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**Department of English Programs**

**The Effect of Teacher Written Direct and Indirect Feedback on EFL Learners'**

**Written Grammar Accuracy**

**A thesis submitted in**

**partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree**

**Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language**

**By**

**Maria Torikyan**

**Irshat Madyarov, Adviser**

**Lilianna Edilyan, Reader**

**Alexan Simonyan, Statistics Consultant**

**Yerevan, Armenia**

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**We hereby approve that this thesis/paper**

**By**

**Maria Torikyan**

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**Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language**


**Committee on the MA Thesis**


………..………………………

**Irshat Madyarov, Adviser**


………..………………………

**Lilianna Edilyan, Reader**


………..………………………

**Catherine Buon**

**Interim Dean of Department of English Programs**


**Yerevan, Armenia**

**2012**

# DEDICATION

**To my family**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# ABSTRACT

This paper reports a research study on the effectiveness of teacher written direct/indirect types of feedback on EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners' English written grammar accuracy. This paper also investigated participants' attitude toward the issue of teacher written direct/indirect types of feedback. The study presented in the paper is experimental, i.e., the samples for the study were randomized. Twenty nine Armenian EFL students and one teacher, also the researcher, participated in this experimental study. The study lasted for ten weeks. This research investigated experimental and comparison groups' data to establish any significant difference between the results of the groups before and after the experiment. The experimental group received teacher written direct feedback, while the comparison group received teacher written indirect feedback. Both groups wrote pre and post compositions in the second and tenth weeks respectively. After students completed the post-test composition the student questionnaire was administered. The findings indicate that the experimental group statistically outperformed the comparison group in the post-test. The students of the experimental group overall expressed their positive attitude toward both types of teacher feedback.

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Teacher written feedback is considered to be the most commonly-used traditional technique of responding to students' writing. As soon as scholars realized the gravity of written feedback they have been keeping this issue in focus during the recent years. Nowadays many researchers consider teacher written feedback as a basic aspect of any language writing course (Ferris, 2002; Chandler, 2003; Coffin et al., 2003).

During the past 2 decades, process approach becomes popular in the area of language teaching and the interest in grammatical correctness grew (Caulk, 1994). However the question of whether teachers should provide feedback on grammar accuracy in the writing assignments of ESL/EFL students has been a subject of miscellaneous disputes in the field of language learning. There is a claim that grammar feedback is not only useless but also harmful for the development of learners writing (Kepner, 1991; Truscott, 2007). On the other hand there is also a contrary opinion that grammar feedback is useful for the development of learners' grammatical accuracy (Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 1999, 2002).

Further the wide spectrum of strategies of written grammar feedback makes this issue more arguable. Thus it is not merely a question of whether grammar feedback is useful but also which type of written feedback is mostly effective for learners' written grammar improvement. Overall research that have examined teacher written feedback types have tended to be divided into two groups- those that have compared direct and indirect types of teacher written feedback (Lalande, 1982; Semke, 1984; Keh, 1990; Vengadasamy, 2002; Chandler, 2003; Coffin et al., 2003).

Concerning the issue of written feedback there is an important factor which is also in the focus of many researchers. There has been suggested that a distinction between second

language (SL) and foreign language (FL) writers should be established, since the purposes and conditions of language learning of these both categories are different (Hedgcock and Lefkowitz, 1994). According to the researchers EFL students – who study English in non-English speaking countries, may have varying motivation degrees of receiving of written feedback. Further some educational background factors of learners, i.e. the level of exposure to the target language has also been emphasized as a subject variable that might have an effect on the extent to which some learners benefit from WF (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994). EFL students may have a strong background of English grammar terminology and rules and weak practice of how to apply this type of knowledge to their writing. Therefore these learners with strong grammar theoretical background and week practical application of theoretical knowledge may not be apt to self-correction in case of indirect feedback (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz; Ferris, 1999).

### 1.1. Significance of the Study

Different scholars have referred to the issue of teacher written direct and indirect feedback in written language learning. However, there is a necessity to investigate and establish to what extent these two types of teacher written feedback can better promote the development of the EFL writing. This research study is designed to further explore the issue of teacher written grammar feedback, and find out whether teacher written grammar direct/ indirect feedback is more beneficial for the improvement of grammar accuracy of Armenian learners' English writing. Moreover, the results of this study may also be helpful to establish Armenian learners' attitude towards teacher written direct/indirect feedback.

### 1.2. Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

➢ Does direct/indirect written grammar feedback impact EFL students' written grammar accuracy?

➢ What is the EFL students' attitude towards teacher direct/indirect written grammar feedback?

This paper presents results from a ten week language program on the effects of teacher written direct and indirect types of feedback on EFL students' writing.

### 1.3. The Structure of the Thesis

The thesis includes four more chapters:

*Chapter 2:* This chapter discusses general characteristics and definitions of the research variables, i.e., written grammar feedback, written grammar correction, types of teacher written feedback: direct, indirect feedback, teacher written focused and unfocused feedback, grammar accuracy.

*Chapter 3:* This chapter presents the methodology of the research, i.e. research design, participants, procedure, instrumentation will be presented.

*Chapter 4:* This chapter describes data analysis, to clarify the final results of the current research, i.e. to provide answers to the proposed research questions.

*Chapter 5:* This chapter presents the summary of the findings from the data collection, the answers for the proposed research questions, the limitations of the study and the recommendations for further research.

**CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

**2.1. Feedback vs. Correction**

The term feedback is defined by different scholars in different ways. For example Kulhavy (1977) refers to the term "feedback" as to a procedure which informs the student about the accuracy of his assignment/response over the issue that the student has been already informed before the feedback. The similar definition of feedback Lightbown and Spada (1999) present in their book. They define feedback as a designation to the learners about incorrectness in the target language. Further Kepner (1991) presents feedback as "any procedures used to inform a learner whether an instructional response is right or wrong". Keh (1990) claims feedback is a process of giving comments on what learner has done. Finally Vengadasamy (2002) states that for teacher feedback is "an option of personalizing his/her comments".

Using the term "feedback", many scholars take into account, that there are some other terms used for substitution of it, for instance "comment", "response", or "correction" Though a clear distinction should be made between the terms feedback and correction, very often in different articles the authors keep using the terms "feedback" and "correction" interchangeably (Truscott 1996; Kepner 1991; Ferris 2002; Ellis et. all. 2008). Moreover these terms according to Kepner (1991) can be used interchangeably. Further Kepner (1991) in his study defines "the surface error-correction" or "grammar feedback" as identification and correction of all sentence-level (grammar) errors plus provision of a brief rule or note.

Based on the definitions presented above we can resume that correction or feedback is an indication to the learner about the incorrectness in the target language, which is supposed to be corrected. Subsequently further in this paper the terms correction and feedback are used interchangeably.

