The Effect of Focused VS. Unfocused Written Teacher Correction on Grammatical Accuracy of Iranian Medical Students

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ABSTRACT

The present study was an attempt to investigate the effect of focused vs. unfocused written teacher correction on grammatical accuracy of Iranian medical students. Medical science students in the Iranian universities study three 2-credit EMS courses irrespective of their background in English before entering the university, but they seem to be weak in terms of grammatical accuracy in all their second language skills. To do the study, a quasi-experimental research was designed in which 120 homogeneous male and female learners studying medicine and related majors in Qeshm Medical Science University were selected following their performance in a piloted version of language proficiency test of PET. The participants were divided into three almost equal groups shaping the experimental group A (Focused Written Teacher Correction) (FWTC), the experimental Group B (Unfocused Written Teacher Correction) (UFWTC), and the control group (C) for the purpose of the study. The participants received a validated researcher-made pretest of grammar prior to the treatment and then each group received its specific training for 13 weeks. Following the treatment, the learners received a validated posttest of grammar and the data gathered was analyzed via SPSS version 21. The results revealed that both types of teacher correction positively affected grammatical accuracy of the learners, however, the learners in FWTC group showed more significant improvement in their grammatical accuracy when compared with the learners in UFWTC group and the control group. The present findings signify the importance of paying attention to FWTC in the ESP and EMS courses and can shed lights on the dark sides of teaching applied grammar to the EFL learners to help them produce grammatically accurate utterances.

Keywords: EFL learners, FWTC group, UFWTC group

INTRODUCTION

The question of whether teachers should provide feedback on grammar in the writing assignments of English as a second/foreign language students (ESL/EFL), and if so how, has been a matter of considerable debate in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). Some researchers (e.g., Kepner, 1991; Sheppard, 1992; Truscott, 2007) claim that grammar corrections do not have a positive effect on the development of L2 accuracy. According to the most extreme views, such as those of Krashen (1982) and Truscott (2007), corrective feedback (CF), which indicates to learners that there is an error in their linguistic output, is seen as not only ineffective but also potentially harmful. In contrast, other researchers (Bitchener&Knoch, 2008;Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 2002; Sheen, 2007), claim that CF is of value in promoting greater grammatical accuracy. What makes this issue even more controversial is the variety of strategies for carrying out written CF (e.g., direct, indirect, meta-linguistic CF). It is not just a question of whether CF is effective but also which type is effective .In this respect, focused vs. unfocused written teacher correction and the effect they

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might leave on the grammatical accuracy of second language learners is considered significant.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

One of the significant components of accuracy in the second language performance is appropriate use of "grammar". Although fluency in the second language is a must and is to some extent supported by "grammar knowledge", this is accuracy which is mostly bound to correct grammar. Yet, one of the problems of Iranian learners of English is lack of employing "correct grammar".

Most recent written Corrective Feedback (CF) studies have utilized the methodology employed in SLA research. They have demonstrated that focused CF is facilitative of learning and thus have provided evidence to refute the critics of written CF (see Bitchener, 2008; Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, 2007). More specifically, the findings of Sheen's (2007) study suggest that written CF works when it is intensive and concentrated on a specific linguistic problem. Her study, in effect, constituted a challenge to the traditional, unfocused approach to correcting written errors in students' writing.

Sheen (2007) noted that L2 writing research investigating CF has suffered from a number of methodological limitations (e.g., the lack of a control group as in Lalande, 1982; Robb et al., 1986). For this reason, research findings to date have failed to provide clear evidence that written CF helps learners improve linguistic accuracy over time. Thus, in her study, she examined the effects of direct, focused written CF using a methodology adopted from SLA, which attempted to avoid the kinds of methodological problems evident in many written CF studies.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To date, the written CF literature is replete with studies that have attempted to shed light on the key question researchers and ESL writing teachers have asked, whether written CF help ESL writers to improve their written accuracy in writing over time. But few have attempted to study the possible effect of CF on grammatical accuracy of second language learners and particularly of Iranian EFL students. Thus this study has the objective of elaborating on the issue by finding the effect of both types corrective feedback, i.e. focused and unfocused, by teachers on the grammatical accuracy of Iranian medical students. The researchers also aimed to compare the effects of these two types of CF on the grammatical accuracy of medical students as a representative sample of higher population of Iranian EFL learners.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Concerning the problem stated and in line with fulfilling the purpose of this study the following questions were raised:

RQ1. *Does focused written teacher correction have any effect on grammatical accuracy of Iranian medical students?*

RQ2. *Does unfocused written teacher correction have any effect on grammatical accuracy of Iranian medical students?*

RQ3. *Do focused and unfocused written teacher corrections have equal effect on grammatical accuracy of Iranian medical students?*

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Research Hypotheses

In order to investigate the above-mentioned research questions, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

RH01. *Focused written teacher correction does not have any significant effect on grammatical accuracy of Iranian medical students.*

RH02.*Unfocused written teacher correction does not have any significant effect on grammatical accuracy of Iranian medical students.*

RH03.*Focusedwritten teacher correction has more effect than unfocused written teacher correction on grammatical accuracy of Iranian medical students.*

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study has tried to shed light on teaching grammar in the EFL context of Iran. Most of the course books used in the Iranian context generally have a "focus on forms" approach to teaching grammar and rely on classroom activities derived from GTM. Learning from one's own performances and behaviors, which is supported by the new learning/ teaching theories such as "noticing theory"(Schmidt,1990) and "consciousness raising" (Ellis, 1994), as well as "output theory" (Swain &Lapkin, 1995), could be more closely studied via the application of "focused written teacher correction" in teaching language skills and components. The present study, however, has focused on the "grammar knowledge" of Iranian academic learners, medical science students, and its improvement via using "focused written teacher correction" and comparing it with unfocused written teacher correction.

The outcomes of the study could be helpful in designing materials for the EFL learners in the Iranian context. The results also could be employed in teaching meaningful grammar to the Iranian EFL learners. The results of the study might be intriguing enough to pave the way for researchers to investigate the application of focused/unfocused written teacher correction on other areas and components of the English language pedagogy.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The present section of the article deals with the most significant concepts pertained to the effects of focused vs. unfocused written teacher correction on grammatical accuracy of the second language learners. There has been a debate in the literature that has questioned the value of CF. Truscott (1996, p. 328) argued that CF has no place in the second language (L2) writing class due to the following four reasons: '(a) Research evidence shows it to be ineffective; (b) this lack of effectiveness is exactly what should be expected given the correction process and the nature of language learning; (c) grammar correction has significantly harmful effects; and (d) the various arguments for continuing it all lack merit.' What follows is an analytic review of the research conducted in the area aforementioned.

Nature of Corrective Feedback

In essence, Truscott was claiming that there was no research evidence to support the idea that CF can assist with the acquisition of particular forms. Ferris (1999) agreed with some of these assertions yet argued for the continued use of CF as students desire to be corrected, subject teachers demand accuracy in students' writing and L2 learners need to develop that ability to self-edit their errors. She called for additional research into CF to which Truscott (1999) agreed. After five years of additional research, however, Ferris (2004) acknowledged that the research base had failed to provide any conclusive evidence as to the benefits of CF.

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These claims about acquisition and CF eventually drew the attention of second language acquisition (SLA) specialists who began to investigate CF utilizing theories and concepts from SLA and the more established findings of oral CF. Notably, Ellis, et al (2008) separated CF into focused and unfocused types. By far the majority of research has been unfocused (e.g. Lalande, 1982; Robb, Ross &Shortreed, 1986; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 2004). More recently those researchers from an SLA background have begun using focused CF (e.g. Bitchener, Young & Cameron, 2005; Sheen, 2007; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008).

The written CF literature (e.g., Ashwell, 2000; Chandler, 2003; Ferris and Hedgcock, 2005; Polio et al., 1998) indicates that teachers and L2 writing researchers have favored the use of indirect feedback (i.e., where errors are indicated and students are asked to self-correct) and placed the emphasis on the revision process. Relatively few studies have investigated direct feedback (i.e., where learners are given the corrections) by comparing an experimental and a control group that did not receive any feedback. Moreover until recently, few studies had examined the effect of focused written CF (i.e., CF directed at a single linguistic feature).

