The Effects of Draft-Specific Scoring on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learner's Writing

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Abstract

Providing feedback is one of the crucial and significant aspects of writing and is considered as a complicated and time consuming task for teachers. However, due to instructional regulation and evaluation during a course, deviation from grading the learners' writing sample is inevitable. Thus, for overcoming the restrict attention to writing scores, a new grading technique called Draft-specific Scoring (DSS) was introduced to motivate students rather than demotivate them in scoring system. However, only few studies in the EFL context have employed DSS. Therefore the presents study aims to investigate the effectiveness of applying DSS on learner's writing samples. Fifty-five male and female learners were randomly assigned in two groups of experimental and control. While participants in the experimental group were required to write ten assignments using DSS and improve their grades, control group members did not receive any feedback and their scores were fixed. In order to analyze the data, pre-test, mid-test and post-test of the experimental and control groups were applied. The results indicated that there was a significant difference between pre-test and post-test of the experimental group; however, there were not any meaningful differences between pre-test and post-test of control group. Draft-Specific Scoring has some implications for both teachers and students. Teachers spend less time for grading and students focus on teacher's feedback in order to improve their scores.

Keywords: Draft-Specific Scoring, corrective feedback, writing.

1. Introduction

Writing is one of the most important skills in developing (EFL) English as a foreign language (Richards & Renandya, 2002). In this regard, providing appropriate writing sample for language learners is considered as an obstacle in developing their language skills. Two important aspects in composition writing are the way of scoring and proving feedback by teachers. Moreover, obtaining feedback is considerable steps in different writing samples. In this regard, few studies have investigated some traditional kinds of feedback including oral responses, teacher written comments or just grammar correction. However, learners have no role in correcting their writing samples and even they can not apply their existing knowledge in order to improve their writing samples.

In order to conquest such a condition, Nemati and Azizi (2013)conducted a study in which a new grading technique known as Draft-Specific Scoring were employed in order to focus on learners' awareness of teachers' effective feedback. In their study, learners' grammar complexity, fluency and accuracy of written text were investigated. Some learners do not have enough motivation in order to focus on teacher's feedback. and teachers try to provide just grading on learners' writing samples, while learners need effective feedback in order to enhance their motivation and achieve the ability to use their existing knowledge. In learners' writing samples, a new technique called Draft-Specific Scoring (DSS) is provided in which learners can promote their grade by using teachers' feedback, because learners at any time need their teacher's feedback (Lee, 2008).

2. Literature Review

Considering DSS as a mediator could provide some opportunities for learners in order to increase their scores in their writing samples. According to Leki (as cited in Kaplan , 2002, p. 60) writing is a text, that is composing, and related to

social construction which expanded the perspective by shifting focus from text, to process (i.e., composing), to sociopolitical context and imposition of discipline (i.e., social construction).

Language learners should concentrate not only on planning and organization, but also on spelling, punctuation, selecting vocabulary and so on. Writing gives learners more time to think for language processing while they are in involved in study. L2 learners' consider writing as a means of conveying ideas and knowledge during the course in spite of the most problematic skill (Harmer, 2008). Moreover, Rivers (1968) viewed writing as a means of emphasizing the acquisition of grammatical and words knowledge. Writing requirements is vital for language learners that are interested in English for specific purposes such as graduation in business courses, law, and natural science (Crossley, 2013). Chastain (1988) considered writing as a basic communication skill and writing may be focused on fundamental process in language learning. Silva and Matsuda (2001) discussed that writing provides a tangible and reliable data for analyzing language learning. Following Silvia & Matsuda (as cited in Schmitt, 2002, p.252) writing as one of the three modes of linguistic communication. According to Seow (as cited in Richards and Renandya, 2002) basic phase in the process of writing includes planning, drafting, revising and editing. Learners need to expand their ideas, clarify and reformulate it until some understandable writing is presented (Kuhi, Asl Rasuli & Deylami 2014). In order to fulfill the writing process drafting and revision discussed more by other scholars. Regarding drafting, Rose (1980) pointed out that drafting could be considered as a challenging factor for writers and learner's self-image and anxiety make the writing task astringent and leads to inhibition and finally, writers' block might happen. Revision is one of the most important aspects in the writing process. Learners often apply comments and suggestions that receive. Editing and proofreading (change and check the grammatical and stylistic trait) are crucial parts of revising process (Schmitt, 2002).

