 100 minutes. The validity and reliability of this test have been well-established (Allan, 2004).

2. Writing Tasks

The writing tasks employed in the present study were taken from IELTS Mock tests. The tasks were taken from the book entitled Cambridge IELTS 8 student's book with answers (2011). Two IELTS writing tasks 2 were randomly selected to be employed for the pre- and post-test. The participants had to write an essay of around 250 words in 40 minutes.

Materials

The textbook employed in the present study was paragraph development: A course for students of English which is written by Arnaudet and Barrett (1990). This book includes the rudimentary issues of writing a paragraph such as how to write a topic sentence, how to write coherently, and how to write different paragraph types. This book was used because it was written for intermediate English language learners. In order to evaluate the participants' writing ability at the beginning and at the end of the study, an analytical scoring rubric was employed. This rating scale was developed by Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel, and Hughey (1981), and has been a popular scoring scheme in the literature. This scoring scheme includes five major traits which are content, vocabulary, language use, organization, and mechanics. In order to examine the consistency in the scoring process, half of the papers were scored by a TEFL PhD candidate. The inter-rater reliability was found to be .92.

Data Collection

In order to collect data for the present study, the students of two intact classes took part in this study. The participants took Oxford Placement Test at the beginning of the study. The results indicated that all participants were of intermediate English language ability. Both groups took the same writing pre-test at the beginning of the study, and another writing post-test at the end of the study. With regard to the treatments, the students of the oral group were provided with oral corrective feedback which was given one by one in a 20-minute at the end of each session. The errors were underlined and the teacher explained each error with the metalinguistic explanation. However, in the written feedback group, the participants were provided with written corrective feedback which included both direct and metalinguistic explanation.

This study was a ten-session long investigation. During these ten weeks different paragraph types were practiced. The learners were provided with similar tasks in preceding semesters, but in the semester coinciding with the present research, the learners were supposed to work on their writing ability more systematically. Although the participants were, more or less, familiar with paragraph writing issues, they were not competent to compose a paragraph independently.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

1. Pre-test Results

The results indicated that the participants' English language proficiency mean scores were not significantly different at the beginning of the study ($t = .868$, $p < .05$). Similarly, the mean scores of the participants' writing ability, organization, content, vocabulary, language use and mechanics were not significantly different (respectively, $t = .252$, $t = .62$, $t = .53$, $t = .09$, $t = .567$, $t = .22$, $p < .05$). Table 1 indicates the mean scores of the participants of the two groups.

Table 1. Pre-test Mean Scores

	Writin g	Organizatio n	Conten t	Vocabular y	Languag e Use	Mechanic s
Oral	56.25	12.81	18.12	11.56	11.37	2.37
Writte n	55.72	12.50	17.5	11.61	11.77	2.33

2. Post-test Results

Research question one: *Does providing written corrective feedback make a significant difference to the writing ability of the intermediate student writers of English?*

To answer this research question, the participants who were in two intact classes were given different types of comments. The oral corrective feedback group received oral direct feedback along with the metalinguistic explanations. The participants in the written corrective feedback group, as its name suggests, were provided with direct written feedback accompanied by metalinguistic explanation. Table 2 indicates the writing mean scores of the two groups in the post-test.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Post-Test Writing

Class	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Oral	16	59.31	4.12
Written	18	64.33	6.50

Table 2 indicates that the mean score of the oral corrective feedback group in the post-test was 59.31. The standard deviation of this distribution was 4.12. This table also shows that the mean score of the written corrective feedback group was 64.33. The standard deviation of the scores of the written corrective feedback group was 6.00. The difference between the mean scores was 5.02. To statistically examine the extent to which the mean scores were different, a t-test was run.

Table 3. Independent Samples T-Test for Post-Test Writing
t-test for Equality of Means

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Writing ability	2.64	32	.013	5.02	1.89

Table 3 reveals that the mean scores of the two oral feedback and written feedback groups were significantly different ($t= 2.64, p<.05$). This shows that the written feedback group treatment was more effective than the one employed in the oral feedback group.

In order to check whether the writing ability of the participants in each group improved during the treatment, two paired sample t-tests were run. Table 4 indicates the result of t-test for the oral feedback group.

