

## Comparing the Effects of Direct and Indirect Feedback on Students' Writing Performance

Tibebu Bekele Waka\*, Getachew Seyoum Woldemariam, and Aberash Tibebu Wakjira

Jimma University, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Department of English Language and Literature

**Article History:** Received: September 17, 2021; Accepted: April 10, 2022; Published: June 7, 2022

**Abstract:** The impact of written feedback on students' ability to improve their writing accuracy has long been a point of debate. This study aimed to investigate the effects of direct and indirect feedback strategies on grade 11 EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students' paragraph writing performance at Abdisa Aga Secondary School in order to develop a feedback provision model. The study was a quasi-experiment in design. Three sections were selected randomly from the seven sections and then allocated as treatments and control group (Sections E and F, and Section G, respectively). A proficiency test (as a pre-test and post-test) was used to collect quantitative data, which was then analyzed using a two-tailed t-test. Furthermore, an Independent Sample t-test was used to compare the mean results of the proficiency test of the direct, indirect, and control groups, while a one-way ANOVA was used to compare the means of the direct, indirect, and control groups based on their writing performance. The finding shows that the students in the treatment groups outperformed the students in the control group in their writing performance. However, there is no significant mean difference between the direct and indirect groups' scores. The use of direct and indirect feedback as an intervention had a significant positive effect on writing. The results obtained from the proficiency tests indicate that experimental groups have improved aspects of writing. Thus, Abdisa Aga Secondary School teachers should apply direct and indirect feedback in the EFL classroom.

**Keywords:** Corrective feedback; Direct feedback; Indirect feedback; Writing performance

Licensed under a Creative Commons. Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.



## 1. Introduction

Providing comments on students' writing has been a key component/aspect of teaching writing for decades. According to Brookhart (2010), feedback is a crucial aspect of the writing process and it plays a central role in learning writing skills. Feedback is also an important component of the formative assessment process. Formative assessment gives information to teachers and students about how students are doing with classroom learning goals. As feedback is an important component of formative assessment, there are three features assumed to be useful for feedback advantages: 1) Through feedback, learners come to distinguish for themselves whether they are performing well or not (Mi, 2009; Littleton, 2011). 2) When they are not performing well, however, further feedback helps them take corrective action to improve their writing to improve it and reach an acceptable level of performance (Getchell, 2011). And 3) feedback is intended not only to help students monitor their progress, but also to encourage them to take another view and modify a message accordingly (Asiri, 1996).

Feedback is widely defined as the response that peers, teachers, readers, or computers provide to the learner of writing in the form of either oral or written feedback (Hyland, 2002). For instance, Ur (1991: 242) defines feedback in the setting of teaching as “the information that is given to the learner about his or her performance on a learning task, usually to improve this performance.”

Kroll (2003) points out that feedback on English as second language students' written works is an essential aspect of improving learners' ability in any language two writing course. Thus, the goal of feedback is to teach skills that will help students to improve their writing proficiency to the point where they recognize what is expected of them as writers. He further observes that learners should be encouraged to analyze and evaluate feedback themselves for it to be more effective. Similarly, Myles (2002) notes that feedback is of utmost importance to the writing process without individual attention and sufficient feedback on errors, improvement will not take place. In addition, it is the teacher's responsibility to help students develop strategies for self-correction and regulation.

Therefore, providing corrective feedback on students' writing products is one of the strategies that can be used in teaching writing as a second or foreign language. However, the effectiveness of corrective feedback on students' abilities to develop their writing accuracy has long been a subject of debate (Kim and Kim, 2011). Even though this topic is of interest to both writing practitioners and researchers, the debate about the role of corrective feedback in helping L2 writers to become successful in self-editing is far from being settled (Tootkaboni and Khatib, 2014).

Although a lot has been written on the subject of error correction in writing, research about its effectiveness is still questionable. Some studies pointed out the usefulness of error feedback (Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1995, 1997; Ferris and Helt, 2000; Lalande, 1982; Polio, Fleck, and Leder, 1998). However, there is also research that casts doubt on its benefits (Cohen, 1987; Truscott, 1996, 1999). In recent years, Truscott (1996, 1999) has argued, rather radically, that error correction is harmful and should be abandoned in the writing classroom. While Truscott's idea of correction-free instruction may be welcome news for writing teachers, in reality, it is difficult for teachers to give up the established practice of giving feedback on students' errors in writing. This is especially true in second or foreign language writing class, where students attach a great deal of importance to writing accuracy and are eager to obtain feedback on their errors (Cohen, 1987; Ferris and Roberts, 2001; Lee, 1997; Leki, 1991).