2.1 Feedback in Writing

One of the significant and crucial aspects of writing is providing feedback in which learning encouragement and consolidating is maintained (Hyland and Hyland, 2006).Providing feedback to students' writing sample is considered as a complex process. By providing feedback, learner's promotion can be concluded as a result of teacher's scaffolding in shaping different perspectives of leaner' confidence and pedagogical view. Hyland and Hyland (2006) believed that feedback practices, also, synthesized with peer feedback, writing workshops, oral-conferences or computer-delivered feedback besides teacher's feedbacks. More precisely teachers have central role in providing feedback for learners and the grades they get.

By providing correction, teachers point out that the marked sentence is incorrect, maybe the teacher writes the correction between the lines, in some cases the teacher may mention the type of the made error or ask students to correct their errors (Chastain, 1988). However, Chastain (1988) claimed that feedback system may fail to introduce the reasons of marking and correcting errors to learners' is to eliminate those errors for their future writing.

In order to specify whether error correction is operative on inoperative Ferris (1999) pointed out that we need to determine what kind of error correction is going to be used for correcting the writing samples. Teachers have various strategies to choose from in order to provide the learners with corrective feedback.

2.2 Focused Corrective Feedback V.S Unfocused Corrective Feedback

Ellis, Murkami, sheen and Takashima (2008) provided the distinction between focused and unfocused corrective feedback. Focused corrective feedback refers to a single type of error such as focus on the appropriate use of simple past while unfocused CF is defined as the consideration of normal practice in writing instruction that a teacher correct all or a range of leaner's error in a written text. Also Ellis (2009) claimed that unfocused corrective feedback can be defined as an extensive consideration of multiple errors. Lee (2003) conducted a study and explained why teachers were eager to apply unfocused corrective feedback or comprehensive marking. Lee pointed out that teachers believe when students are not able to correct their errors and they require their teacher for correction, teachers should provide a corrective feedback and teachers cannot avoid giving feedback.

2.3 Direct V.S Indirect Corrective Feedback

One of the corrective feedback strategies is the direct CF. In this case direct CF is defined as providing learners with the correct form of the errors (Ellis, 2009). Ferris (as cited in Ellis, 2009, p.99) introduced different forms of direct CF including crossing out an unnecessary word, phrase, inserting missing word/phrase/morpheme or writing correct form above or near the error made by learners. In addition, Bitchener (2008, p. 105) suggested other form of applying direct

corrective feedback including "the provision of grammar rules and examples at the end of a students, script with a reference back to places in the text where the error has occurred" regarding to written meta-linguistic description and in oral meta- linguistic explanation in the form of "a mini- lesson where the rules and examples are presented, practiced and discussed, one-on-one individual conferences between teacher and student or conferences between teacher and small groups of students." By applying direct corrective feedback, the learner with explicit guidance can correct the errors. Moreover, direct corrective feedback in lower level of proficiency can be more effective (Ellis, 2009) and sheen (2007) believed that direct CF leads to promotion in acquisition of grammar features.

In contrast, in indirect corrective feedback**,** learners have made errors without actually correcting their errors (Ellis, 2009). This kind of error correcting may happen in different forms including underlining or circling the error, recording in the margin the number of errors in a given line or using a code to show where the error has occurred and what type of error it is (Bitchener, 2008).

2.4   Explicit VS. Implicit Corrective Feedback

According to Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994), corrective feedback may happen explicitly or implicitly. In form of comprehension and checking, it occurs implicitly while, in case of providing the correct form by the teacher, or others, it may come by explanations that occur explicitly. Ellis (2003) stated that implicit corrective feedback required the learners to concentrate on the meaning. They proposed a regulatory scale that moves from implicit to explicit feedback. Here, the teacher encourages learners to self-correct, ask peers to help and finally teacher provides explicit feedback in form of explanation. Some explicit classifications were suggested by James (1998) including marking an error in the exact place in context and labeling it with some code such as VT or wrong verb tense. By using this kind of feedback learner have to be aware of what had happened somewhere. Regarding to explicit feedback writers have to find, recognize and correct the error. Teachers who use explicit feedback spend greater time for identifying the type of error and labeling errors (Ferris & Roberts, 2001).