Table 4. Paired Sample T-Test for The Oral Feedback Group
Paired Differences

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test						
Post-test	3.06	3.25	.81	3.76	15	.002

As indicated in Table 4, the oral corrective feedback group students' mean scores in the pre-test and post-test were significantly different. The mean score of the post-test was higher than that of the pre-test. This result indicates that the treatment had a positive effect on the oral corrective feedback group students' writing ability.

The same procedure was conducted for the written corrective feedback group. The result of paired-sample t-test for the written corrective feedback group is provided in Table 5.

Table 5. Paired Sample T-Test for the Written Feedback Group

	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
	Pre-test	8.61	2.52			
Post-test						

As indicated in Table 5, the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test were significantly different ($t=14.47$, $p<.05$). The mean score of the post-test was higher than the mean score of the pre-test. This result indicates that the students in this groups benefited from the treatment employed.

To answer this research question clearly, it can be stated that the written corrective feedback was successful in improving second language learners' writing ability. The results of paired samples t-tests indicated that both oral and written corrective feedback treatments were beneficial; however, it was the written corrective feedback which was significantly more successful than the oral corrective feedback treatment ($t=2.62$, $p<.05$).

Research question two: *Does providing written corrective feedback make a significant difference to developing specific sub-skills of the writing ability of the intermediate student writers of English?*

In order to answer this research question, the participants' performance in the post-test was assessed. The mean scores of the participants are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Post-test Mean Scores

	organization	content	vocabulary	Language use	mechanics
Oral	14.06	18.56	11.93	12.18	2.56
Written	15.38	18.83	12.72	14.22	3.16

In order to compare these mean scores with those of the pre-test to examine the significance of the difference, a set of independent-samples t-test were run. The first comparison has to do with organization.

Table 7. Independent Samples T-Test for Post-Test of Component of Organization
 t-test for Equality of Means

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Organization	3.68	32	.001	1.32	.36

As indicated in Table 7, the mean scores of the two oral and written corrective feedback groups were significantly different ($t= 3.68, p<.05$). This finding indicates that the students in the written corrective feedback wrote texts with better organization in comparison to their counterparts in the oral feedback group.

To compare the content mean scores of the oral and written corrective feedback groups, an independent samples t-test was run. Table 8 indicates the comparison of these mean scores.

Table 8. Independent Sample T-Test for Post-Test of Component of Content

t-test for Equality of Means					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Content	.22	32	.824	.27	1.20

Table 8 indicates that the difference between the content mean scores of the oral and written corrective feedback groups was not significant ($t=.22, p<.05$). The same procedure was done to check the significance of the difference between the vocabulary mean scores of the two participating groups, an independent samples t-test was run

Table 9. Independent Sample T-Test for Post-Test of Component of Vocabulary

t-test for Equality of Means					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Vocabulary	1.27	32	.211	.78	.61

Table 9 indicates that mean scores of the oral corrective feedback group and written corrective feedback group were not significantly different ($t=1.27, p<.05$).

Table 10 reveals the result of the comparison of the mean scores of written and oral groups' language use mean scores.

Table 10. Independent Sample T-Test for Post-Test of Component of Language Use

T-Test For Equality of Means					
	T	Df	Sig. (2-Tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Language use	3.66	32	.001	2.03	.555

Table 10 indicates that the mean score of the written corrective feedback group was significantly higher than that of the oral corrective feedback group ($t=3.66, p<.05$).

Table 11 deals with the comparison of written and oral groups' mean scores of mechanics which was done by an independent samples t-test.

Table 11. Independent Samples T-Test for Post-Test of Component of Mechanics

t-test for Equality of Means					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Mechanics	2.31	32	.027	.604	.26

Table 11 shows that the mean score of the written corrective feedback was significantly more than that of the oral corrective feedback group ($t=2.31, p<.05$).

