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Title:

The Effect of Focused and Unfocused Written Corrective Feedback on Written Performance of Iranian Intermediate Learners

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The present study investigated the differential role of focused and unfocused written corrective feedback in Iranian intermediate learners’ L2 writing. To this end, 60 EFL learners were divided into two experimental groups and a control group. All groups were required to perform a story-writing task for four sessions. One of the experimental groups, the focused group, received feedback on regular and irregular past tense errors. The second experimental group, the unfocused group, received feedback on all types of errors. The control group revived no feedback on their writing. Results revealed that the performance of the focused group was better than the unfocused and control groups both on the immediate and delayed posttests. Results also showed that learners preferred the focused feedback more than unfocused one.

**Keywords:** Written corrective feedback, focused feedback, unfocused feedback, written accuracy
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Introduction

1.1. Background

Writing is one of the communications tools through which people can express their feeling and thought. Not only writing shows the knowledge and the idea of writer but it shows some errors whether in L1 or in L2. So, through writing, people can find how much one has mastered in the writing skill. As Hudson (2001) states, what people learn about themselves and develop within themselves through writing can help them realize their individual potential and achieve potential goals.

In the field of second and foreign language learning and teaching, writing has more significance, because learners try to learn a new language whose writing may be partially or completely different from their L1. So, it is difficult for the leaners to learn a new system of writing. It may take a long time for them to get a high level of proficiency in writing. Also it is not possible to write without making mistakes and errors. So, linguistic accuracy is important in the writing process and learners should pay more attention to the grammar of their writing. However, learners produce more inaccurate sentences in their writing. Such errors should be identified by teachers’ written corrective feedback (WCF). It has been believed that corrective feedback (CF) is an inseparable part of second language acquisition (SLA) because, it is based on the need of the learner in the context he is using the language (Lightbown & Spada, 1990).

CF refers to responses to learner’s erroneous utterance (e.g., Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2006). In recent years, the focus of the researchers is more on this question that when and how to correct learners’ erroneous utterances rather than the question of whether to correct learners’ erroneous utterances. CF is generally provided by instructors in most language classrooms; however, it can be provided by peers or friends too. It may be given in a written
form or orally in the mode of teacher verbal recasts and corrections. CF in an oral form is less effective than in a written form especially in oral conversations, language learners give more attention to meaning than form because at first stages of language learning that they cannot pay attention to both form and meaning at the same time. Also many language teachers do not want to interrupt the flow of conversation when they see some errors do not interfere with meaning (Lightbown & Spada, 1990). However, formal errors in writing are less tolerated and distract readers from the intended message.

Sheen (2007) highlights a number of differences between oral and written feedback: Written feedback is delayed whereas oral feedback is immediate. For instance, an instructor may not write the response immediately after an error, but he or she may orally respond to an error immediately. Also WCF requires less cognitive load on memory than oral feedback does.

CF has been a hot debate in the mainstream of SLA studies. There is a wide variety of strategies that act as CF when dealing with written error. One of the important teachers’ and researchers’ roles is to provide the most effective CF to students in order to reduce and improve their writing accuracy. Ellis (2009) proposes different classifications for CF.

1) Direct feedback vs. indirect feedback: In the case of direct CF, the teacher provides students with the correct form. This can be done by crossing the wrong or unnecessary word out, inserting a missing word or writing the right form above or close to the wrong form. According to Ellis (2008) the advantage of direct CF is providing learners with explicit information and guidance about how to correct their error. Ferris and Roberts (2001) suggest that direct CF is probably better than indirect CF for low level leaners, because they are unable to recognize the nature of error without correcting that error. However, the disadvantage of direct CF is that the process of the learning is minimal for the learner. It may help them produce the correct form when they revise their
writing just after a short time, not for a long time (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). However, a recent study by Sheen (2007) suggests that direct CF can be effective in promoting acquisition of specific grammatical features.