Some scholars conducted studies on the effect of various kinds of feedback and they believed that all experimental groups which receive explicit corrective feedback had better result rather than those who received implicit corrective feedback (carol & Swain, 1983). In the following figure some meditational strategy suggested by Aljaafreh and Lantolf.

3.   Corrective Feedback Debates

Some scholars strongly believe that providing written corrective feedback could be practical. On the other hand, some of them claim that providing written corrective feedback is harmful and ineffective. To date many researches have conducted due to effectiveness or harmfulness of written corrective feedback in which investigation the conclusion is vague. Various results were obtained without any certainty. As the result of different findings, some discussions raised on effectiveness or ineffectiveness of written error correction between scholars and researchers.

Truscott (1996), Ferris (1999), Chandler (2003), and Bruton (2009) have conducted some studies based on effectiveness or ineffectiveness of correction feedback. They argued that learners pay no attention on teachers' correction feedback; it has just consumed energy and time.

Regards Truscott (1996), grammar correction has harmful effects. Ferris (1999) and Chandler (2003) investigated the importance of fluency and accuracy in learners' writing samples. Regarding fluency, significant changes were obtained at the end of instruction.

On the other hand, Ross and Shortreed (1986), who did have a measure of improving syntactic complexity, as a result of corrective feedback. Beside syntactic complexity, Truscott (2007) has made an attempt based on meta-analysis on corrective feedback, in which he claimed that provide shorter and simpler writing samples in order to correct the learners' writing.

As a result of providing an effective feedback Nemati & Aziz (2013) have conducted a study based on a new technique (DSS) for grading in learners' writing samples for high-intermediate levels. They concluded that, by applying (DSS), significant improving in accuracy and fluency of learners' writing samples has been achieved but there are no changes in grammar complexity in their writing.

4. Research Methods

4.1 Research Question

Based on what discussed above, the problem which is going to be examined in present study is to explore if Draft-Specific Scoring is effective in learners' writing assessment and instruction. In line with this problem this question will be answered:

Does implementing Draft-Specific Scoring have any significant effect on lower-intermediate Iranian EFL learners' writing skill?

4.2 Participants

Fifty-five lower-intermediate students aged 11-17 participated in the present study. Participants' level was based on institution placement test. All the participants were Ofogh and Fardaye Roshan language institute in Gorgan, Iran. They were divided in to an experimental and a control group. Participants in experimental group were 33 female students studying family and friends' book and other 33 participants for control group were 16 females and 17 males studying the same book. All the learners studied English as their second language and their native language was Persian.

4.3 Instruments

Family and Friends are six-level primary course books offering some skillful training program including strong focus on real speaking and writing output. Each level included four books printed in high quality and the content of these books are vivid. In the present study, 3 levels of these books were employed entitled Family and Friends 4, 5& 6 and they covered in 20 sessions. Each chapter provided new issue, alongside with grammatical rules and new vocabularies learners were introduced different topics for their assignment. Some topics including (1) myself, (2) endangered animal, (3) my favorite house, (4) transportation, (5) vacation, (6) your daily activity, (7) New Year Food, (8) important inventions, (9) my favorite singer and (10) school rules were covered. Students were asked to write ten writing samples in a whole course.

Writing scoring criteria in the present study, based on chandler's (2003) suggestion the categories of errors include singular–plural, word form, word choice, verb tense, add or omit a word, word order, incomplete sentence, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, article, meaning not clear, and run-on sentence. Moreover the researcher added verb voice (active versus passive) in addition to verb tense, word division in addition to spelling, and sentence structure in addition to run-on sentences and fragments were also included categories of idiom, awkward (not grammatically incorrect but quite infelicitous stylistically), subject–verb agreement, repetition or redundancy, and pronouns.

