

**Responding to Student's Writing:  
EFL Students' Reactions to Teacher's Written/Oral  
Responses in One-Draft Only Composition Classrooms**

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**Abstract**

For the past several decades, research on L1 and L2 composition has emphasized the importance of the role of composition teachers in providing feedback on students' writings. This article reports on the use of providing different modes of feedback—written/oral—by the teacher and their impacts on Iranian EFL students' writing performances.

Sixty Iranian university students—10 males and 50 females, aged between 22 and 25 majoring in English Translation—were assigned to three homogeneous groups based on their scores on the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) and a sample paragraph on a given topic, emphasizing the expository genre by providing some reasons. They covered five topics in a sequence of ten written texts—before and after receiving feedback—over a 15-week period. Then, the researchers scored the papers analytically. The results revealed that: first, feedback had a significant effect on students' revising their first drafts and second, the students benefited from the two types of teacher-provided feedbacks almost equally. The findings also confirmed student-teacher conferences as an effective means of providing comments on students' writings, which in turn, could be employed to improve interaction and socialization among students and contribute to enhanced attitudes

towards learning and working with others especially in EFL settings.

**Keywords:** Composition, Feedback, Oral–feedback, Teacher– feedback, Writing skill, Written–feedback

### **1. Introduction**

A great deal of recent controversy about the teaching of writing has centered around the dichotomy of process and product approaches. Product-oriented approaches focus on the final product, the coherent, error-free text. Process approaches, on the other hand, focus on the steps involved in drafting and redrafting a piece of work. Proponents of process writing recognize and accept the reality that there will never be the perfect text, but that one can get closer to perfection through planning, reflecting on, discussing, and reworking successive drafts of text.

According to Badger and White (2000), process approaches see writing primarily as the exercise of linguistic skills, and writing development as an unconscious process which happens when teachers facilitate the exercise of writing skills. Teachers should be ever conscious of the need to supply ample quantities of positive responses to what the students have written. Raimes (1983) encourages teachers to look for positives as well as negatives and to “remember that when you or any other reader responds to a student’s piece of writing, your main job is not to pass judgements on its quality (unless you are an examiner and not a teacher), but to help the writer see what to do next” (pp. 142-143). In other words, time for the students to try out ideas and feedback on the content of what they write in their drafts are the two crucial supports that the teachers who use the process approach give their students.

### **2. Literature Review**

Feedback is a fundamental element of a process approach to writing. Keh (1990) defines feedback as “input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision” (p. 294). Through feedback, the writer learns where he/she has misled or confused the reader by not supplying enough

information, illogical organization, lack of development of ideas, or something like inappropriate word-choice or tense.

Muncie (2000) claims that feedback is vital to writing and in helping learners to improve their writing skills, and whatever form it takes, it can have the positive effect of producing in the learner a sense of reader awareness and of giving him/her an outside view of the text.

As process-oriented pedagogy has permeated L2 writing instruction over the past two decades, teachers have encouraged or required their students to write multiple drafts of their papers and explored various ways to provide feedback in order to help students revise as they move through the stages of the writing process (Ferris, 1997). Related to the importance of composition teachers' roles in providing feedback to their students, Reid (1993) notes that the ESL writing teacher "plays several different roles, among them coach, judge, facilitator, evaluator, interested reader, and copy editor" (Reid, 1993, cited in Ferris, 1995, pp. 33-34).

There are several studies demonstrating the efficacy of various kinds of error feedback from the teacher for improvement in the accuracy and fluency of L2 students' writings (Ferris, 1997; Ashwell, 2000; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Chandler, 2003). Gascoigne (2004) replicated a study by Ferris on the type and effect of feedback on advanced ESL composition revisions within a beginning L2 environment. Results of this investigation reveal that brief teacher commentary (4-5 words in length) in the form of imperatives tend to engender successful revisions, and by extension, that successful feedback type is dependent upon the composition environment.

Keh (1990) tends to write comments from three different roles or points of view. Firstly, she writes as a reader interacting with a writer. The next role is that of a writing teacher and the final role she plays is that of a grammarian. In her desire to improve her comment-writing and get feedback on how well she is communicating via comments, Keh further asks students how useful they find each category of comment including one-word comments, phrasal comments, sentence-level comments, paragraph comments, and questions (as comments). The results demonstrate that students

find one-word comments less helpful than comments with the most information (at least in terms of length).

Sheppard (1992) contrasts the effects of two distinct ways of responding to a student essay: discrete-item attention to form and holistic feedback on meaning. In examining the before-and after-essays of a linguistically diverse group of 26 college freshmen, it shows that the use of a holistic response is likely to increase a student's awareness of sentence boundaries more than the alternative. In other words, responding to content results in improvements in grammatical accuracy.