Sheen (2007) noted that L2 writing research investigating CF has suffered from a number of methodological limitations (e.g., the lack of a control group as in Lalande, 1982; Robb et al., 1986). For this reason, research findings to date have failed to provide clear evidence that written CF helps learners improve linguistic accuracy over time. Thus, in her study, she examined the effects of direct, focused written CF using a methodology adopted from SLA, which attempted to avoid the kinds of methodological problems evident in many written CF studies. Drawing on Sheen's study of the effects of focused written CF on the acquisition of English articles, the study reported in this article aims to investigate the relative efficacy of focused and unfocused written CF on the accurate use of grammatical forms by adult ESL learners. Also, to address the claims of Truscott (1996, 2004), it examines whether writing practice without CF leads to gains in grammatical accuracy.

Research Evidence for and against CF

Several researchers have argued that written CF does not have a positive effect on the development of students' L2 writing accuracy (e.g., Kepner, 1991; Truscott, 2007; Sheppard, 1992). Apart from some problematic methodological issues in these two studies (for a discussion of these see DeKeyser, 1993 and Sheen, 2007), both studies investigated the effect of unfocused CF on the written accuracy of ESL learners in that the correction in their studies targeted a range of errors. Critics of written CF make their case based on the traditional unfocused approach to correcting students' written work. However, where grammatical accuracy is concerned, the utility of written CF might eventually lie in the intensity and focus of the correction teachers provide to L2 writers.

Previous written CF research has had only limited success in showing that written CF can have a positive effect on the development of L2 writing accuracy (e.g., Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Ferris and Roberts, 2001; Robb et al., 1986). The fact that these studies measured the effectiveness of written CF in different ways makes it very difficult to compare results and reach any conclusions. Some researchers evaluated students' improvement in accuracy based on an analysis of the revisions which the students made in their subsequent drafts (e.g., Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Ferris and Roberts, 2001); others looked at improvement in new pieces of writing (e.g., Chandler, 2003; Robb et al., 1986).

However, more recently, a few studies have examined the value of written CF by measuring progress in new pieces of writing (e.g., Bitchener et al., 2005; Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, 2007). Bitchener et al. (2005), for example, investigated the extent to which different types of CF

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(direct CF with and without oral conferencing) influence the accuracy in new pieces of writing. Bitchener et al. limited the provision of written CF to only errors involving past tense, definite article ('the'), and prepositions. They found that both types of direct CF had a significant impact on accuracy in new pieces of writing but that this was only evident for the definite article and past tense. The same type of feedback did not have a significant positive effect on accurate use of prepositions. The authors explained their findings by referring to Ferris's (2002) argument that if a grammatical feature is clearly rule-based (e.g., definite article and past-tense), it is more treatable than when a feature is item-based (as with many prepositions). Consequently, the authors suggested that direct CF might be effective in treating some but not all errors, and that teachers should be selective with regard to the errors they address in students' writing.

The present study sets out to address this issue by taking care to distinguish the implementation of focused and unfocused CF more clearly than in Ellis et al. and also by systematically investigating whether the focused approach benefits ESL learners and whether it proves more effective than an unfocused approach. To that end, this study examines (1) the effects of the focused and unfocused approaches on both a single grammatical target (articles) and on a broader range of grammatical structures (Ashwell, 2000) (i.e., articles, copula 'be', regular past tense, irregular past tense and preposition), and (2) the extent to which writing practice without any CF can lead to gains in accuracy over time.

It should be noted that unlike the focused approach, the unfocused approach constitutes a relatively unsystematic way of correcting errors. Given that corrective feedback in the classroom is often provided in an ad-hoc way (i.e., sporadically and often inconsistently on a range of grammatical features) there is an obvious need to investigate unfocused CF. Also, it is important to investigate whether focused CF has an effect not only on the structure targeted by the CF but on other structures as it is possible that such CF might sensitize students to the need to pay attention to grammatical accuracy and, therefore, have a general effect on their writing

Since rarely studies reported in the literature have contrasted focused and unfocused direct CF for the English article system, there is obviously a need for further research into these types of CF with alternate forms.

METHOD

Participants

A group of 180 male and female learners studying medicine and related majors in Qeshm Medical Science University were given a piloted version of language proficiency test of PET. 120 male and female learners whose scores fell 1SD below and above the mean were selected to be divided into three groups of 38, 40, and 42 shaping the experimental groups A and B, and the control group respectively for the purpose of the study. To facilitate the process of training the students were placed in the groups of 18 to 21.