In addition, an *Attitude Questionnaire* was given to participants at the end of the course. This questionnaire, developed by Nemati and Azizi (2013), was a survey to find the learners' feeling and attitude toward the Draft-Specific Scoring as a new correcting feedback technique. The questionnaire contained twenty-eight items in a five-point Likert Scale format ranging from completely agree to completely disagree.

4.4 Procedure

Learners were taught some preliminaries of writing rules during the first two sessions. At first some standard ways of paragraph writing such as length of paragraph, appearance of written text, initiation, accomplishment and termination of text were given to students by teacher in 2 sessions. In order to prevent Hawthorne effect that causes improvement in individuals' behaviors due to observation, learners were kept unaware of the purposes of this study. In the third session, both groups were given 15 up to 20 minutes to write their writing samples. Topics of writing were chosen due to subject of each units in which learners receive much more information. During last 5minutes of each session some new topics were selected. Learners could write their writing sample in normal paper and there were not required to type them.

In the following sessions learners in both control and experimental groups prepared 10 writing samples based on some standards that they were taught in previous sessions. Participants' first writing samples were considered as a pre-test while mid-test was taken exactly five sessions before post-test. Each session teacher collected learners' writing samples, scored them and provided some indirect comments for all writing samples in experimental group in the following session. During the whole course 8 samples had the opportunity to be revised. Mid-test and post-test did not receive any revision due to time limitation.

In control group, also, 10 paragraph samples were collected. The first sample was considered as a pre-test while

the sample for mid-test was taken in five sessions before post-test and post-test was taken in the last session of the course. Each session teacher collected participants' samples. Teacher corrected their mistakes directly that these kinds of feedback differ from feedback in experimental group that they were not any direct comments. In experimental group participants revised writing samples themselves not the teacher.

Feedback notification is one of the major parts in Draft-Specific Scoring. Some problems including writing style, topic development, cohesion, coherence and topic relation could be explained and discussed with the whole class during the course. Some other problems such as grammatical mistakes, wrong spelling and inappropriate vocabulary in learners' writing samples were received indirect corrective feedback, for instance, by circling the mistakes but they were not corrected. For experimental group, the teacher did not provide explicit feedback for mistakes. Some important and necessary points were given in paper margins in order to attract learners' attention to their mistakes.

Another crucial aspect of Draft-Specific Scoring is the given scores to the participants' samples. For control group, scores were fixed and did not change after teacher's comments. On the other hand, having received an indirect feedback, the participants in experimental group made some revisions in the samples. After revising the paragraphs scores were changed and new scores were given to learner's wring samples. For example, a learner received 17 out of 20 in his/her first draft he/she applied teacher's feedback and revised mistakes and submitted new increased score. In this case, learners might increase his/her scores based on mistakes in which revision had made.

5. Data Analysis

Regarding the inter-rater reliability some writing samples were rated by two other raters that they have teaching experience. Addressing the research question, the researcher examines the data obtained through the writing samples in three time intervals (i.e., pre-test, mid-test and post-test) for intra-rater reliability and statistical significance. Then the qualitative analysis of the questionnaire will be presented.

5.1 Inter-Rater Reliability

Due to the fact that "rating on writing test in academic context varies considerably" (Hamp-Lyons, 2003, p. 174) inter-rater correlation coefficient was calculated for both group included. The result of this inter-rater reliability, as shown in table 1 ,and concluded that there is a high positive correlation between the rating of raters. In addition, there is no considerable difference between the scores of the three raters.

Table 1. Inter-rater Correlation of Raters

		N	correlation
Pair 1	rater 1 & rater 2	15	.69
Pair 2	rater 1 & rater 3	15	.74
Pair 3	rater 2 & rater 3	15	.83

5.2 Descriptive Statistics

The research question was to examine the existence of changes in learners' writing samples by using DSS. An investigation of the effect of Draft- Specific Scoring on learner' writing was done. For descriptive statistics SPSS software for the writing pre-test, mid-test and post-test in both experimental and control groups are detailed in Table 2. As the table 2 indicate , the mean scores of pre-test, mid-test and post-test in writing samples in experimental group, are,16.469,16.5 and17.3 respectively . The mean scores of pre-test, mid-test and post-test in writing samples in control group, are, 16.88, 16.32 and 16.00 respectively.