Indirect CF, however, indicates that there is an error without giving the correct form to the learner. Often this takes place by underlining or highlighting the item in question, but can also occur by making a note in the margin without the exact indication of where the error occurred. According to Ferris (2003), indirect feedback can help learners develop the competence of problem solving, guide learning, and encourage students to reflect on linguistic forms. So, it causes learners to benefit from self-discovery and be able to correct their own errors with the passage of time. For these reasons, it is preferable to use direct feedback. However, students with low L2 proficiency levels may not have enough linguistic knowledge to correct their errors even when they are pointed out (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). Another disadvantage of indirect CF is that when teachers provide indirect CF learners do not know if their own hypothesized corrections are accurate whereas in direct CF the exact location of errors is shown and the learners have this ability to instantly internalize the correct form provided by their teacher. So, indirect CF causes learners to need more time in access to the target form. It involves learners in the additional cognitive effort and engages them in deeper processing associated with indirect CF.

2) Reformulation: This type of feedback involves the rewriting of the learner’s text. Students are responsible for using such resources to correct their errors. This technique is described by Cohen (1989) as a way “to preserve as many of the writer’s ideas as possible, while expressing them in his/her own words so as to make the piece sound native-like” (p. 4). The learner’s text is reformulated and they have to identify the modifications that have been made.
3) Metalinguistic feedback: Metalinguistic CF involves providing learners with some form of explicit comment about the nature of the errors they have made. Ellis (2009) further distinguishes between two types of metalinguistic WCF, depending on whether the feedback is provided by means of (1) error codes or (2) metalinguistic explanation of the learner’s errors. Error codes typically consist of abbreviated labels or symbols that correspond to different kinds of errors, and they are usually placed near the error or in the margin. The second type, metalinguistic explanations, is the provision of brief grammatical descriptions about the type or nature of the errors. These descriptions, which may also include examples and grammar rules, are commonly placed at the end of the learner’s text.

4) Focused feedback vs. unfocused feedback: When teachers decide to correct all of the students’ errors at the same time in their written work, the CF is unfocused. Alternatively, when they select specific error types for correction (such as English articles or past tense as used in this study) the provided CF is focused. According to Ellis (2008), focused CF refers to the feedback that is given only on a specific and preselected error and neglects another area. For example, feedback provided only on errors displaying incorrect use of English articles (e.g., Sheen, 2007) is an example of focused feedback. Ellis (2009) also argues that the unfocused feedback refers to the feedback that is given on all or a range of error types.

Even though unfocused CF is what teachers usually do in their classrooms, it might be a confusing way for the learners, since processing corrections is likely to be more difficult in unfocused CF as the learner is required to attend to a variety of errors and thus is unlikely to be able to reflect much on each error. Moreover, Ellis et al. (2008) argue that learners are able to notice their errors in their writing and acquire the received CF better when they receive CF on only one targeted feature. So, focused WCF might be more beneficial in the process of language learning than the unfocused one. He added whenever an error is corrected, learners
pay more intensive attention to that form so, learning takes place more effectively as a result of correction. Focused metalinguistic CF may be especially helpful in this respect, because in spite of attention promotion it raises understanding of the nature of the error. However, unfocused CF has the advantage of indicating a range of errors, but it might not be as effective as focused CF in assisting learners to acquire specific features in the short term, while it might be effective in the long term (Ellis, 2008).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Making errors in writing can influence understanding the message for a reader and can decrease the motivation of the writer as a learner. There have been some ways to impede and decrease these errors and help the learners improve their writing quality and increase their motivation for performing writing tasks. One of them is CF. It has been one of the important topics in the field of foreign language teaching and learning and the most common pedagogical practice among instructors. Providing feedback in a second and foreign language is vital to a student’s writing development because it raises learners’ awareness to notice their errors. One of the most difficult responsibilities for the teachers has always been how to behave with the learners’ grammatical errors in target language classrooms and which CF to select in order to decrease that errors.

Bitchener and Knoch (2010) argue that “while there is growing empirical evidence that WCF can successfully target some types of linguistic error, it is unclear whether some linguistic error domains and categories are more treatable than others” (p. 207). According to Bitchener and Knoch (2009) some grammatical points have rule-based features while others do not. The effectiveness of grammar correction depends to some extent on the kind of grammatical rules to be corrected. For instance, a study on ‘definite article’ errors might give different results from another study on the use of ‘past tense’. Therefore, it is not accurate to generalize the effectiveness of error correction on one kind of grammar point over the others.
However, the role of WCF as an instrument to facilitate foreign language learning remains unclear, and, more specifically, the extent to which grammar correction can help learners notice their errors and whether that leads to greater accuracy in subsequent writing need further investigation.