According to Zamel (1985), while providing feedback, teachers should avoid remarks on abstract norms and instead give text specific instructions and ideas. Furthermore, teachers should ask students whether they comprehend the feedback and ask them to point out any parts of it that they do not understand. Ferris (1997) stated that teachers must carefully analyze their feedback approaches and insure that their students comprehend them. They should also help students with review and ensure that they truly consider comments, whether from teachers or peers. According to Zarifi (2017), several Iranian students with little English competence found indirect feedback puzzling. For instance, if a verb was highlighted, they had no idea whether the error was in the verb tense, the subject verb

agreement, or whether the verb omitted a preposition. According to Mekala and Ponmani (2017), students prefer immediate feedback in order to write more fluidly and properly in the second or foreign language. In general, feedback must be unambiguous so that students understand what faults to correct and how to correct them.

Teachers have to use direct or indirect error correction or both strategies when providing feedback on their students' written texts. Direct error correction takes the form of crossing out some words or phrases, inserting missing words, or writing the correct form of errors (Lee, 2003; Ferris, 2006; Ellis, 2009; Bitchener and Ferris, 2012). Whereas indirect error correction takes the form of locating students' errors by underlining, highlighting, or circling, or by indicating in the margins the existence of an error or errors in that line of the text but without providing any correction (Ferris, 2002; Lee, 2003; Ellis, 2009). This implies that the only job of students when receiving direct feedback is to transcribe teachers' corrections into their subsequent texts; students who receive indirect feedback are required both to identify the type of error and to self-correct that error. Therefore, teachers have to point out ways of providing direct and indirect feedback to learners to achieve the requirements for improved quality of writing. Thus, it is vital to see if the use of direct feedback in combination with indirect feedback can improve students' writing performance in the Ethiopian secondary school context.

Feedback is one of the essential factors in improving learners' writing. It includes correcting the learners' errors and giving suggestions to shape their future writing. According to Nicol (2009), teachers provide feedback to support learners to reach a higher level of achievement in writing. This shows that every feedback intends to motivate learners to be successful in their essay writing. Teachers' feedback equips learners to correct errors by themselves, and teachers should make the language of feedback clear and simple for the learners (Atkins, Hailom and Nuru, 1996). However, learners perceive the teachers' written feedback in different ways. Some learners want positive feedback, but others consider it useless; some need response to their ideas, others demand to have all their errors marked; some exploit teachers' comments effectively and, others ignore them from their entire works (Richards, 2003).

A crucial element to "becoming an independent" writer is to give effective feedback (Lantolf, 2000: 34). Hattie and Timperley (2007) maintain that feedback exerts a significant influence on learning and achievement, and has considerable power to improve teaching and learning. Effective commentary on students' work is a key characteristic of quality teaching (Ramsden, 2003), and supervisors' constructive and detailed feedback on written work has been identified as a key characteristic of good research supervision (Engebretson *et al.*, 2008). Feedback on writing plays a crucial role in the enculturation of students into discipline-relevant literacy and epistemologies (Hyland, 2009). Kumar and Stracke (2007: 462) argue that "it is through written feedback that the supervisor communicates and provides advanced academic training, particularly in writing, to the supervisee." The central importance of feedback for student writers is therefore well established in the literature (Benesch, 2000; Hyland and Tse, 2004).

Most learners are not capable of write their essays free of grammatical and punctuation errors. Their essays are full of troubles with organization, paragraphing, details, and concluding ideas. Some of the possible causes for the inadequate abilities in writing essays could be the teachers' failure to properly provide feedback on essays and the learners' failure to successfully use the feedback as a result of the teachers' failure to provide the feedback in line with their students' preferences. Therefore, before providing feedback to students, teachers should identify their students' weaknesses in areas of feedback.

Ferris and Roberts (2001), in their study of 72 English as a Second Language students' ability to self-edit their written work, found that there were no significant differences between students who received direct or indirect feedback. The direct feedback group had all their errors underlined and coded, while the indirect feedback group had their errors underlined but without codes. These results were similar to the results of Robb, Ross, and Shortreed (1986) that Truscott (1996) used to support

his claim. However, in Ferris and Roberts (2001) research, a control group was included. The control group in such study received no feedback at all, and they were shown to have a significantly higher error rate than the other groups at the end of the study. Bitchener (2008) points out that the post-test in Ferris and Roberts's study involved only a revision of the first text. Bitchener claims that this study cannot be measured for learning, only for revision skills, and that the validity of the study is therefore limited to this.