By looking at the table 2 it can be inferred that the experimental group scores increased near 0.5 point up to mid-test (from 16.469 to 16.5) while the control group showed less than one point reduction. (from 16.8875 to 16.3214). At the end of the course, the experimental groups' scores from pre-test up to post-test enhance near 1 point (from 16.46 to 17.3). By the time that the instruction was over, the control groups' descriptive statistics indicates decrease in scores (2.22 to 2.01).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Learner's Writing Scores in Pre-test, Mid-test and Post-test in Experimental Group

		Experimental	Control
Pre-test	Mean	16.469	16.887
	SD	2.078	2.229
Mid-test	Mean	16.5	16.321
	SD	1.688	2.551
Post-test	Mean	17.03	16.00
	SD	1.79	2.016
	N	32	23

In the next step, an independent t- test was run to investigate whether any significant differences might be observed between the experimental group and control group in pre-test and post-test. The results, as depicted in Table 3, revealed that there is no significant difference between experimental and control groups' scores on the pre-test writing (t (53) = .742, p= .174 > 0.05). In addition, no significant difference was found in the post-tests of the two groups (t(53) = .435, p= .051 > 0.05).

Table 3. Independent Samples Test for pre- and Post-tests of Experimental and Control Group

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Pre-Test	.110	.742	1.380	53	.174	.84063	.60917	-.38293	2.06418
Post -test	.618	.435	-1.997	53	.051	-1.03125	.51635	-2.06691	.00441

Next, to investigate the developmental changes in the experimental and control groups, some paired samples T-tests were run. As the results of the paired samples t-test in pre-test and mid-test of the experimental mid-test group, as presented in Table 4, indicated there was no significant difference in participants scores from pre- to mid-test, $t(31)$ = 1.56, p=.12> 0.05.

Table 4. Paired Sample T-tests for Pre-, Mid- and Post-test in Experimental Group

Pair	**Paired Differences**					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pre-mid	-453	1.64	290	-1.045	-13	-1.562	31	.128
Mid- post	-531	1.477	261	-1.064	-001	-2.035	31	.0.05
Pre-post	-984	2.040	.362	-1.722	-47	-2.722	31	.011

However, as shown in Table 3, there was a significant difference between mid- and post-test in experimental group, t (31) = 2.03, p=0.05 and there was a significant difference between pre and post-test, t (32) = 2.72, p= .01<0.05. On the other hand, the result of the t- test in pre- test and mid-test of control group, as demonstrated in Table 5, indicated that there was not significant differences in participants' scores $t(22)$ = .164, p=0.872 > 0.05. Moreover, the difference in mid-test and post- test of control group was not significant (t (22) = -1.72, p= .254 > 0.05).

Table 5. Paired Sample T-tests for Pre-, Mid- and Post-test in Experimental Group

Pair	**Paired Differences**					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pre-mid	- .217	6.374	1.239	-2.974	2.539	-.164	22	.872
Mid- post	-1.098	4.494	937	-3.041	-845	-1.172	22	.254
Pre-post	-1.315	5.643	1.177	-3.755	1.125	-1.118	22	.276

6. Discussion

Up to date, so many scholars have focused on the effectiveness of teacher feedback. However, regarding the effectiveness of teachers' feedback some scholars have debates and Truscott is one of the prominent of this area. Truscott (1996) published an article against grammar correction and he believed that grammar correction not only is not helpful but may also be harmful for language learners.

Other researchers such as chandler and Ferris argue for the practice. Truscott (2007) claimed that learners do not focus on teachers' feedback and often they are not motivated to do this. Even though, attend to teacher feedback may not grantee to apply the feedback for the next assignment. On the other hand, another crucial criterion in writing samples is grading learners' papers. Some teachers believed that they need to score learners' assignment due to obligation and summative nature of institution programs.