3. Within group comparisons

a. Oral corrective feedback group

Table 12. Paired Samples T-Test for Writing Components of Oral Feedback Group

	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
	Content	.43	1.15			
Organization	1.25	1.18	.29	4.22	15	.001
Vocabulary	.375	1.02	.25	1.46	15	.164
Language use	.81	1.04	.26	3.10	15	.007
Mechanics	.18	.54	.13	1.37	15	.188

Table 12 indicates that the mean scores of the students in the oral feedback groups improved significantly in two areas which were organization ($t= 4.22, p<.05$) and language use ($t=3.10, p<.05$). However, other comparisons did not yield significant differences ($t= 1.51, t=1.46$ & $t=1.37, p<.05$ for content, vocabulary, & mechanics, respectively).

b. Written corrective feedback group

Table 13. Paired Samples T-Test for Writing Components of Written Feedback Group

	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
	Content	1.33	1.23			
Organization	2.88	.9	.21	13.61	17	.000
Vocabulary	1.11	1.36	.322	3.44	17	.003
Language use	2.44	.78	.18	13.23	17	.000
Mechanics	.883	.92	.21	3.82	17	.001

As indicated in Table 13, the participants of the written corrective feedback improved in all areas. The results of a set of paired-samples t-tests indicated that the participants received significantly higher scores of content ($t=4.57$, $p<.05$), organization ($t=13.61$, $p<.05$), vocabulary (3.44 , $p<.05$), language use ($t=13.23$, $p<.05$), and mechanics ($t=3.82$, $p<.05$) in the post-test in comparison to their scores in the pre-test.

The result of the second research question indicated that all the written corrective feedback group participants' sub-skills were significantly improved during the treatment. However, the comparison of the oral and written corrective feedback treatments revealed that the written corrective feedback was significantly more successful in improving learner' organization, mechanics, and language use. No significant difference was observed between the oral and written corrective feedback with regard to vocabulary and content.

Discussion

The first research question had to do with the effectiveness of the written corrective feedback. To do so, oral and written corrective feedback types were compared. The findings of this section indicated that both types of feedback, i.e., oral and written corrective feedback were beneficial for the students. As the results of paired-samples t-tests indicate, the writing ability of both oral and written corrective feedback groups improved during the treatment ($t_{\text{oral group}}=3.06$, $t_{\text{written group}}= 8.61$ $p<.05$). This result is in line with the previous studies which found corrective feedback effective in improving second language learners' different aspects of writing ability (Ahmadi & Shekarabi, 2014; Binglam & Jia, 2010; Ferris & Helt, 2000; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Sheen, et al., 2009; van Beuningen, et al., 2012; Wawire, 2013; Zarei & Rahnama, 2014).

Ahmadi and Shekarabi (2014) and Marzban and Arabahmadi (2013) found the employment of corrective feedback effective in improving Iranian English language learners' writing ability with regard to accuracy and fluency. With regard to the

vocabulary, Zarei and Rahnama (2014) who investigated Iranian students by the employment of three types of coded, uncoded, direct feedback and a control group found the positive effect of different types of written corrective feedback on learners' vocabulary use in their writing activities.

This finding does not support the claims of Truscott (1996, 1999) who found the employment of corrective feedback as both useless and even harmful. Mubarak (2013) did not find any traceable difference between the two groups who received and who did not receive corrective feedback and concluded the uselessness of corrective feedback. This study is also at odds with the study conducted by Truscott and Hsu (2008) who attacked corrective feedback from cognitive, affective and linguistic perspectives. Although these studies found corrective feedback ineffective, even harmful, the results of this study supported the employment of corrective feedback in improving second language learners' writing ability.

Although both types of corrective feedback were beneficial, the post-test results indicated that the mean score of the written corrective feedback group was significantly higher than that of the oral corrective feedback. This superiority of written corrective feedback over the oral corrective feedback is in line with the findings of previous studies such as Bitchener and Knoch (2009) and Sheen (2010) who found written corrective feedback more successful in extending second language learners' writing ability. Another pertinent study was done by Telcekar and Akcan (2010). They studied the way oral and written corrective feedback could affect the second language learners' writing quality in their subsequent revisions. They found that teachers' corrective feedback was significantly beneficial with regard to grammatical issues. The participants were more successful in revising organization and content-related items. They also found written corrective feedback superior to oral corrective feedback. Marzban and Amirahmadi (2013), also, concluded the written corrective feedback as effective in improving second language learners' writing accuracy. The studies conducted by Sheen (2007) and Ellis et al. (2008) found the significant positive impact of written corrective feedback on second language learners' writing accuracy. Van Beuningen (2010) argues that the most significant superiority of written corrective feedback over oral corrective feedback is pertinent to the nature of the corrective feedback mode. The oral feedback because of its transient nature cannot be referred to on later occasions.