In a study by Sayyad Shirabad (1999), the impact of teacher's written comments on Iranian EFL students' revisions was examined. The project spanned about 16 weeks. In each session, students were asked to write a composition. After collecting the students' compositions, the teacher merely made comments on the compositions of the experimental group. The next session, the teacher returned the compositions of both groups and asked them to revise their compositions. The experimental group revised their compositions based on the written comments provided by the teacher on their papers, while the control group revised their papers with no comments. The analysis of the data indicated that the experimental group benefited from the treatment and the null hypothesis that the teacher's written comments have no impact on Iranian EFL students' revisions was rejected.

Tahririan and Mazdayasna (2001) examined the effectiveness of feedback in the development of EFL learners' writing ability. The most valuable feedback came from the teacher in the form of comments, suggestions, and conferences which were very significant because the students usually checked their second drafts before writing a third draft to avoid repeating the same errors. Reader feedback on the various drafts enhanced the writer's performances through the writing process on to the eventual final product. Finally, feedback promoted self-esteem and built important communication bridges between learners and the teacher who worked with them.

Where a response to more sophisticated difficulties is needed, Hyland (1990) has found that the technique of recorded

commentary is useful in encouraging students to respond to feedback. In this alternative to the painstaking writing of comments in the margins of more advanced students' assignments, remarks are recorded on a tape recorder. The recorded commentaries allow "more detailed, natural and informative remarks while increasing teacher-student rapport" (p. 282).

Kirschner (1991) also asserts that Audiotaped Feedback (ATF) is more productive than written marking, noting minimal difference between recording time and written marking time. Clark (1981) identifies teacher comments through ATF as being more sympathetic, as well as more complete and clear.

In a study conducted by Boswood and Dwyer (1996), a significant number of students who received audiotaped feedback mentioned the potential of ATF to improve their listening skills. Their investment in their writing is a strong incentive for them to listen, a motivation strengthened by the novelty of the medium itself, as well as the authentic need to gather information.

Hyland (1990) has used this technique in a variety of EFL/ESP situations with intermediate and advanced students and has been delighted with the results. He further adds that, "at first, the students are usually puzzled and skeptical; but the novelty value gets a few interested at the beginning, then the rest join in later after hearing good reports from the others" (p. 283).

Whatever a particular teacher's orientation(s) toward responding to student writing, it is clear that the teacher's response is important to both the instructor and the students. Research investigating various aspects of ESL writing instruction has demonstrated that students expect and value their teachers' feedback on their writing (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; McCurdy, 1992, cited in Ferris, 1995, p. 34; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994). Further, the amount of time and effort teachers spend in providing written and/or oral feedback to their students suggests that teachers themselves feel that such response is a critical part of their job as writing instructors.

In light of the above issues, the focus of the present study was to provide an opportunity for EFL students to learn through a process of discussion and negotiation and to determine which mode of teacher responses—written/oral—had any impact on Iranian EFL

learners' writing quality. More specifically, responding to EFL learners' writings was examined in terms of different modes of feedback provided by the teacher. In so doing, it provides insights into both what the teacher may do as he/she responds and how students appear to process their teacher's commentaries, leading to suggestions for improving various types of feedback, and helping students utilize them more effectively. The main research questions addressed in this study were:

1. Do EFL students incorporate their teacher comments when revising their drafts?
2. Which mode of teacher-provided feedbacks is more effective: written or oral?

In order to explore the above-mentioned research questions empirically, the following null hypotheses were stated:

1. EFL students do not incorporate comments made by their teacher when revising their drafts.
2. There is no significant difference between the two modes of teacher-provided feedback, that is, written and oral.

In the next section, first the research context and methodology will be described. And then, the research findings will be reported.

### **3. Methodology**

This part features the framework of the present study. The purpose of this study, as mentioned earlier, was to determine whether there was/was not any progress in EFL students' writing performances in a sequence of ten written texts over a 15-week semester after receiving teacher's written/oral feedbacks. To achieve such a goal, the researchers compared the students' rough and final drafts, before and after receiving feedback, on five topics analytically to track any improvement in the two experimental groups and assay the effects of the two types of feedback provided by the teacher.

#### **3.1. Subjects**

Primarily, a group of 98 EFL students, 46 males and 52 females, participated in this study. They were all Persian native speakers

aged between 22 and 25. They were English Translation majors taking Advanced Writing course at Islamic Azad University.

All participants took the pre-test phase prior to the main phase of the experiment. The pre-test consisted of two sub-parts: first, administering the standard English proficiency test—the Oxford Placement Test (OPT)—and second, writing a one-paragraph assignment on the given topic.

After the completion of the first part, 72 students of the whole population whose scores were within the Intermediate domain of the OPT placement chart, from upper intermediate to lower intermediate, were selected. Then in the second phase, based on the students' abilities in paragraph writing, 60 of them--10 males and 50 females--were chosen and considered to be the eligible members of the sample participating in this study.