This debate begins when Truscott (1996) claims that CF is “ineffective” and even “potentially harmful” to students (p. 328); he suggests that the instructors should pay attention to other activities such as additional writing practice. In his paper, Truscott (1996) claims that CF should be abandoned because it is ineffective in cases where the teachers’ CF is not suitable for students’ developmental sequences, and ignores the nature of interlanguage development. It is effective and helpful just for the development of explicit or metalinguistic knowledge not for implicit or procedural one. Also in terms of practicality, it is not possible for teachers to provide adequate and consistent feedback and ensure whether students are able or willing to use such feedback effectively in their learning process. Furthermore, he adds that when teachers provide CF on students’ grammatical errors, they may avoid using such forms and use only simple structure in the writing instead of more complex ones.

Against Truscott’s (1996; 2004; 2007) arguments, Ferris (1999; 2004; 2007) defends the effectiveness of CF on grammatical errors in students’ writings, he states that Truscott’s claim is not on the basis of enough empirical data to determine the effectiveness of CF on L2 writing. After such debates, there have been enormous amounts of empirical studies examining the effects of CF on L2 writings, even though the conclusion is not yet established. Therefore, even though many empirical studies have dealt with CF, the effectiveness of WCF in improving students’ L2 grammar as well as the type of CF which is more effective are not clear-cut. Therefore, it has always been a perpetual concern to L2 teachers.
Some research findings suggest that WCF can be ineffective in decreasing grammatical errors and it cannot improve L2 learners’ writing skill (e.g., Kepner, 1991; Polio, Fleck & Leder, 1998), whereas other studies find WCF effective in improving L2 writing (e.g. Binglan & Jia, 2010; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami & Takashima, 2008; Van Beuningen, De Jong & Kuiken, 2012). Also many studies have shown the effect of CF on the improvement of accuracy in revisions and few of these studies have investigated the effectiveness of CF in new writing tasks which can provide genuine evidence of learning (e.g., Sachs & Polio, 2007; Truscott & Hsu, 2008).

Previous studies also indicate contradictory results in the differential influence of focused and unfocused feedback. There is an inconsistency between the results of these studies, Ellis et al. (2008) and Rouhi and Samei (2010) found that the focused and unfocused groups benefited equally from CF while Sheen et al. (2009) found the opposite, the focused group benefited more than the unfocused group. There is an obvious need for further research to investigate the efficacy of focused and unfocused CF. Most of the previous studies done on WCF have focused on article errors (e.g. Bitchen & Knoch, 2009; Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, 2007; 2010), but in this study past tense errors that cause problems for many students are investigated. So, the present study is conducted to obviate the pervious researches’ limitations and examine the differential influence of focused and unfocused CF on L2 accuracy.

1.3. Significant of the Study

The findings of this study might have implications for learners, teachers, and syllabus designers. Committing errors is unavoidable for the leaners in the context of foreign language learning. Mostly learners are not able to identify such errors and need the guidance of the experts to find those errors. One types of such guidance is teachers’ feedback. So, feedback plays an important role in developing learners’ language abilities. Feedbacks on students’ assignments help them find the gap in their interlanguge in order to improve the accuracy of
Moreover, CF helps students concentrate better on their own errors and don’t be dependent on the teacher. It is a way to foster students’ autonomy and self-determination (Ancker, 2000). Thus, CF motivates learners to learn more and increase their grammatical accuracy.

The results of this study may encourage teachers in providing feedback for learners and help them use CF as a pedagogic strategy. Also, through receiving feedback from the learners, the teachers can realize which type of CF is more effective in improving the writing accuracy. Teachers also through providing CF can help the learners have the opportunities to discriminate between accepted and unaccepted forms of language (Zacharias, 2007).

Also the results of this study help syllabus designers in describing what information might include in their syllabus, which type of CF should be emphasized and what activities, tasks, and materials should be include to strengthen the effectiveness of such CF in L2 learning.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

CF has an important role in language learning because it functions as consciousness-raising mediation which helps learners overcome L1 interference and prevent faulty hypotheses and overgeneralizations. It may decrease errors in learners’ production and help them proceduralize the knowledge. In other words, feedback is employed to reduce the gap between the interlanguge and the target language.