Instrumentation

To collect the desired data, the following instruments were employed:

1. A Preliminary English Test (PET) as a language proficiency test was given to the participants to homogenize the prospective students for the study. Though the test was a standardized one, a pilot study was also run to ensure the reliability of the test prior to the main administration.

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2. A researcher-made pretest of grammar which was piloted and validated through item analysis and modification procedures. The test was developed and piloted in a group of 30 students with similar characteristics to those of the main participants of the study and modified. An item analysis also was run to see which items require modification. Content validity of the test was also examined through the professional view of the experts and university professors. The results of the test showed that the learners enjoyed homogeneity in their grammatical knowledge and structural accuracy before the treatment.
3. Another researcher-made grammar test as a posttest. This test considered the materials presented in the course book of the learners covered throughout the semester. The test was developed, piloted, and validated and then it was administered.

Procedure

A group of 180 learners studying Medicine or related fields in Qeshm University were given a piloted version of language proficiency test of PET. One hundred and twenty male and female learners whose scores were 1SD below and above the mean were selected and divided into two equal groups shaping the experimental groups A and B, and the control group for the purpose of the study. All groups received a piloted pretest of grammar (or the grammar part of PET test) prior to the treatment phase. The experimental group A received focused written teacher correction during the treatment phase while the experimental group B received unfocused written teacher correction and the control group dealt with the conventional classroom norms. Following one semester of training and treatment (13 weeks, per week 2 hours), the learners received the piloted version of the researcher-made grammar posttest. The data gathered were put into statistical analysis and reported.

DATA ANALYSIS

Testing Assumptions

The present data were analyzed through the parametric test of one-way ANOVA based on four main assumptions of interval data, independence of subjects, normality, and homogeneity of variances. The first two assumptions do not have a statistical test. The researchers confirm that the data are measured on an interval scale and the subjects performed on the tests independently. The normality assumption was met. As displayed in Table 1 the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their respective standard errors were within the ranges of +/- 1.96.

The assumption of homogeneity of variances will be discussed when reporting the results of the one-way ANOVA.

Table 1. Testing Normality Assumption

Group		*N*	*Skewness*		*Ratio*	*Kurtosis*		*Ratio*
		Statistic	*Statistic*	*Std. Error*		*Statistic*	*Std. Error*	
	PET	38	-.398	.383	-1.039	-.324	.750	-0.432
FWRTC	Pretest	38	-.191	.383	-0.499	-.549	.750	-0.732
	Posttest	38	.150	.383	0.392	-.429	.750	-0.572

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Table 1 (Part-II) . Testing Normality Assumption

Group		N	Skewness		Ratio	Kurtosis		Ratio
		Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error		Statistic	Std. Error	
UFWRTC	PET	40	-.233	.374	-0.623	-.344	.733	-0.469
	Pretest	40	-.167	.374	-0.447	-.894	.733	-1.220
	Posttest	40	-.369	.374	-0.987	-1.234	.733	-1.683
Control	PET	42	-.006	.365	-0.016	-.562	.717	-0.784
	Pretest	42	.062	.365	0.170	-.025	.717	-0.035
	Posttest	42	.016	.365	0.044	.283	.717	0.395

PET

The PET test of general language proficiency was administered to 180 students. Based on the mean of 53.28 and standard deviation of 15 (Table 2), 150 subjects were selected for the main study.

Table. Descriptive Statistics; PET

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	KR-21
PET	180	53.28	15	225.01	.90

The parametric one-way analysis of variances was run to compare the three groups' means on the PET test in order to prove that they enjoyed the same level of general language proficiency prior to the main study. Before discussing the results it should be mentioned that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met (Levene's F (2, 147) = .30, P > .05) (Table 3).

Table 3. Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

F	df1	df2	Sig.
.302	2	117	.740

Table 4 displays the descriptive statistics for the focused and unfocused written teacher correction and control groups on the PET test. The focused (M = 5474, SD = 10.45), unfocused (M = 56.15, SD = 11.22) and control (M = 57.74, SD = 11.73) groups showed almost the same means on the PET test.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics, PET Test by Groups

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
FWRTC	38	54.74	10.451	1.695	51.30	58.17
UFWRTC	40	56.15	11.224	1.775	52.56	59.74
Control	42	57.74	11.739	1.811	54.08	61.40
Total	120	56.26	11.146	1.018	54.24	58.27

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Based on the results displayed in Table 4 (F (2, 117) = .72, P > .05, ω^2 = .005, representing a weak effect size) it was concluded that there were not significant differences between the means of the three groups on the PET test. Thus it can be claimed that they were homogenous in terms of their general language proficiency prior to the main study.