The sixty participants were assigned to three homogeneous groups—two experimental and one control—based on the above-mentioned criteria. Each group consisted of 20 subjects. The participating groups were respectively as follows:

Group One: Teacher's Written Comments (TW)

Group Two: Teacher's Oral Comments (TO)

Group Three: Control Group (CG)

### **3.2. Instrumentation**

The instruments employed in this study were the standard proficiency test (OPT) version (1985), a sample paragraph on the given topic, a writing handout, a peer response sheet for a one-paragraph composition. Also, the students wrote on five topics all focusing on giving reasons using an expository genre. Analytic marking was also the other instrument used for scoring the students' papers. The next section discusses each in details.

The OPT came in two main parts, each of 100 multiple-choice items. The first part of the test was primarily a test of reading and listening skills, and the second part was a test of grammatical structures and vocabulary. The two parts of the test were, however, designed to be used together to produce a total score of 200. According to the test manual, teacher's introduction, facility values, administration indices, item and inter-test reliability, and concurrent

validity of this test have already been established by Cambridge University Examination Syndicate.

The students also wrote a one-paragraph composition on the topic “Which family member do you get along with best? Why?” by providing some reasons. The sample paragraph and the OPT together formed the first phase of this study.

The subjects, in addition to their coursebook *Paragraph Writing Simplified* written by Ostrom and Cook (1993), received a handout including the necessary information about paragraph development. The handout composed of seven units covering the topics pertinent to the advanced writing course, characteristics of a good paragraph, hints for revising the paragraphs, avoiding jargon, and the conventions of punctuations, collected by the researchers from different writing books written by Bailey and Powell (1989), Fitzgerald (1993), Messenger and Taylor (1989), and Nezhad Ansari (2002). The content validity of the handout was approved by three of the researchers’ colleagues who were all experienced writing instructors.

Providing feedback involves sharing one’s writing with a group of readers who offer feedback and suggestions for improvement. The researchers in this study provided the students with a list of characteristics that were important to their success on the paragraph writing assignment. To approach this task, separate worksheets with some focus questions were used. Petty (1998), advocating the idea of using worksheets, states that worksheets require students to develop carefully the skills of reading and attending to details. These worksheets offered a systematically organized format that the respondents could follow to analyze the written work of their classmates (see Appendix A for a sample peer response sheet).

The students were required to write ten paragraphs, five pairs, on each topic, one before receiving feedback and another, the revised version, after the feedback. The five topics that the students were asked to write on during the 15-week semester were chosen from the book *Talk Your Head off and Write Too* by West (1997).

To moderate the effect of text genre, in this study all the written paragraphs were of the same genre: exposition. This decision was made for two reasons. First, exposition is, according to Roebuck



(2001), a text type that corresponds well to the intermediate level proficiency of most composition students. And second, having to repeat this text type affords the students' continued and structured practice in a single task which allows them to take advantage of what they learn through each composition and apply it to the next one.

Concerning the issue of scoring the students' papers, the analytic approach to marking was applied in this study. In order to reduce scorer errors and contribute to the reliability and validity of the scores given to each paper, the researchers employed the Roebuck's (2001) analytical scoring rubrics for composition. The researchers modified Roebuck's rubric. Roebuck's scoring rubric sample had six parts, each consisting of a four-point scale for measuring the respondent's reaction to the composition. But, in the modified version of the same rubric, the six parts in the body of the rubric were reduced to the four main parts of vocabulary, grammar, organization, and mechanics used in any type of analytical scoring criteria grids and in the popular Likert scale of five-point format based on the pertinent literature in this domain. The content validity of this modified rubric was established on the basis of the existing literature, and three well-experienced instructors teaching writing courses confirmed its content. Its reliability was also determined based on a pilot study carried out by the researchers with a small number of similar subjects attending the main phase of the experiment (see Appendix B for the ease of comparison of the two scoring rubric samples).

### **3.3. Procedures**

#### **3.3.1. General Procedures for All Groups**

The general procedures taken into account in this study were divided into two main phases: first, the pre-test, and second, the main phase of the experiment. The first phase of this study included a pre-test which itself was made up of the OPT and a one-paragraph composition. The first phase was carried out by the researchers to divide the participants into three homogeneous groups and prepare them for the next phase of the study.

The second phase of this study utilized three sources of data based on the three groups carrying out the five tasks, i.e. writing and revising the five topics in the span of 15 sessions. Each task took three weeks to be done fully. In the first sessions of all the tasks, the student writers were required to write the first drafts during the class hour under the supervision of one of the researchers. Then, the papers were collected by the researcher. Depending on the group division, the researcher commented on the papers either in writing or orally.

In the next session, the researcher brought the papers and the comments—written/oral—back to the class, distributed them all among the student writers. Instead of simply handing back the first drafts and the feedbacks, the researcher set aside class time and encouraged the students to discuss the received comments with their respondent. This was due to the possibility that the student writer might misunderstand the comments that the respondent made. Alloting time for discussion would allow time for clarification and elaboration. In the third session, these comments were then used by the student writers to write the final drafts of their paragraphs and again give them back to the researcher.