The second research question dealt with the areas in which written corrective feedback was found successful. Several t-tests were run to investigate the effectiveness of written corrective feedback. The results indicated that written corrective feedback was more significant than oral corrective feedback in three areas ($t_{\text{organization}} = 3.63$, $t_{\text{language use}} = 3.66$, & $t_{\text{mechanics}} = 2.31$, $p < .05$). These findings reveal that the written corrective feedback benefited foreign language learners in three areas. Furthermore, as the within-group comparisons indicated, the participants of the written corrective feedback improved in all areas; however, the improvement of those in the oral corrective feedback group was limited to two areas of organization and language use.

The noteworthy point that can be inferred from between groups and within group comparisons is that those areas which can be taught as a set of rules are the ones which can make the difference. In between group comparisons, organization, language use, and mechanics were the areas which were significantly higher in the written corrective feedback group. In the same vein, oral corrective feedback was also successful in two of these areas (organization & language use). This result can be inferred that those aspects which can be taught as a set of limited rules are more prone to be acquired by corrective feedback and it is the written corrective feedback which can better than oral feedback decrease the occurrence of errors in these areas.

Before wrapping up this discussion, it's better to review the three areas which are more rule-governed. With regard to organization, the most significant criterion, as its name suggests, is the extent to which the contents employed are presented in a systematic manner. This criterion can be achieved by following a set of guidelines which can be mastered by practice. The same story was true for the language use and mechanics. The language use chiefly has to do with the grammatical accuracy. These grammatical items are governed by a set of rules which can be acquired by corrective feedback (Knoch, 2009; Sheen, 2010; Sobhani & Tayebipour, 2015; van Beuningen, 2010). The third sub-skill which followed a set of rules was mechanics; conventions were found to be taught more easily by the assistance of written corrective feedback. On the other hand, other areas which were not as rule-based as the above-mentioned areas, namely, content and vocabulary were not improved significantly in the oral corrective feedback (paired samples t-test for the oral feedback group: $t_{\text{content}} = 1.51$, $t_{\text{vocabulary}} = 1.46$, $p < .05$).

CONCLUSION

From these findings, it can be concluded that both written and oral corrective feedback are beneficial in improving second language learners' writing ability. Written corrective feedback was found to be more effective than oral corrective feedback. This finding which has been supported by the previous studies in the literature draws another line on Truscott (1996, 1999) and Truscott and Hsu's (2008) opposition to corrective feedback.

The second research questions shed light on the areas which can be most affected by written corrective feedback. The areas which are more rule-based and can be taught and learned as a set of limited rules are more prone to be corrected by the employment of corrective feedback. The areas such as organization, language use, and mechanics are the areas that second language teachers can focus on in their corrective feedback provision practice.

These findings, along with those of the previous studies support the usefulness of corrective feedback in second language writing programs. The usefulness of both oral and written corrective feedback has been well-established in the literature. This study once again approved the use of corrective feedback in second language writing classes, not only for grammatical accuracy, but also for organization, and mechanics. This study announced the preference of written feedback over oral feedback in second language classes.

As the pedagogical implication of the present study, it can be suggested that second language teachers employ corrective feedback to improve their students' writing ability. The usefulness of corrective feedback has already been attested to in the literature (Ellis et al., 2008; Ferris, 2003, Bitchener & Knoch, 2009; Sheen, 2010), and is reinforced by the results of this study. Second language teachers can employ written corrective feedback as one of the most effective corrective feedback types to improve their students' writing ability. However, it is recommended to combine both oral and written corrective feedback to maximize the effectiveness of corrective feedback practice (e.g., Bitchener & Knoch, 2009; Ellis et al., 2008).

Another pedagogical implication of this study deals with the effectiveness of written corrective feedback in improving those sub-skills which are of a more rule-based nature such as mechanics, language use and organization. It seems that the benefits of corrective feedback is more tangible in the areas in which the number of items to learn is limited. Thus, it can be suggested that second language teachers focus on these sub-skills and take other measures to improve second language learners' vocabulary and content.

Future studies can solve this problem by including a number of teachers in oral and written corrective feedback treatments to iron out the individual differences of teachers and learners. The second research question shed light on the effect of oral and written corrective feedback on learners' writing sub-skills; however, future studies can investigate the effect of different corrective feedback types (direct vs. indirect), (focused vs. unfocused), (computer-mediated vs. face to face) on the improvement of different writing areas.