A number of the researchers (e.g., Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 1995; 2006; Lee, 2008; Sheen, 2007) have concluded that CF does improve learners’ the accuracy of L2 writing. However, some others (e.g., Kepner, 1991; Polio, Fleck & Leder, 1998; Semk, 1984; Shepard, 1991) have concluded that CF fails to improve the accuracy of L2 writing. Bitchener (2008) argues that result of all studies claiming the effectiveness of WCF on learners’ writing are not generalizable because most of them have
not included a control group to make a comparison between those who received WCF and those who did not. The main motivation for conducting this study is shedding some more light on the role of WCF (i.e., focused and unfocused WCF) in improving the accuracy of L2 writing.

1.5. Research Questions

The current study sought to examine the effect of two different types of feedback on improving L2 accuracy. In this regard, the following questions are formulated:

1. Is there any difference between the focused and unfocused WCF on the accuracy of L2 writing?
2. What is learners’ attitude toward receiving focused and unfocused CF for improving their L2 writing?

1.6. Research Hypothesis

For this study, the following null hypothesis is formulated:

There is no difference between the focused and unfocused WCF on the accuracy of L2 writing.

1.7. Definition of Key Words

Written Corrective Feedback: In language teaching CF is a form of positive reinforcement or correction (Ellis et al., 2008). Lightbown and Spada (1990) define WCF from a negative perspective, that is, it gives this information to the learners that some incorrect forms which are not acceptable in the target language exist in their writing. To extend this definition, WCF, which is at the center of this study, refers to the various ways a reader can respond to a second language writer by indicating that some forms in the writing are not compatible with the norms of the target language. Therefore, WCF makes the learners aware of incorrect forms in a language.
Focused WCF: Focused WCF selects specific grammatical problems that have been identified earlier to be corrected and ignores other errors in the text. It emphasizes on a single error type (e.g., errors in the use of simple past tense).

Unfocused WCF: Unfocused WCF refers to the correction of all or a range of errors at the same time in learners’ written texts (e.g., errors in the use of the article, preposition, verb tense, subject agreement...).

1.8. Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The present study investigated the differential effects of focused and unfocused WCF on the accuracy of L2 writing. The grammatical feature for the focused WCF in this study was English past tense which is one of the delimitations of the study. Another delimitation refers to using only focused and unfocused WCF among difficult types of CF.

The present study encountered some limitations as well. One of the limitations was the short time period in which the study was conducted. It only lasted for eight weeks. However, language acquisition is a process which takes a long period of time, and it is possible that in order to see the beneficial effect of either types of WCF, a long period of investigation would be required. The low number of the participants (n = 20 in each groups) (i.e., the small sample size used in this study) was also a limitation which affects the generalizations of these results to other language learning contexts. Another limitation was examining the performance of only intermediate learners and ignoring other levels of proficiency.
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Literature Review
Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1. Overview

This chapter reviews the most related literature regarding the use of CF and different types of CF in language teaching and learning process. The current chapter is divided into fifth parts. The first part deals with typology of CF. The second part outlines the role of CF in language learning classrooms. The third part of this chapter deals with the empirical studies against WCF. The forth part deals with the review of literature on the usefulness of WCF. The last part presents the empirical studies conducted on the effectiveness of focused and unfocused WCF.

2.2. Typology of CF

CF is providing correction on incorrect forms by the teacher or instructor to writers’ composition in order to help them improve their writing accuracy. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, CF usually takes the forms of direct and indirect corrections which are two main categories of CF. Also it can be focused and unfocused CF.

Direct CF is defined as a type of correction that attracts students’ attention to their error. In other words, the teacher shows the students where they have committed errors and corrects their errors. Indirect CF is defined as drawing students’ attention to the place of their errors without providing corrections (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012).

The teachers use direct CF in a variety of forms in the learners’ writing, such as a) the teacher omits any wrong form in the learners’ writing and cross-outs it. b) the teacher rewrites a word, a phrase or a sentence on the learners’ writing c) the teacher adds any missing items on learners’ writing texts (e.g., prefix, suffix, article, preposition, word, etc.).
The teachers provide indirect corrective feedback by underlining, circling or highlighting errors on learners’ writing, indicating the location of these errors without correcting them. Students are asked to study their errors and correct those (Ferris, 2002). In other words, indirect corrective feedback emphasizes the role of students in understanding and correcting their errors rather than being provided with the corrections.