Corrective feedback which is defined by Lightbown and Spada (2003) as “an indication to a learner that his/her use of the target language is incorrect” (pp. 172-173), in the case of the present study, involved coded error correction in which both the type and location of each error were indicated in writing on the paper, and the students were asked to reformulate their writings. This was normally done by underlining the mistakes and using symbols such as Sp=spelling error, T=tense, D=disagreement to guide the students to their errors and indicate the kind of mistakes made. In the case of the TO Group, the researcher numbered the errors’ locations on the paper and then recorded her voice comments on the tape.

In addition to the constructive criticism, the student writers were also told about what they had done best since they needed praise and encouragement to revise their papers. This was made by the feedback writer (respondent)—the researcher—on the worksheet attached to the paper. Question number nine on the worksheet asked

the respondent about the strong points of the paragraph written by the student writer, and question number ten asked the respondent to make some concrete suggestions to the writer to improve his/her paragraph. These worksheets were completed while the researcher was giving feedback on each student's work. This encouraged the respondent to write his/her commentaries so that the student writers had access to them during revisions. It should be pointed out that the first group receiving teacher's written comments—TW—also received the teacher's written answers to the worksheet attached to their papers. And the second group—TO—receiving teacher's oral comments received the oral answers to the worksheet on their tapes.

All the written drafts by the three groups before and after treatment, i.e. feedback, were scored by the two researchers separately. It is worth noting here that each of the two experimental groups received one type of feedback made by their teacher except the Control Group.

In order to improve the assessment of the students' drafts and to help neutralize the effects of any probable inconsistent marking behavior of the scorers, based on the claim that multiple marking improves the reliability of marking English essays (Weir, 1990), the researchers subjected each draft to more than one judgement using the analytic method of marking. In other words, the assessment of each draft was made by the two researchers marking independently. The total number of papers was 600 paragraphs written on the five topics by the members of the three participating groups before and after receiving feedback.

In order to find out whether the two raters were homogeneous regarding their rating the papers of the students, the inter-rater reliability was calculated and it turned out to be .916 which was significant at the probability level of .000.

### **3.3.2. Specific Procedures for Each Group**

In this section, the specific procedures implemented for each group are discussed in details based on the mode of feedback each group received during the study. It is noteworthy, here, to mention the point that one of the researchers took the responsibility of teaching the class and monitoring all the activities. Hence, from now on, the

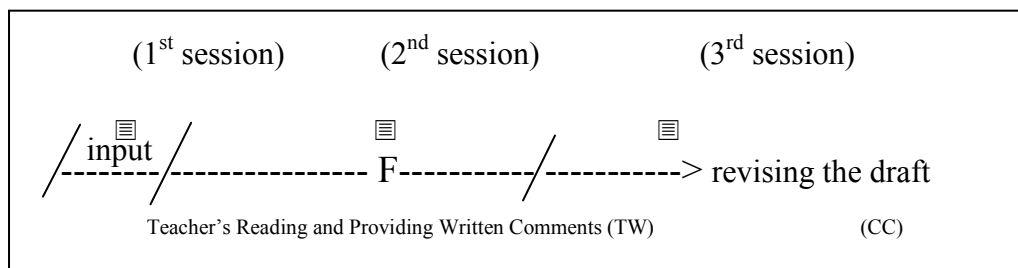
term teacher is used instead of the researcher in describing the procedures.

### 3.3.2.1. Group (1): Teacher's Written Comments (TW)

The teacher asked the students participating in this group to write a paragraph on the first topic given to them (the 1<sup>st</sup> session). After collecting the papers, the teacher wrote her comments on students' first drafts which were then given directly to the writers of the papers. The corrective feedback given by the teacher involved coded error correction in which both the type and location of each error were indicated in writing on the paper.

After receiving this written feedback, the students were given time to read the comments and ask any questions or seek clarification about what their teacher had written—student-teacher conferencing—(the 2<sup>nd</sup> session). The students were then asked to rewrite their paragraphs based on the received written comments from their teacher and bring them back to the class (the 3<sup>rd</sup> session). Then the papers were collected by the teacher and put in an archive for later analysis. The whole writing process consisting of drafting, commenting, and revising can be shown as the following in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** Implementation of TW on Students' Drafts of Writing



**F:** Feedback

☰: Draft

**TW:** Teacher's Written Comments

**CC:** Comments Corrections

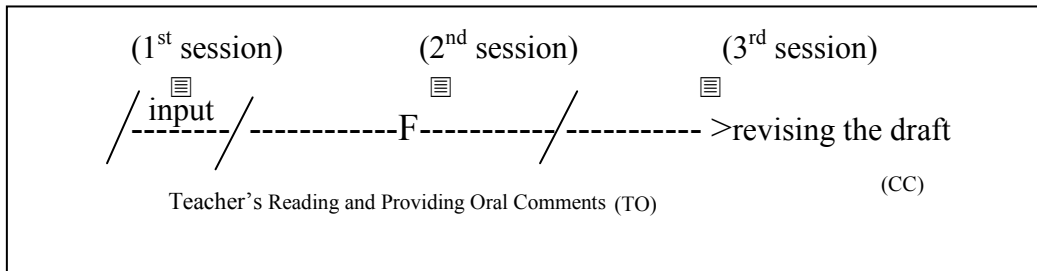
### 3.3.2.2. Group (2): Teacher's Oral Comments (TO)