## 2.2. Types of teacher written feedback: direct, indirect feedback

According to the research presented above there are direct and indirect techniques of teachers responding to students writing. Direct techniques are correct forms for each error given from teachers to learners and indirect ones are usually codes by means of which errors are pointed out, but not corrected. Teacher feedback usually takes two general forms: direct (explicit) feedback– using this format teachers are supposed to give direct corrections or notes on students' errors and indirect (implicit) feedback – in which teachers simply indicate students' errors (Chandler, 2003; Ellis et al., 2008; Ferris, 2002).

The indirect error correction is the indication but not correction of the errors on the students' writing and refers to different strategies (e.g. simply indicating or underlining errors) (Chandler, 2003).

The indirect feedback can take different forms:

➢ marginal error feedback (the margin is used to indicate the number of mistakes in each line)

➢ coded error feedback:(a coding system is adopted to indicate the mistake such as abbreviations or symbol)

➢ uncoded error feedback (the mistakes are underlined or circled without mentioning the type of mistake made) (Ferris, 2002).

According to R.Ellis et al. (2008) direct corrective feedback is the indication and correction of the errors on students' writing. The authors claim that the direct error correction refers to corrective feedback that provides learners with the correct target language form. According to Vengadasamy (2002) instructional and evaluative comments are examples of directive feedback. Ferris (2002) states that direct feedback or explicit correction is writing the correct letter(s) or word directly on the student's written work, whereas indirect feedback or implicit feedback is simply indication of an error in the script, without giving the direct correction. Further it may include the insertion of a missing word/phrase/morpheme, the crossing out of an unnecessary word/phrase/ morpheme or the provision of the correct form or structure (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Robb, et al, 1986)

## 2.3. Teacher written focused and unfocused feedback

As it was presented above there has been a real controversy among the researchers whether teachers should mark student errors or not. Many researchers have examined the issue of error-correction and did not get positive results concerning the effect of grammar feedback on the development of students' writing. Some of them concluded that it is a waste of teacher time and energy to correct students' grammar in writing since the correction diverts students' attention from more substantial issues (Truscott 1996, 1999). On the other hand, there are also studies indicating the effectiveness of well-constructed error feedback, which is not only useful for students' writing but also highly valued by students themselves (Ellis 1998; Ferris 1997).

However, many proponents of error correction still warn against marking all the errors because there is the very actual risk to exhaust teachers and overwhelm students. Thus, error feedback may be most effective when it focuses on patterns of error. This will allow students to concentrate on certain error patterns instead of being discouraged by dozens of them (Ferris, 2002).

The focused teacher written feedback refers to what might be considered regular practice in writing instruction (although not necessarily what L2 writing researchers advocate) that is when teachers correct all or a range of the errors in learners' written work. The former type of feedback can be called also 'extensive' since it treats multiple errors. As opposed to 'extensive' teacher written feedback, focused feedback focuses on certain errors to be corrected and ignores others. Further highly focused teacher written feedback selects a single error type (e.g. errors in the use of the past simple tense). Finally less focused feedback will focus on more than one error type though will still keep correction on a limited number of pre-selected types (e.g. simple past tense; articles; prepositions) (Ellis et al., 2008).

As it has already been mentioned above, in case a teacher selects to correct all of the students' errors feedback becomes unfocused. Alternatively the teacher can select merely specific error types for correction (e.g. article errors). In all likelihood, the process of correction can be more difficult for a teacher if the teacher decides to fulfill unfocused feedback. Because learners are required to attend to a variety of errors and thus it will be more complicated to be able to reflect much on each error. In this respect, focused feedback may seem more effective since the learners are able to determine various corrections of a single error. Thus it will be plain and clear to learners to recognize why and what they wrote incorrectly. On the other hand unfocused teacher written feedback also may have its own advantage. Though unfocused feedback might not be as useful in assisting learners to acquire specific features as focused feedback in the short term, however unfocused teacher feedback addresses a range of errors. Consequently unfocused teacher feedback may prove superior in the long run (Ellis, 2009).

According to Anker (2000) some teachers claim that every error should be corrected. On the other hand it should be mentioned that overcorrection can have negative effect because when a student gets back written work with lots of teacher notes or corrections on it this may discourage the student and make him or her get depressed. Too many error corrections can be discouraging to the learner writer (Vengadasamy, R., 2002). Furthermore Hillocks (1986) concludes: "focused feedback can have an effect on certain aspects of writing" (p. 166). Consequently, if teachers correct every error this will make students begin hating them. "Focusing" or selective correction according to Harmer (2000) is a good "learning tool" to avoid the flow of red ink all over a students' work (p.110). This kind of feedback is focused on the particular issues of written work thus teachers are not supposed to correct everything but merely choose some particular areas to focus on, i.e., organization, spelling verb tense, etc. Nevertheless adopting this kind of feedback, it is advisable that teachers inform students beforehand. In other words, it is worth to be clarified, correcting all students' errors does not mean doing a good work at all. Thus teachers should take into account some changes and progress in the students' writing over time, so it may

be more useful to give more feedback on the work at the very beginning of a student's course, and accordingly less at the end of it.

**2.4. Grammar Accuracy in Writing**

Referring to the concept of teacher written feedback it is necessary to clarify one more aspect which is crucial in the process of appropriate interpretation of any writing- grammar accuracy, which is defined by (Skehan, 1996) as the ability to avoid error in performance.

Wolfe-Quintero (1998) defined accuracy as an appropriate form of discourse moves in a specific context. Further, Foster and Skehan (1996, cited in Wolf-Quinteero, 1998) defined accuracy as "freedom from error, which can be measured by an analysis of target-like use, taking into account both the contexts and uses of the structure in question" (Pica, 1983, cited in Wolf-Quintero, p.33) Larsen-Freeman (2006) regards accuracy as the proportion of error-free units in a context. Thus, it can be assumed that the writing accuracy is one's ability to produce a written or oral language in communication free from errors (Armstrong, 2010). According to Langan (1997) in order to achieve "clear, error free sentence" the following elements should be in focus: Grammar, Mechanics, Punctuation, Word use.

Further Langan (1997) presents the categories which are the parts of Grammar.

➢ Subject and verbs

➢ Fragments

➢ Run-ons

➢ Regular irregular verbs

➢ Subject verb agreement

➢ Consistent verb tense

➢ Additional information about verbs (infinitives, participle, gerund, active and passive)

➢ Pronoun agreement, reference and point of view (first, second and third pronouns)

➢ Pronoun types (subject and object, possessive, demonstrative)

➢ Adjectives, adverbs

➢ Misplaced modifiers

➢ Dangling modifiers

As a result of error inventory made by Celce-Murcia (2006) the following seven categories were presented in her work, where the first five categories according to Celce-Murcia belong to Grammar.