The above studies briefly explain the types of CF and address the difference between direct and indirect CF and their influences on students' performance. The indirect method, according to Ferris (2006: 83), is more effective since it requires learners to engage in "directed learning" and "problem-solving." In contrast, direct CF is only desirable for the lower-level students of L2 writing due to their inadequate linguistic knowledge. As far as proficiency is concerned, it slows down the learning process and it is not useful for long-term learning and memory. Alternatively, simply identifying the error in the text could assist learners to seek the correct form.

In the present study, a comparative study is initiated because in the literature concerning types of feedback provision conflicting findings were obtained: Several research studies have recently been conducted to examine –the effectiveness of the different types of feedback on the L2 writers' adaption of teacher correction. It might exactly be the case in the distinction between direct and indirect CF. For example, Ellis (2009: 98) identified several primary strategies for giving feedback: direct and indirect CF, "metalinguistic" CF, "focused versus unfocused" CF, electronic CF and "reformulation".

The current study is different from the above-mentioned studies for they were conducted outside Ethiopia and did not focus on a comparative study of direct and indirect feedback strategies on students writing performance. In addition, the above studies were conducted at grammar level and sentence level that is to find out whether direct feedback has a positive effect on error correction or not.

Various local studies in the context of feedback provision have been conducted with several aims by different researchers. For instance, Kasaye (2006) studied oral feedback provision during plasma satellite lessons where teachers faced constraints of time and found that the teachers always provided correct responses. Besides, Temesgen (2008) conducted a study on the effect of peer feedback on improving students' writing. The findings of his research revealed that peer feedback improved the quality of writing. In addition, Zewdie (2015) conducted a study on the effect of teacher and peer feedback on students' paragraph writing performance. His finding indicates that peer feedback was more important than teacher feedback to enhance students' paragraph writing performance.

In various reasons, the current study differs from the previous local studies. First, it focused on the effects of written feedback techniques. Second, it provides empirical evidence of conflicting findings about the effect of direct or indirect feedback. As far as the knowledge of the researcher is concerned, no research has been conducted comparing the effects of direct and indirect feedback strategies on EFL students' writing performance in Ethiopia. In order to build a feedback provision model, this study was designed to explore the impacts of direct and indirect feedback mechanisms on grade 11 EFL students' paragraph writing ability at Abdisa Aga Secondary School. Thus, it attempted to answer the following research questions.

1. What is the effect of direct and indirect feedback on students' writing performance?
2. What aspects of writing are improved as a result of providing direct and indirect feedback on students' writing?

## **2. Research Methods**

### **2.1. Study Setting**

A convenient sampling technique was used to select Abdisa Aga Secondary School as a study setting. This type of sampling technique is the most common in L2 research, where "members of the target population are selected for the study if they meet certain practical criteria, such as geographical proximity, availability at a certain time, easy accessibility, or the willingness to volunteer" (Dornyei, 2007: 98-99). Dornyei (2007) points out that by using a homogenous sampling strategy, the researcher can select participants who share some important experience relevant to a given study. Dornyei (2007: 138) further explains, "A multiple or collective study, where there is less interest in a particular case, many cases are studied jointly to investigate a phenomenon or general condition. In this way, this strategy allows researchers to conduct an in-depth analysis to identify common patterns in a group with similar characteristics."

### **2.2. Design of the Study**

The effects of direct and indirect feedback on students' paragraph writing skills are investigated in this study. The study was primarily concerned with quantitative elements, and it utilized a quasi-experimental design to examine the effect of direct and indirect feedback on students' writing performance. Because participants in a quasi-experiment were assigned to groups at random, we must assess and implement a program in a natural school setting using selected groups (Creswell, 2014).

Participants in this study were assigned to groups at random, as indicated previously. This indicates that the groupings were randomly chosen from the seven sections, i.e., two experimental groups and one control group. As a result, quantitative data was gathered from these three complete groups. Therefore, the choice of quasi-experimental as a design for the quantitative element, which is the focus of this work, is suitable.

The study focused on quantitative aspects, and it employed a quasi-experimental design to see the effect of involving students in the written feedback process on their writing performance. The researcher, in quantitative research, collects numerical data that is statistically analyzed to describe "trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (Creswell, 2014: 155).