This group like the first group—TW—wrote their paragraphs on a topic and gave them to the teacher (the 1<sup>st</sup> session). In this group, the teacher instead of providing written comments on each paper,

provided oral comments and recorded them on a tape for each student. When the teacher had something to say, she simply numbered the place on the paper, switched on the recorder, and talked. She also provided oral responses to the questions on the worksheet and recorded them for each student.

The next session when the class met, the teacher gave each paper plus the oral comments to the writer (the 2<sup>nd</sup> session). Each student was asked to carefully listen to the recorded commentaries as an out-of-class activity and in the case of any misunderstanding(s), they were allowed to have short conferences with their teacher before the third session of the class. Then, they had to use these comments to rewrite their papers and hand them in to the teacher (the 3<sup>rd</sup> session). The papers were then collected by the teacher. The writing procedure of this group can be illustrated in Figure 2.

**Figure 2:** Implementation of TO on Students' Drafts of Writing



**F:** Feedback  
☰: Draft

**TO:** Teacher's Oral Comments  
**CC:** Comments Corrections

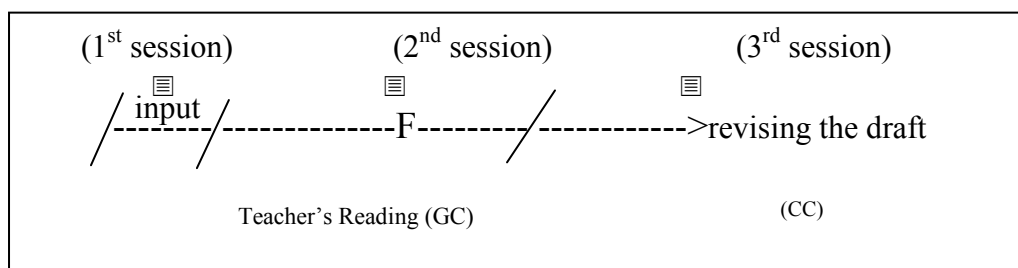
### 3.3.2.3. Group (3): Control Group (CG)

A distinct characteristic of the experimental method of research is to enable the researcher to make causal statements about variables (Farhady, 2006). To fulfill such an aim, a group of twenty students who received no treatment made up the Control Group in this study. This decision was made by the researchers in order to make sure that the changes in the behavior of the experimental groups did not occur in the behavior of the control group.

The students in the Control Group did not receive any type of feedbacks—written/oral—mentioned above. Instead, whenever the teacher found a special problem in the students' paragraphs, she explained it to the class, not individually, without using any type of special comments or marking the location and the type of the error(s). The presence of this group was just for the sake of comparison purposes, contribution to the internal validity of this research, and interpretation of findings with more confidence.

Figure 3 shows the writing procedure of this group.

**Figure 3:** Implementation of No Feedback on Students' Drafts of Writing



**F:** Feedback

☰: Draft

**GC:** General Comments

**CC:** Comments Corrections

#### 4. Results

As it was previously stated, this study was an attempt to find evidence to accept or reject the two null hypotheses formulated at the beginning. This section investigates the hypotheses empirically one by one and reports the findings.

##### 4.1. Investigation of the First Null Hypothesis

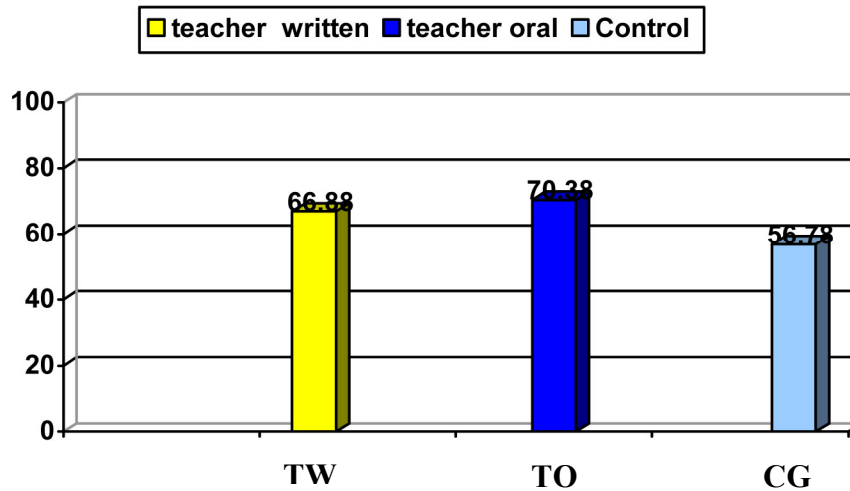
###### *Iranian EFL Students' Incorporation of Comments Provided by Their Teacher*

As stated earlier, the three homogeneous groups completed the five writing tasks in the span of a 15-week semester. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the students' final scores after receiving feedback. It should be noted that for this analysis the scores of each student on the five topics—after receiving feedback—were added together to obtain the total score for each student. Figure 1 shows the graphical representation of the scores.