Another dichotomy deals with focused and unfocused CF. Focused CF which targets only one problematic error type (such as simple past tense as used in this study) as opposed to unfocused corrective feedback which targets all of the errors in students’ writings (Ellis et al. 2008).

A sample of unfocused feedback

| The thesis statement is crucial to an essay. Because it gives readers the first idea of what will be covered in the essay. A good thesis statement contains two parts: the first part should explain the purpose of the essay |

A sample of focused feedback

| The thesis statement is crucial to an essay. Because it gives readers the first idea of what will cover in the essay. A good thesis statement contain two parts: the first part should explains the purpose of the essay |

The two samples above show unfocused CF and focused CF. Even though unfocused CF is what teachers usually do in their classrooms. Ellis et al. (2008) posit that learners benefit more from focused CF than unfocused one. Processing corrections is more challenging difficult in unfocused CF, where the learner is required to attend to a variety of errors and is not able to reflect much on each error. In this respect, focused CF may be more effective because, the learner is able to look at multiple corrections of a single error carefully
and notice why what they had written was erroneous. Such a noticing in turn can reinforce learning (Swain, 2005). Ellis et al. (2008) add if learning is dependent on attention to form, then it is reasonable to assume that whenever the learners pay more intensive attention, they can learn as a result of more correction. Focused CF may be especially helpful in this respect as it promotes not just attention but also understanding of the nature the error (Sheen, 2007). However, unfocused CF has the advantage of referring to a range of errors, so it might not be as effective in assisting learners to acquire specific features as focused CF in the short term (Truscott, 2001).

Some researchers (e.g., Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, 2009) maintain that focused WCF might be more beneficial in terms of SLA than the unfocused type. Sheen (2009) argues that the focused approach may enhance learning by helping learners notice their errors in their writing, engage in hypothesis testing in a systematic way, and monitor the accuracy of their writing. On the contrary, unfocused CF is more likely to be given in a confusing and unsystematic way, and become overburdening for the learners due to the attention to multiple error types (Sheen et al., 2009). However, Bitchener and Ferris (2012) also acknowledge that providing feedback on only a few specific errors might neglect the learners’ long-term needs and affect their perception with respect to the errors they produce and their ability to edit their own texts comprehensively.

2.3. Role of CF in Language Learning Classrooms

In very general terms, CF on grammar errors can enhance learners’ accuracy. There are also special arguments presented as to why CF is necessary. These arguments, which justify the usefulness of CF, are outlined below.

2.3.1. Focus on form: Focus on form which was put forward by Long (1991) refers to explicit, separate grammar instruction on language forms. It draws learners’ attention to language form and provides opportunities for them to practice specific linguistic features
According to Long and Robinson (1998), the term focus on form is used to describe teaching language forms according to communicative approaches, where attention of learners to form is directed through activities which are primarily meaning-focused. Ellis, Loewen & Basturkmen (2006) describe focus on form activities as including small time-outs from efforts to communicate.

Furthermore, Paradowsk (2007) declares that focus on form can act as an acquisition facilitator which helps learners to perceive the structures through explanation in meaning-focused activities. So, focus on form can turn input into intake.

CF is one method of focus on form instruction or grammar instruction which entails “any pedagogical effort which is used to draw the learners’ attention to language form either implicitly or explicitly in appropriate situations” (Spada, 1997, p. 73). CF provides this opportunity by raising awareness of grammar by using students’ own writing. WCF allows the learner to be able to pinpoint his or her error and be able to see them as they occur in his or her own writing. Therefore, providing form-focused feedback has been the standard practice of L2 writing instruction.

2.3.2. Noticing hypothesis: Second language learners cannot acquire a language feature unless they notice it in the input. According to the Schmidt’s (1991) noticing hypothesis, noticing underlines awareness of discrepancies between the learner’s output and the L2 is necessary for the acquisition of a specific linguistic item. In this sense, noticing is seen as the intake of grammar that results from paying attention to the input. Intake refers to “input which becomes part of the learning process” (Batstone, 1996, p. 273).