REFERENCES

- Ahmadi, M. & Shekarabi, Z. (2014). The role of written corrective feedback in enhancing the linguistic accuracy of Iranian Japanese learners' writing. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research* 2(1), 99-118.
- Allan, D. (2004). *Oxford placement test*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Arnaudet, M. L., & Barrett, M. E. (1990). *Paragraph Development*. London: Published Pearson Education.
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., & Sorensen C. (2010). *Introduction to Research in Education*. Thomson Wadsworth, Australia.
- Ashwell, T. (2000). Patterns of teacher response to student writing in a multiple-draft composition classroom: Is content feedback followed by form feedback the best method? *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 9, 227-257.
- Bitchener, J. & Knoch, U. (2010). Raising the linguistic accuracy level of advanced L2 writers with written corrective feedback. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 19, 207-217.
- Bitchener, J. (2008). Evidence in support of written corrective feedback. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 17, 102-118.
- Bitchener, J., & Knoch, U. (2008). The value of written corrective feedback for migrant and

- international students. *Language Teaching Research*, 12, 409-431.
- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.
- Chandler, J. (2003). The Efficacy of Various Kinds for Improvement in the Accuracy and Fluency of L2 Student Writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 12(3), 267-296.
- Ferris, D. (2003). *Response to student writing: Implications for second language students*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Ferris, D. R. & Hedgcock, J. (1998). *Teaching ESL composition: purpose, process, and practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Frantzen, D. (1995). The effects of grammar supplementation on written accuracy in an intermediate Spanish content course. *Modern Language Journal*, 79, 329-344.
- Gass, S. & Selinker, L. (2001). *Second language acquisition: An introductory course*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Gass, S. (1997). *Input, interaction, and the second language learner*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Hyland, K & Hyland, F (Eds.). (2006). *Feedback in second language writing: Contexts and issues applied linguistics series*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Hyland, K. (2003). *Second Language Writing*. New York: Cambridge University.
- Jacobs, H.L., Zinkgraf, S.A., Wormuth, D.R., Hartfiel, V.F., & Hughey, J.B. (1981). *Testing ESL composition: A practical approach*. Rowley, Mass. Newbury House Publishers, Inc.
- Kassimt, A., & Luan Ngr, L. (2014). Investigating the efficacy of focused and unfocused corrective feedback on the accurate use of prepositions in written work. *English Language Teaching*, 7(2), 21-40.
- Kessler, G. (2009). Student-initiated attention to form in wiki-based collaborative writing. *Language Learning & Technology*, 13(1), 79-95.
- Long, M. H. (2007). Recasts in SLA: The story so far. In M. H. Long (Ed.), *Problems in SLA* (pp. 75-116). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Mubarak, M. (2013). *Corrective feedback in L2 writing: A study of practices and effectiveness in the Bahrain context*. PhD dissertation. University of Sheffield.
- Polio, C., Fleck, N., & Leder, N. (1998). "If only I had more time": ESL learners' changes in linguistic accuracy on essay revisions. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 7, 43-68.
- Richards, J.C., & Renandya, W.A. (Eds.). (2002). *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sheen, Y. (2007). The effect of focused written corrective feedback and language aptitude on ESL learners' acquisition of articles. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41, 255-283.
- Sheen, Y., Wright, D., & Moldawa, A. (2009). Differential effects of focused and unfocused written correction on the accurate use of grammatical forms by adult ESL learners. *System*, 37, 556-569.
- Trahey, M. & White, L. (1993). Positive evidence and preemption in the second language classroom. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 15, 181-204.
- Truscott, J. (1996). The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes. *Language*

Learning, 46, 327-369.

Truscott, J. (1999). The case for “the case for grammar correction in L2 writing classes”: A response to Ferris. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 8, 111–122.

Truscott J. & Hsu, A.Y. (2008). Error correction, revision, and learning. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 17, 292–305.

Vonderwell, S., & Zachariah, S. (2005). Factors that Influence Participation in Online Learning. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 38(2), 213-230.

White, L. (1991). Adverb placement in second language acquisition: Some effects of positive and negative evidence in the classroom. *Second Language Research*, 7, 133-61.