In this regard, one simple new technique entitled Draft-Specific Scoring was applied. The present study was an attempt to check the effect of a new technique in teacher's feedback and scoring called Draft-Specific Scoring on language learners' writing samples. Based on this technique learners are provided with corrective feedback while teacher use holistic scoring for grading in order to have the general evaluation of participants drafts. Teacher tried to apply indirect corrective feedback to attend learner's to their errors. Final scores, depend on the mean of all grades learners received for their writing samples during the course. However, learners' grades are not fixed. Participants in experimental group can enhance their scores by applying teacher feedback to their writings and there is an opportunity for them to revise their first and mid drafts. During the whole course, students are given two chances to receive teacher feedback and revise their drafts. Students' scores on the final draft will be applied to calculate their mean scores.

The research question checked the general enhancement of learners receiving DSS against those in control group as assessed without any corrective feedback. According to the results, the experimental group improved during the course and there was a significant difference between the two groups. Treatment group outperformed better than control group. Developing experimental group was considerable.

After applying Draft-Specific Scoring, learners' grades significantly improved at the end of the program. The concern was that the control group could not show that much improvement and had significant decline in some areas. It seems that corrective feedback can be effective in different situation; in some cases it helps learners improve their scores, in other cases it can have effect on learners' motivation toward writing due to Richards and Renandya (2002) consideration writing as the most difficult skill for L2 learners in order to develop and organize their ideas while in control group participants did not receive any corrective feedback in this case learners lack of motivation provide an unpleasant area to accomplishing the writing samples. Draft- Specific Scoring is a device that encourage learners to pay attention to teacher feedback, on the other hand, applying the teachers corrective feedback and revising the drafts, can help them to have better outcome.

For assessing the whole draft of participants chandler (2003) conducted a study and mentioned error categories including singular–plural, word form, word choice, verb tense, add or omit a word, word order, incomplete sentence, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, article, meaning not clear, and run-on sentence. In addition, she added verb voice (active versus passive) in addition to verb tense, word division in addition to spelling, and sentence structure in addition to run-on sentences and fragments. In the present study on the basis of chandler's study these classifications were taken in to account as rubrics for correcting participants papers.

The result of this study is consistent with Nemati and Azizi's (2013) study which proved the effectiveness of DSS as a technique to ensure that learners pay attention to teacher feedback by requiring them to revise their drafts. In DSS, learners consult with the teacher about his or her assumption. This is what can be called the negotiation of meaning. As such, it can be observed that DSS has the potential to incorporate all the necessary processes for helping learners develop their L2. In addition, they discussed that learning will not happen if there is not a form of noticing on the part of learning. In this case learners do not pay attention to the feedback teachers provided by teachers. As the result of applying DSS, learners are motivated enough to attend teachers feedback. In other words, teachers' efforts are more likely to lead in the desired outcome by using Draft-Specific Scoring technique.

7. Conclusion

The results of this investigation show that, by using DSS, there is no need to change the principles underlying the practice. Li and Bernard (2011) stated that scoring is a crucial part of providing feedback in writing samples. In addition, grading possibly provides a better situation for teachers to assess their students (Lee, 2009). On the other hand, teachers know that as soon as students receive their grade, they will ignore teacher feedback. Learners need scoring because

scores help them to evaluate themselves during the course (Lee, 2009). Draft-Specific Scoring provides a situation to practice while reduce the negative effects of scoring and cause improve weak points to strong one. By looking at the learners' grades, students lose their motivation toward writing samples; in this case, DSS motivate learners in order to come up the negative affects and they can apply teacher feedback in their future assignments. When, Draft- Specific Scoring was considered as an instruction, learners had more confident and had a positive attitude toward writing when, assessment accompany with DSS. In other word, learners require to pat attention to the input, after that provide out put based on what they had received before in other papers. By applying Draft-Specific Scoring, teacher can obtained desirable outcome. Moreover, the study presents those learners who received feedback in their assignments have improvement during the course. To sum up, this new technique can be completely helpful and can be considered within the writing instruction.

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