For instance, some features of the target language (e.g., grammatical factors) may be reduced in the speech of native speakers and may be hardly perceptible learners. As result learners miss them in their input. It is presumable that some features are not noticed by speakers. In interaction, for example, the interlocutor may only break the flow of
conversation to correct an error if he/she does not understand the meaning of the speaker. The proponents of this hypothesis (e.g., Batstone, 1996; Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Sheen, 2009) argue that exposure to L2 will not automatically guarantee this kind of awareness therefore; CF is necessary to direct learners’ attention to forms and individual problems. They believe that CF as the facilitative role draws learners’ attention to form and acts as stimulus to help learners identify the gap between their erroneous utterance and the target form. Thus, in perceiving different types of feedback and enhancing their benefits for language learners, noticing and awareness are vital.

2.3.3. Interaction hypothesis: The importance of CF is also a central element in the interaction hypothesis elaborated by Long (1996). In the context of interactions, learners receive feedback through interactional responses such as clarification requests, confirmation of message understood, and comprehension checks which are referred to as negotiation of meaning (Lyster, 1998).

Interaction alone without CF may not be sufficient to impact the acquisition of certain linguistic forms (McDonough, 2005). CF can prompt learners to focus on form and adjust their output to solve problems in understanding the input and output processing (Gass, 1997). When learners recognize that their previous utterance is deficient “they either generate a new message or reprocess their original message” (McDonough, 2005, p. 82). Modifying output in response to CF is also known as uptake which is defined by Lyster and Ranta (1997) as “a student’s utterance that immediately follows the teacher’s feedback and that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher’s intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student’s initial utterance” (p. 49). According to Lyster and Ranta (1997) uptake may contribute to L2 development by triggering additional grammatical encoding by strengthening knowledge representations that learners already have stored and by
encouraging automatic retrieval of linguistic forms. These modifications may, in turn, lead to subsequent stabilization or language change (Gass & Varonis, 1985).

Hence, pedagogical practices such as CF are expected to support the SLA process by triggering learners’ noticing of gaps between the target language norms and their interlanguage, and thus, lead them to subsequently restructure their developing grammar.

2.3.4. Modified output: Second language learners cannot acquire a language feature unless they notice it in the input. According to the Schmidt’s (1991) noticing hypothesis, noticing underlines awareness of discrepancies between the learner’s output and the L2 is necessary for the acquisition of a specific linguistic item. In this sense, noticing is seen as the intake of grammar that results from paying attention to the input. Intake refers to “input which becomes part of the learning process” (Batstone, 1996, p. 273).

For instance, some features of the target language (e.g., grammatical factors) may be reduced in the speech of native speakers and may be hardly perceptible learners. As result learners miss them in their input. It is presumable that some features are not noticed by speakers. In interaction, for example, the interlocutor may only break the flow of conversation to correct an error if he/she does not understand the meaning of the speaker. The proponents of this hypothesis (e.g., Batstone, 1996; Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Sheen, 2009) argue that exposure to L2 will not automatically guarantee this kind of awareness therefore; CF is necessary to direct learners’ attention to forms and individual problems. They believe that CF as the facilitative role draws learners’ attention to form and acts as stimulus to help learners identify the gap between their erroneous utterance and the target form. Thus, in perceiving different types of feedback and enhancing their benefits for language learners, noticing and awareness are vital.

2.3.5. Positive and negative evidence: Gass (1997) reports that learners are faced with two types of input: positive evidence and negative evidence. Positive evidence is
provided to inform the learner about what is acceptable in the target language and refers to “the set of well-formed sentences to which learners are exposed to” (Gass, 1997, p. 36). Negative evidence, on the other hand, provides learners with information about sentences that are not close to the target language. It is often realized through the presence of CF in response to learners’ erroneous L2 production.

The distinction between these two types of evidence raised the question whether provision of positive evidence suffices L2 acquisition or it is necessary to provide learners with CF when committing errors.

Krashen (1981) and Truscott (2003) argue that if learners are provided with enough amount of proper input, acquisition would take place. They referred to what happens in L1 acquisition to support their claim. Therefore, there would be no need to draw learners’ attention to linguistic forms or focus on form instruction (Long, 1991). Based on this claim, exposure to enough input leads to L2 acquisition.

Later on, other researches prove (e.g., Hyland, 2006; Kepner, 1991; Ferris & Roberts, 2001) that the provision of input is not enough for L2 learning. Swain (1985) refers to immersion programs which are based on high exposure to authentic input, but even after many years of exposure to the target language, still the learners’ interlanguage in many grammatical points is flawed. She argues that the failure of these immersion programs is partly due to the absence of negative feedback to learners’ errors.