### **2.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Technique**

According to the information obtained from Abdisa Aga secondary school, the total number of students was 215 (134 males and 81 females). A random sampling technique was used to determine the sample size from the total population of 215 students. In grade eleven, 215 students were learning in seven classrooms as of the 2013 Ethiopian academic year. In each section, there were about 30 students. Of the 215 students, three sections, which each had 90 students, were selected using random sampling. That is, 60 students were assigned to the experimental groups; while 30 were assigned to the control groups. The target population of this study was grade 11 students at Abdisa Aga secondary school. There were seven sections of grade 11 students (11A–11G) at Abdisa Aga secondary school. Each section has about 30 students. The research focused on three sections of grade 11 students that were selected using a random sampling technique. Accordingly, sections E (N = 30) and F (N = 30) were assigned as the experimental groups, whereas section G (N = 30) was assigned as the control group. The treatment groups are treated separately as direct feedback group and indirect feedback group, while the control group writes paragraphs in the traditional manner.

The students in the three groups have similar educational backgrounds. They all learned under the same educational policy and the same curriculum, and they all learned English as a subject starting from grade one. They also took similar regional and national examinations (both in grade 8 and grade 10). Thus, it is possible to say that the students were comparable.

## 2.4. Data Collection Instrument

The data was gathered through paragraph writing tests (pre-test and post-test) for this study. That is, the researchers employed paragraph writing tests as a pre-test and a post-test to answer the research questions. Before the researcher gave the pre-test, the students gained definitions of the paragraph, types of paragraph and their elements. Secondly, both experimental groups and control groups wrote a paragraph as a pre-test on the topic of 'my future plans'. This helped the researcher to see the status of the students in three groups in writing performance. Students were expected to write paragraphs on four titles over the course of twelve weeks in their practice of writing, with the goal of receiving direct and indirect feedback on their writing. These are "The impact of HIV/AIDS", "The benefits of education", "The impact of abortion" and "The process of making coffee". These titles are found in the English grade 11 Ethiopian textbook. The interventions lasted three months or twelve weeks. The interventions were given by the researcher.

There are two basic ways to writing scores (paragraph or essay), according to the National Capital Language Resource Center (2003): holistic and analytical measures. In a standard holistic ranking, the script is read aloud and then evaluated on a rating scale, or a score heading, which specifies the score requirements, whereas in an analytical score, the scripts are graded on several writing criteria rather than a single score (Weigle, 2002). Therefore, the researchers chose the analytical scoring methodology over the holistic method for this analysis, because it has the following benefits. 1) It offers useful diagnostic knowledge (strengths and weaknesses) about student writing skills, focusing on a variety of aspects of writing performance; 2) It suggests that a student will have unequal skills growth in various areas of writing (i.e. organization, sentence-construction, ideas-generation, etc.) and thus it seems more fitting to use L2 writers, whose writing skills grow at different rates; and, third, it suggests that a student will have unequal 3) It is more accurate because of the many test elements and can provide evidence to draw logical inferences as to the writing skills of students; 4) The analytical score scheme is easier for students to recognize and apply the standards for evaluating written work; and 5) The analytical score heading is more fitting than the holistic score heading for various facets of the writing results.

Thus, based on what the scholars have explained above, the researcher uses five analytical features or aspects to compare or analyze the writing of students (written paragraph). This is to assist students in the treatment community use the headings to measure the work of students. The features included content, mechanics, vocabulary, organization and style, grammar and sentence skills. The researcher also used the checklist, which included the above sections, to score the problems in the paragraph, and also used two additional raters to achieve inter-rater reliability.

One rater was chosen from the teachers who have expertise in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). The selection was made primarily based totally on willingness. After the rater was selected, training was given on how to evaluate the paragraphs. The training was given for 2 hours in the morning and concentrated on subjects such as evaluation in general and writing assessment in particular. Training concentrated more extensively on the topic of analytic evaluation and the distinction between it and comprehensive assessment, and how to score paragraphs using the criteria included in the checklist.

After the two raters (i.e., the researcher and the selected teacher) rated the paragraphs, inter-rater or scorer reliability was checked by computing the Pearson correlation coefficient.

## 2.5. Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative data was collected through paragraph writing tests, and the data was entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24.0 for analysis. Accordingly, inter-rater or scorer reliability was checked by computing the Pearson correlation coefficient. The coefficient variation and homogeneity testing of variance was checked by Levene's test (if Sig.05, the variances of the data were equally homogenous). An independent sample T-test was also used. ANOVA was

then used to determine whether there were any significant differences between the mean error rates in the writing tasks and the revisions of the three groups (direct, indirect, and the control group).

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. T-test Result of Writing Proficiency

As stated above, data on writing proficiency was gathered using a series of paragraph writing tests. Students in three groups (i.e., direct, indirect, and control group) wrote paragraphs on my future plans. After this, a post-test was given to each student and rated by the raters. The researcher added the results together, computed the mean, and analyzed these mean results using the T-test on SPSS. Accordingly, the results of the Pearson correlation coefficient, independent sample T-test results, and their descriptive analysis output are indicated below.