- ➢ Errors in the Noun Phrase

- ➢ Errors in the Verb Phrase

- ➢ Errors in Prepositional Phrases

- ➢ Errors at the Clause Level

- ➢ Lexical Errors

- ➢ Errors in Mechanics (punctuation, capitalization)

- ➢ Spelling errors

Based on the lists presented by the researchers the following conclusion can be made: a sentence can be considered grammatically correct if all the categories mentioned above are written correctly.


## 2.5. Characteristics of good feedback

Feedback is widely spread in teaching/learning process; it supports learners in the process of becoming aware of any gaps that may exist between learner s' current and obtained knowledge. Furthermore feedback guides learners through the certain actions which are necessary to achieve improvement of initial knowledge (Sadler, 1989). "The provision of feedback is a major means by which to inform learners of the accuracy of both their formal target language production and other classroom behavior and knowledge" Chaudron (1988, p. 133). According to Bransford et al., (2000) learners very often need feedback i.e. support and

reflection to use relevant knowledge appropriately to adapt their previously acquired skills and knowledge in new environment.

Teacher written feedback is considered to be the most commonly-used traditional technique of responding to students' writing. Thus to have the clear criteria of good written teacher feedback can be very useful both for teachers and students making feedback more productive.

Consequently alongside with the types of feedback it will be reasonable to discuss some criteria of teacher good written feedback well. Since there are different opinions over this issue it is still difficult for researchers, teachers and students to reach an agreement on what good feedback is. Thus considering different criteria for teacher good written feedback presented by different researchers will be more logical.

Referring to the criteria of good feedback Ferris (2002), Kannan (2000), Freeman and Lewis (1998) emphasize the types (direct and indirect) and the tone of feedback. With this regard some researchers became the opponents of direct teacher feedback in writing the others proponents. For example Freeman and Lewis consider that good feedback should encourage students for the self-assessment and for the dialogue between them and teachers. Further Kannan (2000) claims that from the perspective of teachers themselves good feedback means underlining errors but not correcting them. The other opponent of direct feedback is Vengadasamy (2002), who considers that direct feedback is ineffective in promoting autonomous learning. However Keh (1990) refers to the concept of corrective feedback as to a basic element of the writing process. Likewise in their qualitative responses over the issue of the role of teacher' grammar feedback on students' writing students answered that their

teachers' comments and corrections helped them to avoid future mistakes, improve their grammar, and clarify their ideas (Ferris, 2002 & 1995).

Good feedback must be relevant and informative. The key in giving successful commenting is keeping in focus what is said in the comments with what is done in the classroom. Thus teacher's comments and the material covered during the lesson will mutually reinforce and enrich each other. Commenting on papers assists the writing course in achieving its purpose; classroom activities and the comments we write to our students need to be connected (Lewis and Freeman, 1998). In one of his studies, Butler (1987) argued that grading of student performance has not much effect in comparison with feedback comments because grading leads learners to compare themselves against other learners (ego-involvement).

Later Butler (1988) showed that simply comments in feedback increased learners' interest toward learning process. Butler argued that students didn't pay much attention to the comments when were given marks consequently they did not try to use the comments to improve the quality of their works. Second, according to Lewis and Freeman (1998) feedback needs to be relevant to every learner previous feedback and stage of development. Definitely, if there is no way to relate the new information to what is already learned and the material studied is not well familiar and clear, teacher feedback will not have enough effect on criterion performance (Kulhavy, 1977). Moreover the timing and the clarity of feedback is also very important. Thus feedback should to be given as soon as possible and as clear as possible (Freeman and Lewis, 1998).

Good feedback is a two-way process or in other words teacher should try to stimulate a response and continuing dialogue. Thus good feedback may take the form of suggestions

(constructive criticism), positive comments (praise) or negative comments (criticism) (Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Coffin et.al,results

 2003). According to some research comments in feedback are considered to be an important facilitator for the development of L2 grammar writing (Ferris, 2002 & 1995).

Further according to Sommers (1982) comments in writing are supposed to "create the motive for doing something different in the next draft" (p. 232). Freeman and Lewis (1998) claim after receiving good feedback, generally, learners should have positive feelings and desire to move forward. Kannan (2000) states for the most of the teachers good feedback comprises positive and encouraging comments, and using guiding questions to help students to work out their problems. These authors  also specifies that "the comment make sense, they are positive and encouraging but still identify the additional points that could have been made, or links that have been missed" (Coffin et.al 2003, p. 118).

**2.6. The Role of Teacher Written Direct and Indirect Feedback in Language Learning**

It has long been assumed by teachers and researchers working in the area of corrective feedback that WCF helps students to improve their writing. As a result, teachers and researchers of FL and SL have been most focused on ways of providing WCF to find out the most effective type of feedback for improvement of students' writing. Two main types of teacher-written feedback are in the focus of researchers: direct and indirect. The former refers to corrective feedback that supplies learners with the correct target language form in case of an error, the latter refers to different strategies of error correcting, i.e. coding, underlining, circling etc. to call the learners' attention to errors made (Robb, et al., 1986; Truscott, 1996; Ferris, 2002; Ellis, 2009).  Several researchers such as Lalande (1982), Robb, et al. (1986), Frantzen

(1995), Lee (1997), Ferris & Roberts (2001), Ferris (2002) referred to the effects of different types of teacher-written feedback on the learners' writing improvement.

Lalande (1982), Semke (1984), Robb et al.(1986), Vengadasamy (2002), Chandler (2003), Ferris (2006) believe that teacher indirect feedback is considered to be a strong facilitator for learners to self-correct own errors. The proponents of indirect feedback suggest that this approach is better than the approach of direct feedback because it requires students to engage in guided learning and problem solving. According to Vengadasamy (2002) motivation in learning is crucial in language learning and it cannot be achieved when teachers provide students with direct instructions (directive response). Consequently directive instructions may cause students to lose control over their work, with the possible effect of demotivating students' feeling (Vengadsamy, 200; Truscott, 1996, 2004 & 2007). Further according to Chandler, students feel they learn more from self correction and self-correction occurs due to indirect feedback. Truscott suggests that grammar correction deteriorates students' subsequent writing and compromise their overall achievement. According to Truscott grammar correction is not merely ineffective but also unsystematic and arbitrary.