The usefulness of CF is justified from different perspectives. Meanwhile, the interaction hypothesis proposed by Long (1985; 1996), followed by Gass (1997) and Pica (1994) give credit to the importance of teachers’ CF. Interactionists acknowledge the significance of exposure to input, but in the meantime emphasize the notability of negative evidence afforded by teachers or competent interlocutors through interactional feedback.
The underlying assumption is that CF on written texts promotes L2 acquisition. As noted by Hyland (2006), both teachers and students believe that direct feedback is useful and effective in aiding L2 acquisition. Nevertheless, for most students and teachers, this view is largely based on personal experience and not on scientific evidence.

Students instinctively like to get their mistakes corrected and similarly, teachers instinctively feel that their corrections are both helpful and necessary. An article published in 1996 by Truscott entitled “The Case against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes” changed all these perceptions. Truscott asserts that “all forms of CF applied to L2 student writing were not only useless, but could be detrimental to L2 acquisition and should be abandoned” (p. 328). He believes that the “intuitive belief held amongst language teachers and students that CF had value was a dangerous fallacy” (pp. 341). He notes that just because students want to have CF is not reasonable enough to give it to them; the main responsibility of the teacher toward a student is to aid them in their learning.

2.4. Empirical Studies against WCF

Several studies (e.g., Semke; 1984; Sheppard, 1992; Truscott, 1996) concluded that WCF does not aid students’ written accuracy. These are summarized below beginning with the earliest relevant studies towards the most recent ones.

In an investigation including both meaning-focused and form focused WCF Semke (1984) studied the journal writing of German foreign language students at a university in the USA. In a 10-week study, students were divided into four groups either receiving direct error correction, feedback indicating the type of error with a code only, a combination of direct correction, and comments only. She found no significant difference in the accuracy of the four groups at the end of study. The only difference noted was that all three correction groups wrote more slowly than the comments only group, but this had no effect on accuracy.
Kepner (1991) analyzed student journal entries of Spanish foreign language students at another university in the USA. The students were randomly assigned into two groups. One group received WCF and the other group received a comment without any correction. Their writing accuracy was compared after a period of 12 weeks. Results showed no significant difference between the experimental and control groups.

In another investigation comparing form-focused and meaning-focused feedback, Sheppard (1992) compared the writing accuracy between two groups of students; one received indirect error coding CF and another received holistic comments. Students were asked to write seven compositions over 10 periods which, were then analyzed based on students’ accurate use of verb tense, punctuation, and subordination. Students who received holistic comments made significantly greater improvement in writing accuracy than those who received error corrections.

None of the studies discussed above found any statically significant difference in the accuracy of writing between groups of students receiving CF and those receiving holistic or content-focused comment only. Thus it would seem that there is not adequate evidence supporting the benefit of error correction in language teaching. Findings of these studies confirm Truscott’ claim (1996), who argues that grammar correction should be avoided in L2 writing and stresses that teacher should not correct grammar because of its potentially harmful impacts. He presents three arguments against error correction. The first is that the learning process is too complex for students to improve through CF. The second one is that giving CF to students at a time when they are ready to learn a specific language form or structure is barely possible. The third argument is that when students get some knowledge as a result of correction, it would dissipate over a short period of time. These arguments lead to need for further research to focus on the effectiveness of CF on students’ writing.
2.5. Empirical Studies on WCF

In contrast to the studies outlined above, several researchers have investigated the use of WCF and claimed that it improves students’ written accuracy. Their main findings are summarized below.

Kepner (1991) investigated the relationship between the types of WCF given to students and the development of second language writing skills. Based on a collection of sample texts, Kepner (1991) used a sample of 60 students distributed between four groups of a Spanish module. The researcher cooperated with the course instructors to design eight writing tasks that were given to students over 12 weeks. The course instructors supplied the researcher with the assignments of students every time a task was accomplished. Half of the subjects received feedback on content and the other half received grammar and vocabulary correction. Kepner selected the sixth assignment of the subjects produced after 12 weeks of instruction and counted all grammatical and vocabulary errors to measure grammatical accuracy. She also measured the number of “high-level propositions” to check the writing content. Kepner found that students who received feedback on accuracy did not make any significant improvement, while students who received feedback on content showed a significant improvement in L2 writing in terms of quality and accuracy.