Table 5. One-Way ANOVA, PET by Groups

	Sum of Squares	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
Between Groups	180.404	2	90.202	.723	.488
Within Groups	14604.587	117	124.826		
Total	14784.992	119			

Pretest of Grammatical Accuracy

The parametric one-way analysis of variances was run to compare the three groups' means on the pretest of grammatical accuracy in order to prove that they enjoyed the same level of knowledge on grammatical accuracy prior to the main study. Before discussing the results it should be mentioned that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met (Levene's F (2, 117) = .90, P > .05) (Table6).

Table 6. Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

F	*df1*	*df2*	*Sig.*
.905	2	117	.407

Table 7 displays the descriptive statistics for the focused and unfocused written teacher correction and control groups on the pretest of grammatical accuracy. The focused (M = 15.97, SD = 2.48), unfocused (M = 15.13, SD = 3.01) and control (M = 15.71, SD = 2.61) groups showed almost the same means on the pretest of grammatical accuracy.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics, Pretest of Grammatical Accuracy by Groups

	N	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*	*Std. Error*	*95% Confidence Interval for Mean*	
					Lower Bound	*Upper Bound*
FWRTC	38	15.97	2.488	.404	15.16	16.79
UFWRTC	40	15.13	3.014	.477	14.16	16.09
Control	42	15.71	2.616	.404	14.90	16.53
Total	120	15.60	2.718	.248	15.11	16.09

Based on the results displayed in Table 7 (F (2, 117) = 1.008, P > .05, ω^2 = .001, representing a weak effect size) it was concluded that there were not significant differences between the means of the three groups on the pretest of grammatical accuracy. Thus it can be claimed that

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they were homogenous in terms of their knowledge on grammatical accuracy prior to the main study.

Table 8. One-Way ANOVA, Pretest of Grammatical Accuracy by Groups

	Sum of Squares	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
Between Groups	14.880	2	7.440	1.008	.368
Within Groups	863.920	117	7.384		
Total	878.800	119			

Analyses of Research Hypotheses

The parametric one-way analysis of variances was run to compare the three groups' means on the posttest of grammatical accuracy in order to probe the research question posed in this study. It was followed by post-hoc Scheffe's test to compare the groups two by two in order to probe the minor research questions. Before discussing the results it should be mentioned that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met (Levene's F (2, 117) = 2.40, P > .05) (Table 9).

Table 9. Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

F	*df1*	*df2*	*Sig.*
2.404	2	117	.095

Table 10 displays the descriptive statistics for the focused and unfocused written teacher correction and control groups on the posttest of grammatical accuracy. The focused group (M = 20.92, SD = 2.85) showed a higher mean on the posttest of grammatical accuracy than the unfocused (M = 17.35, SD = 3.08) and control (M = 18.62, SD = 2.44) groups.

Table 10. Descriptive Statistics, Posttest of Grammatical Accuracy by Groups

	N	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*	*Std. Error*	*95% Confidence Interval for Mean*	
					Lower Bound	*Upper Bound*
FWRTC	38	20.92	2.851	.463	19.98	21.86
UFWRTC	40	17.35	3.085	.488	16.36	18.34
Control	42	18.62	2.449	.378	17.86	19.38
Total	120	18.93	3.139	.287	18.36	19.49

Based on the results displayed in Table 11 (F (2, 117) = 16.22, P < .05, ω^2 = .20, representing a large effect size) it was concluded that there were significant differences between the means of the three groups on the posttest of grammatical accuracy. Thus it was claimed that types of written teacher error correction had a significant effect on the improvement of the grammatical accuracy of Iranian EFL learners.