However scholars such as Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) have an opposite opinion concerning the issue of teacher direct feedback in writing. Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) argue that the complete absence of grammar feedback may actually be demotivating and upsetting for learners. Thus in case of complete absence of teacher comments student writers couldn't revise their writings in an appropriate way. Consequently direct feedback aims to show the students how to improve their writing, whether the writing is on a satisfactory level or not. Furthermore, not providing students with direct feedback may cause confusion and leave them unaware of those aspects of their writing which need to be improved (Hyland, 2003; Hyland & Hyland,

2001). The proponents of direct feedback suggest that it is more useful for students writing because it is more comprehensible by writers in contrast to indirect feedback, i.e. error codes and symbols used by teachers. Besides, direct feedback provides students with sufficient information to comprehend more complex errors in syntactic structure. The studies done by Ferris (2002 & 1995) shows that the students consider that their teachers' comments helped them to improve their grammar and avoid mistakes in their next written works. . In their qualitative responses over the Role of Grammar Feedback on students' writing students gave the positive answers about their teachers' comments.

**2.7. Research design dissimilarities as the crux of the matter: summary of empirical studies**

The dispute continues between the opponents and proponents of written grammar feedback.

The results of many empirical studies on written grammar feedback have been so controversial that language teachers still don't have any conclusive answer whether to correct learners' written grammar mistakes or not. Should teachers spend hours correcting their students' written assignments? This is the main question for EFL/ESL language teachers who are trying to assist their students to improve the accuracy in writing.

It would be logical to expect that when comparing different types of feedback, every other design parameter must remain constant. The present section addresses how dissimilarities in the design features of the experimental studies can make comparisons quite controversial. The research parameters such as comparison between groups, population, design itself (longitudinal versus cross-sectional), treatments (type of feedback provided and how it was provided) as well as procedures should be taken into consideration since they are crucial in showing that differences in methodology make extremely difficult to compare the results of different studies.

In most studies on corrective feedback, the participants were already enrolled in the classrooms where the experiments took place. Nevertheless it cannot be assumed that all participants had the same level of proficiency. Frodesen and Holten (2003) claim, students in the same writing class can differ in their command and background of English grammar. For instance, Lalande (1982) reported that based on pre-test results there was no significant differences in writing abilities in German; however, he failed to clarify which criteria were used to come to this conclusion. Other studies paid more attention to the issue of students' level variety. Semke

(1984) in addition to pretests and post-tests results used a multiple-choice cloze test results. Besides he did an analysis of covariance and established the initial differences in pre-test scores. Further Robb et al. (1986) pre-tested their participants as well. The authors used a narrative composition (calculating error-free T-units (EFTs) and number of words in EFT per total words). This last measure showed differences between groups consequently the researchers took it into consideration and used it as a covariate in their further analysis. Chandler (2003) and Semke (1984) explored whether corrective feedback could help learners improve their accuracy in writing, and whether explicit, positive results would stand the test of time. In her study Semke (1984) compared feedback on content with more than one kind of feedback on form during a 10-week semester; she didn't find any difference on measures of accuracy. Chandler (2003) also conducted a semester-long experiment in which participants wrote five essays that were collected every second week. The ''control'' group corrected their errors only at the end of the semester, whereas the experimental group corrected the errors that had been underlined before submitting their next essay. Based on Chandler's experiment results the accuracy of students who were required to correct their errors before submitting their next assignments improved over the semester. Though Chandler's (2003) study has found significant positive results of feedback on accuracy however it does not offer conclusive evidence in favor of feedback because both the experimental and control groups saw their errors indicated, the only difference being what they were told to do with the feedback (i.e., correct now or correct later).

If researchers aim at understanding whether error feedback helps non native student writers, they must compare students who have received grammar correction with students who have not (Truscott, 1996; Ferris, 2004). As Ferris claims, ''If correction is important for

learning, then the former students should be better writers, on the average, than the latter'' (p. 50). By referring to Lalande's (1982) and Robb's et al. (1986) studies which did not have a ''no-correction'' group Truscott's (1996) demands that a non-correction group might perform as well, better, or worse than a correction group. Consequently the comparison of correction and non-correction groups will provide evidence to prove or disprove Truscott's claim.

As it has been mentioned before different research parameters of the study should be taken into consideration in the course of the experiment. Thus the treatment of the study is the crux of the matter as it is considered to be an independent variable that will either approve or disapprove the external and internal validity of the study. In the research mentioned above, the treatments varied between feedback on content and experimenting and combining feedback on form., Lalande (1982), Robb et al. (1986) and Chandler (2003) provided all their students with no feedback on content and different types of feedback on form. Semke (1984) provided feedback on content combined with two types of corrections on form. In the studies that provided feedback on form only – Chandler (2003), Lalande (1982), and Robb et al. (1986) – different feedback techniques were used. All studies provided indirect corrections (errors are identified but not corrected).

In some longitudinal studies of feedback on form scholars compared different types of feedback on form (Chandler, 2003; Lalande, 1982; Robb et al., 1986). For example Lalande (1982) compared indirect corrections (coded) and direct corrections but all students were asked to rewrite their compositions, and his participants wrote five in-class essays under the same time. There was not a ''no feedback'' group, that is why the effects of correction could not be compared with the effects of non-correction, but significant difference was established for

indirect corrections over the direct ones. Further in Chandler's (2003) research all students received four different types of feedback on different pieces of writing. Five essays were collected and corrected every second week and students had to correct their errors before submitting their next assignment. The direct correction and underlining treatment showed the most significant effects on accuracy, while the other two treatments – codes and underlining with codes – did not show positive results. These findings were controversial to Lalande's (1982) findings. In his study the group that had their errors coded was superior to the direct correction group in terms of grammar accuracy.

Chandler (2003) tested four different types of feedback on form, including direct corrections. The students belonged to four different groups where classroom activities were identical. The experiment was carried out over a 23-week period, and five compositions were corrected. Results showed no significant difference in terms of accuracy or fluency, since all groups developed their writing quality regardless of the feedback received.

# CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides information about the educational context of the study. Thus, it describes the research design, the participants of the study, the materials, the instruments used for the data collection and data analysis, as well as the research procedure.

## 3.1. Research Design

The study investigated the impact of teacher written direct/indirect types of feedback on EFL learners' written language quality. The data for this experimental research study were obtained via pre and post test compositions, and student questionnaires.

The research questions of this study are as follows:

➢ Does direct/indirect written grammar feedback impact EFL students' written grammar accuracy?

➢ What is the EFL students' attitude towards teacher direct/indirect written grammar feedback?

The following non-directional hypothesis was formulated for this study.

➢ There is no influence of direct/indirect written grammar feedback on the EFL students' written grammar accuracy.

**3.2. Setting, Participants and Materials**

The participants of this study were Armenian EFL students from the Experimental English Classes (EEC) organized by the Department of English Programs (DEP) at the American University of Armenia (AUA). The level of English language proficiency of all the participants was (communication 5) high elementary or A2+ (according to CEFR). The age of the participants ranged from 8 to 15. The number of participants was 29.

The duration of the EEC courses is usually ten weeks, the classes met twice a week, one hour per session. The researcher of the study was not the main teacher of the course but fulfilled the teaching in parallel with the main teacher of the course.