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics of the Students’ Final Scores after Feedback

Group	N	Mean	SD	SEM	Min	Max
TW	20	66.88	8.4275	1.8844	49.00	81.50
TO	20	70.38	10.9459	2.4476	52.00	89.50
CG	20	56.78	11.4667	2.5640	37.50	80.00

**Note:**  
 TW: Teacher’s Written Comments      CG: Control Group  
 TO: Teacher’s Oral Comments



**Figure 1:** Graphical Representation of the Students’ Final Scores after Feedback

It can be seen in Table 1 that the means of the three groups are different. In order to find out whether the differences are statistically significant or not, a one-way ANOVA was applied to the results. Table 2 presents the results of the ANOVA.

**Table 2:** The Results of the One-way ANOVA on Students’ Final Scores after Feedback

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1994.800	2	997.400	9.283	.000
Within Groups	6124.113	57	107.441		
Total	8118.913	59			

Table 2 shows that the amount of F-observed is significant ( $F=9.283$ ,  $p=.000$ ). This means that the students do incorporate the comments provided by their teacher in revising their drafts. To find out the exact area(s) of significant difference(s), a Scheffe post hoc test was applied to the result. Table 3 shows the findings of this test.

**Table 3:** The Results of Scheffe on the Students' Final Scores after Feedback

Group	Groups	Mean Difference	Sig.
TW	TO	-3.5	.569
	CG	10.1*	.012
TO	TW	3.5	.569
	CG	13.6*	.001
CG	TW	-10.1*	.012
	TO	-13.6*	.001

**Note:**

TW: Teacher's Written Comments

TO: Teacher's Oral Comments

CG: Control Group

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

According to Table 3, the differences between the following groups were significant.

1. TW Group and Control Group
2. TO Group and Control Group

According to the above results, the first null hypothesis stating that the students do not incorporate their teacher comments in revising their drafts can be rejected.

#### 4.2. Investigation of the Second Null Hypothesis

*Comparison between Teacher-provided Feedback Modes: Written and Oral*

In this study, there were two modes of teacher-provided feedbacks, written and oral. In order to track any difference between these two modes, therefore, the students' scores in the two experimental groups were separately calculated.

According to Table 3, presented above, the difference between the two types of teacher-provided feedback is not statistically significant ( $p=.569$ ). Therefore, the second null hypothesis stating



that there is no significant difference between the two types of teacher-provided feedback, written and oral, is safely retained.

### **5. Discussion**

Of the two null hypotheses formulated at the beginning of this study and investigated empirically, one is statistically supported and the other rejected. Generally speaking, this study reveals that; first, feedback, in its general sense, affects students' writing performances which subsequently means that the students do incorporate suggestions made by their teacher while revising their drafts. In the process of editing the drafts, each feedback type has its own special effect on improving students' writing performances compared with that of the Control Group. In other words, the two experimental groups outperformed the Control Group in writing quality.

Clearly, as Hyland (1990) claims, "teacher-response is an essential step in the writing process" (p. 279). Diligent marking provides students with an idea of the criteria by which their work is judged, and should offer useful information that will help them avoid similar errors in the future.

Students can certainly learn from their mistakes, but this depends on adapting appropriate feedback methods that encourage them to return to their work after it has been assessed. In other words, providing feedback should always provide a platform from which students can reassess and redraft their works. In this way, drafting and revising become indispensable stages in the production of a piece of written work and spectacular improvements can be seen in their final drafts.

Regarding the second null hypothesis, the students benefited from different types of feedback—written and oral—provided by the teacher almost equally. This might be due to the high reliance the students have towards their teacher's comments, and most of the time they generally prefer to receive constructive comments from their teacher. Research investigating teacher feedback on students' writings has shown that students generally expect and value their teacher's feedback on their writings and that various types of teacher's comments lead to substantive students' revisions (Shin,

2002). This preference for the teacher's feedback is also consistent with the findings of other researchers (Ferris, 1995, 1997; Zhang, 1995; Nelson & Carson, 1998).