Table 1. Result of the Pearson correlation coefficient

Correlations			
Result of the Pearson correlation coefficient		Student score after intervention by rater one	Student score after intervention by rater two
Student score after intervention by rater one	Pearson correlation	1	.986**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	80	80
Student score after intervention by rater two	Pearson correlation	.986**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	80	80

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As Table 1 indicates, the result was found to be significant at ( $r = 0.986$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This implies that there was a high correlation between rater 1 and rater 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics results of writing proficiency (post-test)

Group statistics					
Method	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coefficient Variation(CV)	Std. Error Mean
Direct	28	68.27	10.937	16.0%	2.067
Indirect	24	65.77	15.441	23.5%	3.152
Control	28	49.86	13.90	27.9%	2.626
Total	80				

As can be seen from Table 2, the number of students in the direct group was 28, the indirect group was 24, and the control group had 28 students. They were compared together on a paragraph writing test. However, one may possibly see differences among the 3 groups within the mean of students' scores. The CV of experimental groups is direct feedback is (16%) and indirect feedback is (23.5%), which are smaller than the control group, which is 27.9%. This indicates that the control group is more variable than the direct and indirect groups. This is the result of the intervention.

Table 3. The result of homogeneity testing of variance

Test of homogeneity of variances			
Levene statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2.674	2	77	.075

Table 3 shows that the outcome of homogeneity testing of variance was 0.075, which is more than .05 (the significance threshold of Levene's Test). As a result, there was sufficient evidence to conclude that the variance was homogeneous.

Table 4. Independent samples test results of writing proficiency (post-test)

Independent samples test							
t-test for Equality of Means							
T	Sig.	Df	Sig.(two tailed)	Mean difference (direct-indirect)	Std. error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
						Lower	Upper
.677	.053	51	.502	2.497	3.690	-5.313	9.908
Independent samples test							
t-test for Equality of Means							
T	Sig.	Df	Sig. (2-tailed) p-value	Mean difference (direct – control)	Std. error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
						Lower	Upper
7.808	.077	55	.000	18.411	2.358	-23.084	-13.738
Independent samples test							
t-test for Equality of Means							
T	Sig.	Df	Sig. (2-tailed) p-value	Mean difference (indirect - control)	Std. error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
						Lower	Upper
5.540	.294	51	.000	15.914	2.872	-21.611	-10.216

Key: T= Student t-test, df-degree of freedom, sig- significance

The independent t-test shows that there is no significant mean difference between the direct and indirect groups' scores. The reason is that the p-value is greater than five percent (i.e. 5.3%). The independent t-test shows there is a significant mean difference between the direct and control groups' scores. The reason is that the p-value is lower than five percent (i.e. 0.000). The independent t-test shows there is a significant mean difference between the indirect and control groups' scores. The reason is that the p-value is lower than five percent (i.e. 0.000). As can be seen from Table 4, the independent sample t-test result showed that there was a significant difference between the experimental groups and the control group as the result of the intervention (direct and indirect feedback).

Table 5. Statistical results of the three dependent variables in combination (post-test)

ANOVA					
	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	P-value.
Between groups	11002.782	2	5501.391	14.952	<0.0001
Within groups	28330.318	77	367.926		
Total	39333.100	79			

The results of ANOVA, as can be seen from Table 5, showed a mean difference among the three groups (direct, indirect, and control group). Accordingly, between groups, the result showed that there was a significant difference in mean score, but, within groups, the result showed that there was no significant difference in mean score.

Table 6. Aspects of students' writing improved as a result of direct and indirect feedback on writing performance

Groups	Aspects of writing	Mean score of pre-test	Mean score of post-test	Difference=Post-pre
Direct	Content	12.91	14.2	1.29
	Mechanics	14	18.77	4.77
	Vocabulary	9	11	2
	Organization and Style	12	14.7	2.7
	Grammar and Sentence Skills	7	9.6	2.6
	Mean total	54.91	68.27	13.36
Indirect	Content	12	13.6	1.6
	Mechanics	15	19	4
	Vocabulary	9.2	10.6	1.4
	Organization and Style	11.53	12.8	1.27
	Grammar and Sentence Skills	7.5	9.77	2.27
	Mean total	55.83	65.77	9.94

From Table 6, it can be seen that the students' scores for each aspect increased after the implementation of direct and indirect feedback. The difference in mean scores for the aspects of writing for the direct group is 13.36. Out of these, mechanics held the highest difference in mean scores (i.e., 4.77) while the lowest was 1.29.