The present study is experimental, so it implies randomization of the samples. There were two groups (A, B) enrolled in the experiment. The total 29 students from both groups were randomly selected. Then based on the randomization groups were reorganized in two new experimental and comparison groups. Thus in the groups A and B there were students from both Experimental and Comparisons groups. The total number of students of the Experimental group was 14 (11 were male, 3 were female), while the total number of the Comparison group was 15 (10 were male, 5 were female).

The textbook used for both groups (focus and experimental) was "English in Mind" Cox & Hill, 2007, which is accomplished by a workbook. The data collection for this research, as well as the treatment applied in the experimental group was coordinated with the textbook.

### 3.3. Operational Definitions of the Terms

➢ T-unit: minimal terminal unit, which is grammatically capable of being considered a sentence (Hunt, 1965). The latter is defined as "a main clause and any subordinate clauses attached" (Hunt, 1965, cited in Armstrong, 2010, p.693). According to Hunt (1965, p. 21) T-unit, or Minimal Terminal Unit is one that "is grammatically capable of being considered a sentence".

➢ Accuracy: defined as "freedom from error, which can be measured by an analysis of target like use, taking into account both the context and used of the structure in question" (Pica, 1983, cited in Wolf-Quintero, p.33).

➢ Written indirect feedback: Indirect feedback is the indication of the errors on the students' writing (Chandler, 2003).

➢ Written direct feedback: Direct feedback is the indication and correction of the errors on students' writing (R.Ellis et al., 2008).

**3.4 Treatment**

During the treatment period of the study students were assigned to write seven compositions at home (see Appendix C). After the each composition students received teacher written direct/ indirect feedback. The students of the experimental group received teacher written direct feedback (corrections/explanations), while the students from the comparison group received teacher written indirect feedback (codes/symbols/indirect questions). After the receiving the feedback on their writing the students were asked to rewrite their compositions. The first writing task "The most useful invention" assigned to the students was similar to the topic students covered in the first unit called "Great idea"; the theme of the unit was about useful inventions. The second writing assignment "My favorite sport/sportsmen" was also similar to the second unit's theme. The main unit of the course was called "He run faster" and it aimed to have the students talk to talk about different types of sport, sportsmen etc. For the third writing assignment called "Letter to my parents" students were supposed to write a letter to their parents and use the target grammar structure (past simple passive, indefinite and zero articles). The fourth assignment called "I want to grow up because…". The main topic of the course was about growing up. The fifth assignment was also aligned with the topic covered during the course. It was dedicated to the environmental issues in general and in Armenia particularly, the students wrote a composition on "Environment in Armenia: possible problems and solutions.", the main topic of the course was dedicated to disasters. The sixth writing assignment was "Future life". The topic of the main unit was "Ways of life". The target grammar structure was the following *will vs. be going to*… Again the students were asked to write the compositions using the target grammar structure appropriately. The seventh assignment was called "My day". The target grammar structure was present perfect simple. All

the topics were assigned taking into consideration similarity with the main topic of each unit, the appropriateness to the grammar part for each unit and students motivation.

### 3.5. Instrumentation

### 3.5.1. Pre & Post Test Compositions

Both the experimental and the comparison groups completed the same pre and post-tests under similar conditions: the classroom, the time to complete the test, the researcher and the teacher who supervised them during the test (see Appendix A, B). Both pre and post-tests were composition writing tasks aligned with the course objectives. The participants took the pre and post-tests in week 2 and 10 respectively. The data of the pre and post-tests was analyzed first by dividing the written work into T-units and identifying the number of T-units totally and then identifying the number of error free t-units. Thus the proportion of percentages of error-free T-units (EFT) per total number of T-units (T) converted into ranks was used for the data analysis of this study.

### 3.5.2. Questionnaire

After completing the post-test the participants of both the experimental and comparison groups were distributed questionnaires (Appendix E) to express their attitudes towards teacher written direct/indirect types of feedback. The questionnaires were anonymous so that the participants feel free in expressing their opinions and attitudes towards the two types of feedback.

### 3.6. Data Collection Procedures

The three main steps involved in the study are as follows:

1.      Both the experimental and the comparison groups took a pre-test in the second week. The pre-test was given during the second week of the classes (for some organization purposes) because some students were still moving from group to group. The pre-test aimed at establishing any significant difference between the results of the participants' English grammar accuracy before the treatment.

2.      For fulfillment of the study treatment the seven writing tasks were assigned both in the experimental and comparison groups. Students were required to write seven compositions on the assigned topics, which were related to the topics they were covering throughout the course (Appendix C). The instructions for all the tasks in both groups were the same. Students received their assignments and had to them as homework. After each task students received teacher written feedback; the experimental group received teacher written direct (corrections/explanations) feedback and the control group received teacher written indirect feedback (abbreviations/codes/symbols/indirect questions).

Teacher feedback for this study was focused on certain grammar aspects.

*Table 1* **of certain grammar aspects for teacher written feedback**

| Symbol | Kind of error |
|---|---|
| C | Capitalization |
| S | Spelling |
| P | Preposition |
| V. F. | Verb form |
| # | Subject verb agreement |
| WF | Word form (part of speech) |
| A | Wrong or omitted article |
| ↔ | Word order |
| ≅ | Unclear meaning |
| ○ | Plural/singular mistakes |

It is should be noticed that in agreement with some ethical reasons, since the subjects were not supposed to be aware of divisions of them into additional experimental and comparison groups, both groups were corrected seemingly in an "equal way".

The students from the experimental group received teacher indirect feedback (codes and symbols not concerning grammar aspect, e.g. "C" for capitalization, "S" for spelling), whereas the students of comparison group in turn sometimes received direct feedback in forms of "comments" not concerning grammar aspect as well (e.g. "Thank you for your opinion" or "That was an interesting composition, thank you." ).

3.     At the end of the treatment, in week 10, the two groups completed a post-test. The post-test aimed at finding any significant difference in the results of the both groups in terms of participants' written grammar accuracy improvement after the treatment.

4.     The aim of the second research question was to evaluate students' preference in getting teacher written direct feedback vs. indirect one. With this respect the samples of the multiple open ended and close ended questionnaires were distributed to the students of both comparison and experimental groups. The questionnaire consists of eight items; each item (except the first and last items) has two and more options both open ended and close ended. The first item is merely close ended, the last one is merely open ended, the others are open and close ended. It should be mentioned that open ended options were not obligatory, they were optional and the respondents were supposed to either chose them or not. Since some students marked all options for some items and didn't write any open ended answer, i.e. comments, these answers have been defined as open ended answers and categorized as "others".  The administration of the questionnaire took about 15 minutes.