Focusing on the oral mode of feedback provided by the teacher, students benefited more from this mode (TO=70.38), in comparison to Control Group (56.78). This is in congruence with the idea proposed by Hyland (1990) that comments recorded on tape seem to be much more effective than arrows or symbols in highlighting the confusion arising from weak expression or poor organization. Explanations that would take far too long to write out, in his opinion, are easily provided, and spontaneous suggestions can be more constructive for correcting the errors than lengthy written criticisms. Zareh Ekbatani (2002) also states that using Audiotaped Feedback (ATF) in his writing classes not only led to a higher writing performance, but also enhanced the students' listening skills. He further suggests that additional research be carried out either to support or to challenge such an assumption. The findings of the present study—in the case of TO Group—when compared with the performance of Control Group does support the claims made by Hyland and Zareh Ekbatani. But, the performance of the same group—TO—when compared with that of the TW Group in this study revealed no significant difference between the two modes of teacher-provided comments.

The researchers also interviewed the participants in this study after completing the last task to investigate any change(s) in their attitudes towards this type of working with their teacher in writing classes. Some of the students' comments in their own words, written here without corrections, illustrate the ways they thought teacher's responses helped them learn from their reader's responses.

#### **5.1. Comments from TW Group:**

These are some selected samples from the TW Group who received written comments from their teacher.

“Direct teacher's observant is the most factor to reach a good writing progress. Teacher is the main character in this process who should motivate, force and admire students to become better and trust on the gain of this action.”

“Thanks a lot that you give me an opportunity to work on my writing and you really help me to increase writing skill.”

“The topics made me think deeply. Revising the composition caused me to understand mistakes and correct them.”

“The comments helped me so much to improve my writing and eliminate my wrong words and sentences. Teacher’s comment is useful, because when the comment is from the teacher, we are assured that the comments are correct and we can trust on them.”

### **5.2. Comments from TO Group:**

Here, there are some selected samples from the TO Group who received their teacher’s oral comments.

“I believe both oral and written comments are useful but oral comments are better because it makes the student to know his area of difficulty better and if they had any question they are able to ask teacher orally”.

“In writing courses, it’s a very good method to let students talk in the class. When students interact with teacher and share their comments—about grammatical points, planning of the paragraph and also the revise of it—it really helps them to be more professional in academic writing. I really enjoyed participating your experience. Now that it’s finished, I feel better about writing even in English.”

“In my opinion receiving oral comments from teacher is useful and by understanding our mistakes we can improve our writings.”

## **6. Conclusions**

If teaching were a one-way process, one would perfectly learn satisfactorily from books and videos, and teachers would be an unnecessary irritation. But, the fact is something else. The students communicate directly with the teacher, and the teacher checks the students’ works. These are both examples of feedback for the teacher. Without this feedback, the teacher cannot know whether or not understanding or learning has taken place. Since teaching is a two-way process, therefore, this feedback is also effective for the students if they can hear it, understand it, and most importantly, act upon it in order to improve what they do (Exley & Dennick, 2004). This provokes a social context for language learning and teaching.

In student-teacher conferences, students bring their papers to their teachers to discuss the problems. In this regard, White and Arndt (1991) argue that:

Conferencing can be carried out either during or after composition and it has the virtue of enabling the teacher to give individual attention to each student so that better advice can be provided than is generally possible with written remarks. Furthermore, conferencing is conducted on a face-to-face basis, so that students can respond to the reader's questions and comments as well as adding their own. The discussion can be one of joint negotiation of meaning, whereas written comments tend to be one-way. (p. 131)

There are several advantages of conferences between the student-writer and teacher-reader. One advantage mentioned is the interaction between the teacher and the student. As Keh (1990) claims, the teacher-reader is a live audience, and thus is able to ask for clarification, check the comprehensibility of oral comments made, help the writer sort through problems, and assist the student in decision-making.

Conferences, according to Shin (2003), also provide prospective teachers with little or no teaching experiences with an excellent opportunity to practice providing feedback on student writing, which is an integral part of their job as writing teachers. Furthermore, conferences enable teachers to assess how students react to their feedback, and how their comments help students revise their writing.

The results of this study uncovered the following:

1. The students incorporate comments made by their teacher when revising their drafts.
2. There is no statistically significant difference between the two modes of teacher-provided feedback, that is, written and oral.

The findings of this study also support the following contentions made by other researchers in ESL contexts. The contention by Youngs and Green (2001) stating that "in second language writing using the draft process for revising essays can be an effective tool

for learning to write more proficiently in another language” (p. 550). Han (2002) also believes that in communicative language teaching, corrective feedback remains an important vehicle for facilitating L2 knowledge construction and enhancing knowledge use. This study also confirms the speculation made by Beason (1993) that students improve their drafts upon receiving feedback (cited in Ferris, 1997, p. 316).

Thus, to avoid writing ineffectiveness or inefficiency, the first step is for the teacher to respond as a concerned reader to a writer—as a person, not a grammarian or grade-giver. Kehl (1970), for example, urges the teacher to communicate “in a distinctly human voice, with sincere respect for the writer as a person and a sincere interest in his improvement as a writer” (p. 976).