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Table 11. One-Way ANOVA, Posttest of Grammatical Accuracy by Groups

	Sum of Squares	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
Between Groups	254.557	2	127.279	16.226	.000
Within Groups	917.768	117	7.844		
Total	1172.325	119			

Although the F-value of 16.22 indicated significant differences between the three groups' means on the posttest of grammatical accuracy, the post-hoc Scheffe's test should be run to compare the groups two by two in order to probe the three research questions in detail. The results of this test are displayed in Table 12 below:

Table 12. Post-Hoc Scheffe's Tests, Posttest of Grammatical Accuracy by Groups

(I) Group	*(J) Group*	*Mean Difference (I-J)*	*Std. Error*	*Sig.*	*95% Confidence Interval*	
					Lower Bound	*Upper Bound*
FWRTC	UFWRTC	3.571*	.634	.000	2.00	5.14
	Control	2.302*	.627	.002	.75	3.86
Control	UFWRTC	1.269	.619	.127	-.27	2.80

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Considering the results of the Scheffe's testit was concluded that:

A. The focused group (M = 20.92) outperformed the control group on the posttest grammatical accuracy (MD = 2.30, P < .05). Thus the first null-hypothesis as 'focused written teacher correction does not have any effect on grammatical accuracy of Iranian medical students' was rejected. The focused group significantly outperformed the control group on the posttest of grammatical accuracy.

B. There was not any significant difference between unfocused (M = 17.35) and control (M = 18.62) groups on the posttest grammatical accuracy (MD = 1.26, P > .05). Thus the second null-hypothesis as 'unfocused written teacher correction does not have any effect on grammatical accuracy of Iranian medical students' was supported.

C. The focused group (M = 20.92) outperformed the unfocused group on the posttest grammatical accuracy (MD = 3.57, P < .05).The focused group significantly outperformed the unfocused group on the posttest of grammatical accuracy.

Construct Validity

A factor analysis was run to probe the construct validity of the tests employed in this study. The SPSS extracted one factor which accounted for 62.42 percent of the total variance.

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Table 13. Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.023	67.426	67.426	2.023	67.426	67.426
2	.878	29.254	96.679			
3	.100	3.321	100.000			

Table 14 displays the factor loadings of the tests under the extracted factor.

Table 14. Component Matrix

	Component
	1
Posttest	.953
Pretest	.948
PET	.465

KR-21Reliability Indices

Table 15 displays the KR-21reliability indices for the grammatical accuracy tests.

Table 15. KR-21 Reliability Indices

	N	Mean	Variance	KR-21
Pretest	120	15.60	7.385	.56
Posttest	120	18.93	9.851	.94

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results revealed that both types of teacher correction positively affected grammatical accuracy of the learners, however, the learners in FWTC group showed more significant improvement in their grammatical accuracy ability when compared with the learners in UFWTC group. This finding is in line with the findings of previous research in the related literature: Sheen's (2007) study suggests that written CF works well when it is intensive and concentrated on a specific linguistic problem. Other researchers (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 2002; Sheen, 2007) also claim that Focused CF is of value in promoting greater grammatical accuracy.

In line with Ellis, et al (2008) who separated CF into focused and unfocused types, the majority of research has been unfocused (Lalande, 1982; Robb, Ross & Shortreed, 1986; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 2004). More recently the researchers from an SLA background have begun using focused CF (Bitchener, Young & Cameron, 2005;

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Sheen, 2007; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008). The present findings are in line with the findings of the second group.

However, the written CF literature (Ashwell, 2000; Chandler, 2003; Ferris and Hedgcock, 2005; Polio et al., 1998) indicates that teachers and L2 writing researchers have favored the use of indirect feedback (i.e., where errors are indicated and students are asked to self-correct) and placed the emphasis on the revision process. Relatively few studies have investigated direct feedback (i.e., where learners are given the corrections) by comparing an experimental and a control group that did not receive any feedback. Moreover until recently, few studies had examined the effect of focused written CF (i.e., CF directed at a single linguistic feature).

CONCLUSION

The present study was an attempt to investigate the effect of focused vs. unfocused written teacher correction on grammatical accuracy of Iranian medical students. The results revealed that both types of teacher correction positively affected grammatical accuracy of the learners, however, the learners in FWTC group showed more significant improvement in their grammatical accuracy ability when compared with the learners in UFWTC group. The present findings signify the importance of paying attention to FWTC in the ESP and EMS courses and can shed lights on the dark sides of teaching applied grammar to the EFL learners to help them produce grammatically accurate utterances. The outcomes of the study could be helpful in designing materials for the EFL learners in the Iranian context. The results also could be employed in teaching meaningful grammar to the Iranian EFL learners. The results of the study might be intriguing enough to pave the way for researchers to investigate the application of focused/unfocused written teacher correction on other areas and components of the English language pedagogy.

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