### 3.7. Data Analysis

Quantitative research methods were employed to gather data for this research study. The data of the current study were obtained via pre and post-tests, student questionnaire. Two groups took a test of writing before and after the treatment. Thus, to provide answer to the first research question about any significant difference in the students grammar accuracy in writing depending on the two types of teacher written corrective feedback the pre- and post test results were analyzed quantitatively through the statistical package of social sciences (SPSS software, version 16). This was done by dividing the written work into T-units totally and then by counting the number of error-free T-units. Afterwards accuracy was measured by overall units expressed in terms of the proportion of percentages of error-free T-units of all T-units (EFT/T) converted into ranks.

Taking into consideration the number of participants, which was 29 for both groups , i.e. 14 and 15 in each group, the distribution of percentages of error-free T-units obtained from performances of both experimental ( which received teacher written direct feedback) and comparison ( which received teacher indirect feedback) groups are not normal. Thus the non-parametric Mann-Whitney and Wilcoxon tests were used to compare the 2 sets of ranks of percentages of error-free T-units obtained from performances of both experimental and comparison groups by comparing the results of both groups in terms of grammar accuracy, to see which group showed higher performance and to find out whether there was any significant difference in the improvement t of grammar accuracy in writing between the two groups who received teacher written direct/indirect feedback.

The Mann-Whitney U test is a non-parametric alternative to Independent Samples t-test. It is "between" groups' analysis and it allows comparing the mean ranks of percentages of error

free t-units of two continuous variables (grammar written accuracy of both groups). Percentages of error free t-units were converted into ranks and then mean rank for each group were compared (Pallant, 2007).

Student questionnaire was the second quantitative device to obtain data of the study. Student questionnaires were distributed among the participants in the both groups only in week 10. All the items in the questionnaire were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 16. For each item statistically analyzed, frequencies and percentages were calculated. The total number of answers of the questionnaire was calculated based on the percentages of the answers. It is worth mentioning that there was the researcher's decision to calculate the results of the questionnaire for each group separately. This was made in order to find out which particular group what opinion does have about the particular type of teacher written feedback. Thus the total number of the responses was divided into two parts. Each part of the data included the answers of each group. Consequently the percentages of the responds were calculated accordingly out of 14 and 15. The percentage of each item in ratio with the total number of answered items (14 and 15) was calculated with the help of SPSS, particularly through Tables and Total Custom Tables technique. The necessary corrections were made in a mini-study of a smaller scale on EEC learners, and all the items were validated by the thesis supervisor and the thesis reader.

**CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS**

The present study was carried out to determine whether teacher written focused direct and indirect feedback improves students' grammar accuracy in writing or not. It was also aimed at determining students' attitudes towards teacher written direct feedback. The aim of the chapter is to provide answers to the proposed research questions. Thus, this chapter presents detailed information of quantitative data analysis, collected during the experiment in order to clarify the picture of the current research.

**4.1. Pre and Post Tests' Analysis**

To answer research question 1 that seeks to investigate which type of feedback (direct/indirect) is mostly useful for the improvement of learners' written grammar accuracy several statistical comparisons were done which are as follows: Mann-Whitney U Test for between group comparisons; Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for within group comparisons as well as Effect Size for both Wilcoxon and Mann-Withney U Tests.

To clarify if the pre- and post test results for both groups differ significantly Mann-Whitney U Test was applied; first, pre-test results of the both groups and then post-test results of the both groups were analyzed.

*Table 2 Mann-Whitney U Test results of pre-tests of both groups*

|                                    | Pre-test results |
| ---------------------------------- | ---------------- |
| Mann-Whitney U                     | 103.500          |
| Z                                  | -0.066           |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)             | 0.948            |
| Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]     | 0.949            |

According to *Table 2* the Z value is -0.066 and the observed significance level p is 0.948 which is not less than the critical alpha level of 0.05. Thus we cannot reject the null hypothesis consequently there is no significant difference between pretest results of both groups. Effect size for the comparison of pre-percent results of both groups is r= Z/square root of N where N is a total sample size. So r = 0.066/square root (29) = 0.01(very small effect size). According to Pallant (2007), a small effect size is equal to 0.1. Thus the calculated value of r=0.01 once again confirms that there was no significant difference between the groups at the beginning of the study.

The next data (*Table3*) depicts whether there is any significant difference in the results of posttests of both groups.

*Table 3 Mann-Whitney U Test results of post-tests of both groups*

|  | Post test results |
|---|---|
| Mann-Whitney U | 73.000 |
| Z | -1.398 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.162 |
| Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)] | 0.172 |

Table 3 shows for posttests that the Z value is -1.398 and the observed asymptotic significance level p is 0.162 which is not less than the critical alpha level of 0.05. So again we cannot reject the null hypothesis. It means there is no significant difference between posttest results of both groups. Effect size for comparison of post-percent results of both groups is r=1.398/square root (29) = 0.26 (close to medium effect size). According to Pallant (2007), a medium effect size is equal to 0.3

In order to obtain statistical results for within group comparisons of pre- and post tests for both experimental and comparison groups non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test has been applied, since the sample sizes are small (less than 30). Table 4 shows the results of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test of pre and post test results for the Comparison Group.

*Table 4 Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test of pre and post test results of Comparison Group*

|  | **post percentage– pre percentage** |
|---|---|
| **Z** | **-0.094** |
| **Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)** | **0.925** |

Here Z value is equal to -0.094 and the p value is 0.925 which is not less than alpha value of 0.05. This means that there is no a significant difference between the pretest and the posttests of the indirect group. Effect size for comparison of pre-percent and post-percent results for the indirect group is: r= 0.094/square root (30) =0.02 (very small effect size). According to Pallant (2007), a small effect size is equal to 0.1.

The same actions were done to obtain the results for the experimental group as well.

*Table 5 Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test of pre and post test results of Experimental Group*

|  | **post percentage – pre percentage** |
|---|---|
| **Z** | **-2.691** |
| **Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)** | **0.007** |

As Table 5 depicts the Z value of -2.691 with significance level of $p=0.007$ which is less than 0.05. The results show that there is statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttests results of the direct group in favor of posttest. The effect size for comparison of pre-percent values and post-percent values for the direct group is: $r=2.691$/square root (28) = 0.51 (large effect 0.5). According to Pallant (2007), a large effect size is equal to 0.5. It means that the direct group improved their writing performance largely due to the direct instruction.

The result of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test displayed the outcomes of the experimental and comparison groups separately. It showed that there had been a significant improvement in the writing performance only of the direct group. Therefore it can be assumed that teacher direct written feedback had a beneficial effect on the learners writing at the end of the treatment.