The difference in mean scores for aspects of writing for the indirect group is 9.94. Out of these, mechanics covered the highest difference in mean scores (i.e., 4) while the lowest was 1.27.

The results obtained from the proficiency tests indicate that the students have improved aspects of writing like content, mechanics, vocabulary, organization and style, and grammar and sentence skills. The reason is that the direct and indirect groups scored better than the control group due to intervention.

#### 4. Discussions

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of direct and indirect feedback on students' paragraph writing performance. This part, therefore, deals with the explanation of the results of the study in response to the research questions. The discussion was supported by the results of the research conducted so far on the same issue.

Direct and indirect feedback was used as an intervention to see if it improved students' writing performance. After the intervention, the post test results of three groups (two treatment groups and the control group) were compared, and the results showed that the students in the treatment groups

outperformed the students in the control group as a result of the treatment given. The independent t-test also shows there is a significant mean difference between the direct and control groups' scores. The reason for this is that the p-value is less than 5% (i.e., 0.000). The CV of experimental groups is direct feedback (16%) and indirect feedback (23.5%), which are smaller than the control group, which is 27.9%. This indicates that the control group is more variable than the direct and indirect groups. This is the result of the intervention. The independent t-test also shows there is a significant mean difference between the indirect and the control groups' scores. The reason is that the p-value is lower than five percent (i.e. 0.000). This indicates that the use of direct and indirect feedback as an intervention had a significant positive effect on writing. Moreover, the independent t-test shows there is no significant mean difference between the direct and indirect groups' scores. The reason is that the p-value is greater than five percent (i.e. 5.3%) and this positively answered the research question stated for this purpose.

ANOVA was used to analyze data collected from post-test result of the three groups on writing performance. Accordingly, between groups, the result showed that there was a significant difference in mean score, but within groups, the result showed that there was no significant difference in mean score. This result is similar to that of the study conducted by Alharrasi (2019), which investigated the effectiveness of direct and indirect written corrective feedback on improving Omani EFL students' grammatical accuracy regarding two newly-learned linguistic structures: the comparative and prepositions of space. Besides, Nematzadeh and Siahpoosh (2017) investigated the effectiveness of direct correction and indirect (underlining) written correction in improving intermediate Iranian EFL learners' grammatical accuracy in revising English use of articles, prepositions, and verb tenses. They found that both types of written CF enhanced the learners' writing performance and there was no statistically significant difference between direct and indirect correction.

The difference in mean scores for the aspects of writing for the direct group is 13.36. Out of these, mechanics held the highest difference in mean scores (i.e., 4.77) while the lowest was 1.29. The difference in mean scores for aspects of writing for the indirect group is 9.94. Out of these, mechanics covered the highest difference in mean scores (i.e., 4) while the lowest was 1.27. The proficiency test results show that students have improved in areas such as content, coherence, vocabulary, organization and style, grammar, sentence skills, format and mechanics. The reason is that the direct and indirect groups scored better than the control group. Students, especially English as a second language ESL /EFL students, pay greater attention to formal mistakes than to problems relating to content or structure, according to studies that look into what they pay attention to while rewriting their writing. When ESL/EFL students are asked what components of instructor feedback are most valuable to them, 88 percent of the responses are tied to input on the form, according to Morra and Asis (2009). Other researchers came to similar conclusions (e.g., Cohen, 1987; Ferris, 1995; Silver and Lee, 2007; Treglia, 2009).

## 5. Conclusions

The result showed that the students in both treatment groups outperformed the students in the control group on their writing. The independent t-test shows there is a significant mean difference between the direct and control groups' scores. The reason is that the p-value is lower than five percent (i.e. 0.000). The CV of experimental groups is direct feedback (16%) and indirect feedback (23.5%), which are smaller than the control group, which is 27.9%. This indicates that the control group is more variable than the direct and indirect groups. This is the result of the intervention. The independent t-test also shows there is a significant mean difference between the indirect and control groups' scores. The reason for this is that the p-value is less than 5% (i.e., 0.000). This indicates that the use of direct and indirect feedback as an intervention had a significant positive effect on writing. Moreover, the independent t-test shows there is no significant mean difference between the direct and indirect groups' scores. The reason is that the p-value is greater than five percent (i.e. 5.3%) and this

shows that the difference in writing proficiency between the experiment groups and the control group was statistically significant.

ANOVA was used to analyze the data obtained from the evaluation of the post-test writings of the three groups. This, as explained earlier, was to see if the results of the dependent variable in groups would statistically be significant as a result of the treatment (direct and indirect feedback). Accordingly, the ANOVA result showed that the dependent variable in the group was found to be statistically significant ( $p\text{-value} < .05$ ).