In pedagogical practice, viewing writing as a process-oriented activity encourages students to engage in multiple drafting and consider writing as occurring in stages that may differ to some extent among different writers. The findings of this study also help the syllabus designers and material developers write books which encourage students to engage in brainstorming activities, outlining, drafting, rewriting, and editing. This is in congruence with what Vygotsky (1978) argues that people learn by doing. Thus, it is important to give learners many opportunities to do and learn from their writings. This means that writers do not compose before they have a sense of purpose, i.e. why the writing is to be done, and a sense of audience, i.e. who it is being written for, the two most essential stages in the writing progress.

Therefore, it seems to be a good idea to use the results of this study and a series of similar confirming research studies to modify and improve teaching practices, in general, and writing instruction, in particular.

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### Appendix A: Sample Peer Response Sheet

#### Sample Peer Response Sheet for a One-Paragraph Composition

Respondent: ..... Author: .....  
 Practice No: ..... Date: .....

**Please answer the following questions, keeping in mind that the purpose of peer response is to help each other write better.**



1. What is the topic and purpose of this composition? Is it clear?
2. Does this composition seem to be well organized? Does it have a clear beginning and end?
3. Is there logic to the argument? Is it well supported with examples or pertinent details? On the other hand, are there irrelevant details?
4. Is this composition interesting? If not, what might the author add to make it more interesting?
5. Are there areas that needed more information?
6. Is the title appropriate to the composition?
7. Is this composition grammatically well-formed?
8. Is this composition well-organized with appropriate choice of vocabularies?
9. What are the strong points to this composition?
10. Make one or two concrete suggestions for improvement.

**After you have answered these questions, discuss your answers and the paragraph with the author. Remember that you are trying to help your classmates improve their writing, so it's important that they understand your answers. Please tell the author (student writer) what you think because it can help him/her write a really good paragraph.**

#### **Appendix B: The Two Analytic Scoring Rubric Samples**

##### **Analytic Scoring Rubric Developed by Roebuck (2001)**

<b>Paper addresses the major areas of the task</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Answers questions proposed in assignment</li> <li>▪ Includes all necessary information</li> <li>▪ Participates in planning activities and peer reviews</li> <li>▪ Completes components on time</li> </ul>				

**Vocabulary**

Comments for improvement: 1 2 3 4

- Accurate and appropriate, minor errors
- Usually accurate, occasional inaccuracies
- Not extensive enough, frequent inaccuracies, may use English
- Inadequate for the task, inaccurate

**Grammar**

Comments for improvement: 1 2 3 4

- May contain some minor errors that do not interfere with comprehensibility
- Some minor errors that may interfere with comprehensibility, some control of major patterns
- Many errors that interfere with comprehensibility, little control of major patterns
- Almost all grammatical patterns incorrect

**Message/Content**

Comments for improvement: 1 2 3 4

- Relevant, informative; adequate level of creativity and detail; well-organized, well written, logical
- Generally informative, may lack some creativity and detail
- Incomplete; lacks important information and creativity; poorly developed, lacks coherence
- Not informative; provides little or no information, lacking key components, organized incoherently

**Drafts and outline**

1 2 3 4

- Completes drafts/outlines and makes appropriate revisions

**Overall Assessment**

1 2 3 4

Comments:

**Roebuck's Analytic Scoring Rubric Modified by Maftoon & Rabiee  
(2006)**

**Scoring Rubric for Composition**

- I. VOCABULARY** 1 2 3 4 5  
 Comments for improvement:
- Completely accurate and appropriate, no errors
  - Usually accurate and appropriate, few minor errors
  - Frequently accurate, occasional inaccuracies
  - Not extensive enough, frequent inaccuracies, limited vocabulary
  - Completely inadequate and inaccurate, lots of major errors
- II. GRAMMAR** 1 2 3 4 5  
 Comments for improvement:
- Complete mastery over grammar, variety in sentence structure and lengths, no errors
  - May contain few errors that do not interfere with comprehensibility
  - Some minor errors that may interfere with comprehensibility, some control of major patterns
  - Many errors that interfere with comprehensibility, little control of major patterns
  - Almost all grammatical patterns incorrect, lots of major errors leading to complete incomprehensibility
- III. ORGANIZATION** 1 2 3 4 5  
 Comments for improvement:
- Relevant, fully informative; adequate level of creativity and detail; well-organized, logical
  - Generally informative, may lack some creativity and detail
  - Usually informative; occasional lapses in organization and/or coherence
  - Incomplete; lacks important information and creativity; poorly developed, lacks coherence
  - Not informative; provides little or no information, lacking key components, organized incoherently
- IV. MECHANICS** 1 2 3 4 5  
 Comments for improvement:
- Completely accurate and appropriate, no errors
  - Generally accurate, few minor errors
  - Usually accurate, frequent inaccuracies not interfering with comprehensibility
  - Usually inaccurate, interfering with comprehensibility
  - Completely inaccurate, lots of major errors
- 

**Note:**

- 5: No errors
- 4: 1-3 errors
- 3: 4-6 errors
- 2: 7-9 errors
- 1: 10 and over