Further the data of descriptive statistics of means of percentages of error-free t-units for both groups were obtained. According to the present descriptive statistics the comparison group performed slightly better than the experimental group during the pretest (see Tables 6, 7). In addition, the comparison group did not improve significantly the performance at the end of the treatment, whereas the experimental group did significantly improve the performance at the end of the treatment. Thus the results of this quantitative analysis depict the obvious advantage of the experimental group's results.

*Table 6* Descriptive Statistics of means of error-free t-units for the Comparison Group

|  | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pre percent | 15 | 54.9305 | (22.71527) |
| Post percent | 15 | 55.8066 | 26.19461 |

*Table 7* Descriptive Statistics of means for the Experimental Group

|  | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pre percent | 14 | 53.7628 | 17.35043 |
| Post percent | 14 | 69.2440 | 14.27312 |

### 4.2. Student Questionnaire Analysis

The questionnaire comprised seven items; each item does have two and more options both open ended and close ended (See Appendix E).

 After completing the post-test all 29 participants were distributed with questionnaires in week 10. Table 8 and 9 present students' attitude towards teacher written direct/indirect types of feedback.

*The Table 8 Questionnaire for the Comparison group students (out of 15)*

| **1. Was the teacher written feedback helpful for improving your grammar?** | |
|---|---|
| A.   Yes (Please go to question 2) | 53.3% |
| B.   No (Please go to question 3) | 46.7% |

| **2. If helpful what improvements do you see in your grammar after receiving teacher written feedback? (choose all that apply) (Out of 53.3%)** | |
|---|---|
| A.  I now make fewer grammar mistakes | 40.0% |
| B.  I do not make any grammar mistakes | 6.7% |
| C.  I notice my grammar mistakes better | 6.7% |
| D.  Others (please specify) | 0.0% |

| **3.  If not helpful, please mark specific problems you've experienced (choose all that apply) (Out of 46.7%)** | |
|---|---|
| A.  I make the same grammar mistakes as before | 40.0% |
| B.  I make even more grammar mistakes | 6.7% |
| C.  I am not able to notice my own mistakes any more | 0.0% |
| D.  Others (please specify) | 0.0% |

| **4. Which types of feedback do you find most effective for improving your grammar? (choose all that apply)** | |
|---|---|
| A.  When my teacher points out my grammar mistakes and lets me correct myself | 46.7% |
| B.  When my teacher points out my grammar mistakes and corrects them for me | 46.7% |
| C.  When my teacher focuses more on strengths in my grammar and praises me | 0.0% |
| D.  When my teacher points out weakness in my grammar | 0.0% |
| E.  Other (please specify) | 6.7% |

| 5. Sometimes teacher's feedback could be useless for improving your grammar. What are the main reasons for it? (choose all that apply) | |
| --- | --- |
| A. I don't understand my teacher's handwriting | 20.0% |
| B. I don't agree with my teacher's written feedback | 6.7% |
| C. My grammar mistakes are not clearly explained | 26.7% |
| D. There are too many grammar mistakes to revise | 13.3% |
| E. Others (please specify) | 33.3% |

| 6. What do you usually do if you don't understand your teacher's grammar feedback? (choose all that apply) | |
| --- | --- |
| A. I ask my teacher for further explanation | 80.0% |
| B. I ask my classmates for help | 6.7% |
| C. I ask other teachers for help | 0.0% |
| D. I use print resources for help (grammar textbooks, dictionaries, manuals, etc.) | 6.7% |
| E. I use internet for help | 6.7% |
| F. Others (please specify) | 0.0% |

| 7. What forms of grammar feedback do you like best? (choose all that apply) | |
| --- | --- |
| A. Questions (e.g. "Why did you write this noun in a singular form?") | 53.3% |
| B. Statements (e.g. "This sentence is not clear, correct") | 6.7% |
| C. Imperatives (e.g. "Change your sentence, use another word") | 0.0% |
| D. Exclamations or praises (e.g. "Good!") | 26.7% |
| E. Underlining or circling the grammar mistakes | 6.7% |
| F. Giving correction codes/symbols | 6.7% |
| G. Others (please specify) | 0.0% |

*The Table 9 Questionnaire for the Experimental group students (out of 14)*

| 1. Was the teacher written feedback helpful for improving your grammar? | |
|---|---|
| A. Yes (Please go to question 2) | 1 |
| B. No (Please go to question 3) | 0.0% |

| 2. If helpful what improvements do you see in your grammar after receiving teacher written feedback? (choose all that apply) (Out of 100%) | |
|---|---|
| A. I now make fewer grammar mistakes | 71.4% |
| B. I do not make any grammar mistakes | 7.1% |
| C. I notice my grammar mistakes better | 14.3% |
| D. Others (please specify) | 7.1% |

| 3. If not helpful, please mark specific problems you've experienced (choose all that apply) | |
|---|---|
| A. I make the same grammar mistakes as before | 0.0% |
| B. I make even more grammar mistakes | 0.0% |
| C. I am not able to notice my own mistakes any more | 0.0% |
| D. Others (please specify) | 0.0% |

| 4. Which types of feedback do you find most effective for improving your grammar? (choose all that apply) | |
|---|---|
| A. When my teacher points out my grammar mistakes and lets me correct myself | 64.3% |
| B. When my teacher points out my grammar mistakes and corrects them for me | 35.7% |
| C. When my teacher focuses more on strengths in my grammar and praises me | 0.0% |
| D. When my teacher points out weakness in my grammar | 0.0% |
| E. Other (please specify) | 0.0% |

| 5. Sometimes teacher's feedback could be useless for improving your grammar. What are the main reasons for it? (choose all that apply) | |
|---|---|
| A. I don't understand my teacher's handwriting | 7.1% |
| B. I don't agree with my teacher's written feedback | 0.0% |
| C. My grammar mistakes are not clearly explained | 21.4% |
| D. There are too many grammar mistakes to revise | 28.6% |
| E. Others (please specify) | 21.4% |
| *Did not give any answer for the question 5* | 25.5% |

| 6. What do you usually do if you don't understand your teacher's grammar feedback? (choose all that apply) | |
| --- | --- |
| A. I ask my teacher for further explanation | 92.9% |
| B. I ask my classmates for help | 0.0% |
| C. I ask other  teachers for help | 0.0% |
| D. I use print resources for help (grammar textbooks, dictionaries, manuals, etc.) | 0.0% |
| E. I use internet for help | 0.0% |
| F. Others (please specify) | 7.1% |

| 7. What forms of grammar feedback do you like best? (choose all that apply) | |
| --- | --- |
| A. Questions (e.g. "Why did you write this noun in a singular form?") | 21.4% |
| B. Statements (e.g. "This sentence is not clear, correct it.") | 21.4% |
| C. Imperatives (e.g. "Change your sentence, use another word") | 7.1% |
| D. Exclamations or praises (e.g. "Good!") | 14.3% |
| E. Underlining or circling the grammar mistakes | 14.3% |
| F. Giving correction codes/symbols | 0.0% |
| G. Others (please specify) | 21.4% |

Student questionnaire showed that the majority of students of both groups (53.3% of comparison group; 100% of experimental group- Q. 1) were overall satisfied with the both types of teacher written feedback. However 64.3% of the experimental group preferred to be more autonomous in the process of learning, and would like to be corrected indirectly rather than directly (Q.4).