The difference in mean scores for the aspects of writing for the direct group is 13.36. Out of these, mechanics held the highest difference in mean scores (i.e., 4.77) while the lowest was 1.29. The difference in mean scores for aspects of writing for the indirect group is 9.94. Out of these, mechanics covered the highest difference in mean scores (i.e., 4) while the lowest was 1.27. The results obtained from the proficiency test indicate that the students have improved in aspects of writing like content, mechanics, vocabulary, organization, style, and grammar and sentence skills. The reason is that the direct and indirect groups scored better than the control group.

Here, the control group's CV is larger, which indicates that it is more variable than the direct and indirect groups, which are the experimental groups. This shows that the intervention had an effect on this group.

## 6. Recommendations

Several actions are required from teachers, students, and curriculum designers based on the findings presented in this paper. First, in the context of EFL, direct and indirect feedback is important, especially for beginner writers. Thus, EFL teachers have to be patient and willing to sacrifice in order to provide effective direct and indirect feedback. Second, teachers in writing classes are required to motivate students, provide adequate practice, and provide treatment that is followed by direct and indirect feedback with clear comments. Moreover, EFL teachers should encourage, assist, and make their students aware of the benefits of direct and indirect feedback. Finally, curriculum designers should incorporate direct and indirect feedback sessions into learners' textbooks, and the ministry of education should provide teachers with training on how to handle learners' errors and other pedagogical issues related to feedback provision.

## 7. Acknowledgements

First of all, we would like to thank the Oromia Education Bureau and Girar Jarso Woreda Education Office for sponsoring this study. Secondly, our sincere gratitude goes to the grade 11 students of Abdisa Secondary School for their cooperation. Last but not least, we also thank Mr. Haile Girma (Assistant Professor) and Mr. Nigusu Ayele (Mensur) for guiding us and providing us with the necessary materials on quantitative data analysis.

## 8. References

- Alharrasi, S. N. M. 2019. *The effectiveness of direct and indirect written corrective feedback in improving the grammatical accuracy of Omani EFL learners*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation. The University of Sterling.
- Asiri, I. 1996. *University EFL teachers' written feedback on compositions and students' reactions*. Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Essex.
- Atkins, J. Hailom, B. and Nuru, M. 1996. *Skill development methodology (part 2)*. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press.
- Benesch, S. 2000. *Critical English for academic purposes: Theory, politics and practice*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.
- Bitchener, J. 2008. Evidence in support of written corrective feedback. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 17 (2): 102-118.

- Bitchener, J. and Ferris, D. 2012. *Written corrective feedback in second language acquisition and writing*. New York: Routledge.
- Brookhart, S.M. 2010. *How to give effective feedback to your students. Instructional supervision and evaluation: The teaching process*. PP. 10-18.
- Cohen, A. D. 1987a. *Student processing of feedback on their compositions*. In: Wenden, A. L. and Rubin, J. (Eds.), *Learner strategies in language learning*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall International. PP. 57–69.
- Creswell, J. W. 2014. *A concise introduction to mixed methods research*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Dornyei, Z. 2007. *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods*. London. Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R. 2009. A typology of written corrective feedback types. *ELT Journal*, 63 (2): 97-107.
- Engebretson, K. Smith, K. McLaughlin, D. Seibold, C. Teret, G. and Ryan, E. 2008. The changing reality of research education in Australia and implications for supervision: A review of the literature. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 13 (1): 1-15.
- Fathman, A. and Whalley, E. 1990. Teacher response to student writing: Focus on form versus content. In: Kroll, B. (Ed.), *Second Language Writing: Research insights for the classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. PP. 178–190.
- Ferris, D. 1995. Student reaction to teacher response in multi-draft composition classrooms. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29 (1): 33-53.
- Ferris, D. R. 1997. The influence of teacher commentary on student revision. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31 (2): 315–339.
- Ferris, D. R. 2002. *Treatment of error in second language student writing*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Ferris, D. R. 2006. *Does error feedback help student writers? New evidence on the short- and long-term effects of written error correction*. In: Hyland, K. and Hyland, F. (eds.). PP. 81–104.
- Ferris, D. R. and Helt, M. 2000. Was Truscott right? New evidence on the effects of error correction in L2 writing classes. Paper presented at Proceedings of the American Association of Applied Linguistics Conference, Vancouver, B.C., March 11–14, 2000.
- Ferris, D. R. and Roberts, B. 2001. Error feedback in L2 writing classes: How explicit does it need to be? *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 10 (1) 161–184.
- Getchell, X. 2011. Reflective thinking on communicative teaching in writing. *US-China Education Review*, 4 (5): 19-25.
- Hattie, J. and Timperley, H. 2007. The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77 (1): 81-112.
- Hyland, K. 2002. *Second language writing*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hyland, K. 2009. *Academic discourse*. London: Continuum.
- Hyland, K. and Tse, P. 2004. Metadiscourse in academic writing: A reappraisal. *Applied Linguistics*, 25 (2): 156-177.
- Kasaye, Gutama. 2006. *An exploration of the provision of oral feedback during satellite plasma lesson*. Unpublished MA thesis: Addis Ababa University.
- Kim, K. and Kim, K. 2011. Grammar correction in a second language (L2) process-oriented composition classroom. *National Teacher Education Journal*, 4 (4): 5-16.
- Kroll, B. 2003. *Exploring the dynamics of second language writing*. New York. Cup.
- Kumar, V. and Stracke, E. 2007. An analysis of written feedback on a PhD thesis. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 12 (4): 461-470.
- Lalande, J. F., Jr. 1982. Reducing composition errors: An experiment. *Modern Language Journal*, 66 (2): 140–149.
- Lantolf, J. 2000. *Sociocultural theory and second language learning*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Lee, I. 1997. ESL learners' performance in error correction in writing. *System*, 25 (4): 465–477.