Ferris and Roberts (2001) carried out an experimental study to investigate the role of explicit CF on students’ writing accuracy and overall quality of their writing. The subjects were 72 students enrolled in ESL classes at California State University, Sacramento. The majority (82%) were immigrants from Southeast Asia and China. Forty-four students were attending three sections of a composition class below the freshman composition level and 36 were attending a Grammar for Writers class. All students were assigned to one of three treatment groups (two experimental and a control). The first experimental group included 28 students the second experimental group 25, and the control group 14. It lasted for two weeks.
In the first week, all students were asked to respond to a short reading by writing a composition in 50 minutes. Both classes, forming the three treatment groups, wrote on different topics but the researcher did not indicate what the topics were. The compositions were collected and word-processed without changing them. Five categories of errors were corrected in the compositions of experimental groups a) verb errors, b) noun ending errors, c) article errors, d) wrong word, and e) sentence structure. Errors made by students in the first experimental group were underlined and coded by drawing a line under each error and writing a code to indicate the type of error made. Errors made by students in the second experimental group were only underlined but not coded. The control group received no feedback. All three groups received instruction sheets. Students in the first experimental group were given instructions explaining the meaning of the codes written on their compositions. Students in the experimental group were given prompts guiding them to study all the corrections made. Students in the control group were given instructions to re-read their compositions, look for errors, and correct them. All students were then given 20 minutes to complete the self-editing of their compositions. They had to write the corrections on the word-processed compositions which were then collected again.

The researchers marked the changes made by students and obtained a word count for each composition. The results showed that the experimental groups significantly outperformed the control group in the accuracy of writing but no difference was found between the two treatment groups. Ferris and Roberts (2001) concluded that both types of CF (more explicit and less explicit) helped students improve their writing accuracy.

Chandler (2003a) investigated the effect of CF on students’ grammar and vocabulary in writing. The learners were music major freshmen or sophomores at an American conservatory placed in two groups. The experimental group consisted of 15 students and the control group included 16. They were from different East Asian language backgrounds:
نام خانوادگی دانشجو: اکبری بیرگانی

نام: اعظم

عنوان پایان‌نامه:
تانایر بازخورده اصلاحلی نوشتاری متمرکز و غیرمتمرکز بر روی عملکرد نوشتار زبان آموزان سطح متوسط ایرانی

استاد رئیس: دکتر افسانه سعید اختر
استاد مشاور: دکتر رضا عبیدی

مقطع تحصیلی: کارشناسی ارشد
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تعداد صفحات: 77

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چکیده:
مطالعه‌ی حاضر به بررسی نقش بازخورده اصلاحلی نوشتاری متمرکز و غیرمتمرکز بر روی نوشتار زبان دوم زبان آموزان سطح متوسط ایرانی پرداخته است. بدین منظور، 60 نفر از زبان آموزان که انگلیسی را به عنوان یک زبان خارجه فرا می‌داشتند گیرنده بودند. گروه متمرکز و گروه غیرمتمرکز، بازخورده بر روی خطاهای مربوط به افعال ی فاعل و باقاعدگی زمان گذشته را دریافت کردند. گروه آزمایشی دوم، گروه متمرکز، بازخورده بر روی تمام انواع خطاهای را دریافت کردند. گروه کنترل همچنین بازخورده را دریافت نکردند. نتایج بدست آمده حاکی از آن بود که گروه متمرکز عملکردی بهتر نسبت به گروه غیرمتمرکز و گروه کنترل در آزمون‌های آنی و تعقیبی را داشتند. نتایج همچنین نشان داد که زبان آموزان بازخورده متمرکز را بهتر از بازخورده غیرمتمرکز ترجیح دادند.

کلیدواژه‌ها: بازخورده اصلاحلی نوشتاری، بازخورده متمرکز، بازخورده غیرمتمرکز، صحبت نوشتار
دانشکده ادبیات و علوم انسانی
گروه آموزشی زبان‌های خارجی

پایان نامه برای دریافت درجه کارشناسی ارشد
در رشته آموزش زبان انگلیسی

عنوان:
تأثیر بازخورده اصلاحی نوشتاری متمرکز و غیرمتمرکز بر روی عملکرد نوشتار زبان آموزان سطح متوسط ایرانی

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اسفندماه ۹۵