- Lee, I. 2003. How do Hong Kong English teachers correct errors in writing? *Education Journal*, 31(1): 153-169.
- Leki, I. 1991. The preference of ESL students for error correction in college-level writing classes. *Foreign Language Annals*, 24 (3): 203–218.
- Littleton, Ch. 2011. *The role of feedback in two fan fiction writing groups*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation. Indiana: University of Pennsylvania.
- Mekala, S. and Ponmani, M. 2017. The impact of direct written corrective feedback on low proficiency ESL learners' writing ability. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, 11 (4): 23–54.
- Mi, L. 2009. Adopting varied feedback modes in the EFL writing class. *US-China Foreign Language*, 7 (1): 60-63.
- Morra, M. and Asis, M. 2009. The effect of audio and written teacher responses on EFL student revision. *Journal of College Reading and Learning*, 39 (2): 68-82.
- Myles, J. 2002. Second language writing and research: The writing process and error analysis in student texts. *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language Journal*, 6 (2):1-19.
- National Capital Language Resource Center (NCLRC). 2003. *Elementary immersion learning strategies resource guide*. Washington, DC: National Capital Language Resource Center.
- Nematzadeh, F. and Siahpoosh, H. 2017. The effect of teacher direct and indirect feedback on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' written performance. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Learning*, 3 (5): 110-116.
- Nicol, D. 2009. *Good designs for writing feedback for students*. Newyork: Houghton Mifflim.
- Polio, C., Fleck, C. and Leder, N. 1998. "If I only had more time": ESL learners' changes in linguistic accuracy on essay revisions. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 7 (3): 43–68.
- Ramsden, P. 2003. *Learning to teach in higher education*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London: Routledge Falmer. PP. 88-189.
- Richards, J. 2003. *Second language writing*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Robb, T., Ross, S. and Shortreed, I. 1986. Salience of feedback on error and its effect on EFL writing quality. *TESOL Quarterly*, 20 (1): 83–93.
- Silver, R. and Lee, S. 2007. What does it take to make a change? Teacher feedback and student's revisions. *English Teaching Practice and Critique*, 6 (1): 25-49.
- Temesgen, Chimbsa. 2008. *The effect of feedback on students' writing skills*. Adama University: Unpublished MA Thesis.
- Tootkaboni, A. A. and Khatib, M. 2014. The efficacy of various kinds of error feedback on improving accuracy of EFL learners. *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching and Learning Language and Literature*, 7 (3): 30-46.
- Treglia, M. 2009. Teacher-written commentary in college writing composition: How does it impact student revisions? *Composition Studies*, 37 (1): 67-86.
- Truscott, J. 1996. The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes. *Language Learning*, 46 (2): 327-369.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1999. The case for "the case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes": A response to Ferris. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 8 (2): 111–122.
- Ur, P. 1991. *A course in language teaching, practice and theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weigle, S. C. 2002. *Assessing writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zamel, V. 1985. Responding to student writing. *TESOL Quarterly*, 19 (1): 79–98.
- Zarifi, A. 2017. Iranian EFL learners' reaction to teacher's written corrective feedback. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 6 (3): 254–261.
- Zewdie, Tura. 2015. *Research on the effect of teacher and peer feedback on students' paragraph writing performances and attitudes at Arba Minch College of Teachers' Education*. Arba Minch University: Unpublished MA Thesis.