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

**5.1. Discussion of Findings**

This study explored the influence of teacher written direct/indirect feedback on EFL learners' written grammar accuracy. Moreover, it examined students' attitude towards the issue. In this chapter, the findings of the research, as well as the answers to the research questions are presented. Besides, the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research will be discussed in the chapter.

The study addressed the following research questions:

➢ Does direct/indirect written grammar feedback impact EFL students' written grammar accuracy?

➢ What is the EFL students' attitude towards teacher direct/indirect written grammar feedback?

➢ What is the students' attitude towards getting teacher written focused direct and indirect feedback for improving their grammar accuracy in writing?

The findings of this study showed (based on the results of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test) the significant difference of the pre and post test results of Experimental group in favor of the post test results. Consequently teacher written indirect feedback had positive impact on the students written grammar accuracy. Further the descriptive statistics of means of percentages of the experimental group did show significant difference between the means of the pre and post-test results. The large means, which are significantly different from each other, implies that the majority of the students did improve their grammar accuracy in writing. However, the variance of both pre and post test of the experimental group is quite large, which means that not all students improved their grammar accuracy homogeneously.

The results of the questionnaire didn't approve the results gained from the pre and post tests, since both types of feedback (direct/indirect) were acceptable for the participants. All the students of the Experimental group were satisfied with teacher written direct group, however most of them would like to get teacher indirect feedback and be more autonomous in their language improvement. Nevertheless, there is another factor that should be taken into consideration in making inferences based on the questionnaire. The students were not exposure to both types of feedback. The students of the experimental group did not receive teacher written direct feedback and vice a versa, so their opinion could not be accepted as an objective one. Thus over the issue of teacher written direct/indirect feedback on grammar the results of the study are quite controversial and still disputable.

## 5.2. Delimitations of the study

The study includes several limitations which should be taken into consideration in future for further research by other researchers.

➢ Students of experimental and comparison groups received only one type of   feedback, so their opinion could not be accepted as an objective one.

➢ The assignments as well as the pre and post tests compositions were written without taking into consideration rhetoric part of composition. This means that a certain target grammar structure could be omitted by a student.  Thus, if a student is not sure whether to use the target structure or not in all probability he/she may simply avoid of using the structure. Consequently the teacher will not have an objective picture of student's grammar accuracy product.

➢ Another limitation may be that students wrote the treatment compositions under no-control conditions, so they may have used different amounts of time to write the essays and various amounts of outside resources, including family's help, copy-pasting from other resources, et

**5.3. Limitations of the study**

There are other limitations as well, which should be noted in short alongside with the limitations mentioned above. Thus and so the limitations of the study are the following:

- ➢ Age
- ➢ Gender
- ➢ Nationality
- ➢ Short period of time
- ➢ Sample size

**5.4. Pedagogical implications of the study**

Based on the findings of pre and post tests of the experimental group the following conclusion was made: the direct type of feedback significantly improved the participants' grammar accuracy. However the results of the descriptive statistics of means of percentages of the experimental group depicted the high standard deviations for the pre and post test percentages. This indicates that despite the significantly different means of pre and post test percentages (in favor of post test) not all participants did improve their accuracy homogeneously. Besides the results of the questionnaire showed participants' positive attitude for both types of feedback, though the students of the experimental would prefer teacher indirect type of feedback. Consequently the following pedagogical implications can be used for future research: both types of feedback could be implemented in the process of the development of foreign language. Moreover, based on personal experience, research who provided the two types of feedback during the experiment concluded that the direct type of teacher feedback is time consuming. Thus if a teacher has a group of more than ten students, it will be more convenient for the teacher to provide the students with indirect feedback.

### 5.5. Implications for further research

In order to conduct a better and more useful study over the issue the limitations mentioned in the previous paragraph should be taken into consideration. It means the conditions of writing of treatment and pre- post tests should be equal in terms of place and time of writing.

➤ It is worth to mention once more that the further study should be experimental as well, since the experimental design of the research implies randomization which is crucial for making general inferences. Besides, there is a lack of experimental research on the issue of the grammar feedback, thus the evidence presented in favor of correction is very weak because the relevant studies were descriptive rather than experimental (Chandler, 2003).

➤ As it has been mentioned before students of experimental and comparison groups received only one type of feedback, so their opinion could not be accepted as an objective one. Therefore it will be useful to fulfill an experiment. A group of randomly selected EFL students (with the same level of language knowledge) will be provided with the two types of feedback (direct/indirect) either simultaneously or sequentially during the experiment. At the end of the experiment there will be distributed attitudinal questionnaires. Students will be supposed to express their opinion over the issue of direct/indirect feedback through the questionnaire. These opinions will be considered to be more objective, since the responders will be more aware about the advantages and disadvantages of both types of teacher written feedback.

➤ Another suggestion for further research is concerned to high variances obtained for this study. According to the variance of these study one could make an inference about either homogeneous improvement or not homogeneous. May be there is a necessity of using some other methods that will address individual variance.

Case studies with qualitative methods could shed more light onto microchanges occurring in individual students writing during some period of time.

➢　　　There has been mentioned above that the short time of the experiment could be considered as a limitation of the study, thus longitudinal experimental study will be more fruitful in terms of revealing more valid results for the research.

➢　　　And the last but not least suggestion for the further research is to supply merely direct or indirect types of feedback within the frame of one group. Since the present experimental study implies randomization of the samples the total 29 students from both were reorganized in two new experimental and comparison groups. Thus in the groups A and B there were students from both Experimental and Comparisons groups. Based on the ethical reasons it was quite challengeable to hide that they do belong to such different groups and receive the direct and indirect feedback. Thus, for future, a researcher may provide direct feedback on form vs. direct feedback on content in one group, and indirect feedback on form vs. indirect feedback on content. This will be more convenient for the researcher and less noticeable for the learners.

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**Pre-test composition: Cats vs. Dogs**

**Please write a composition about the topic (at least 100 words).  Which animal do you like most and why?**

Teacher:                                                    Student:

Group:                                                      Date:

**Appendix B (Posttest)**

**Post-test composition: Computer games playing vs. books reading**

**Please write a composition about the topic (at least 100 words). What is more useful for children to play computer games or to read books?**

Teacher:                                             Student:

Group:                                               Date:

**Appendix C (Writing Assignments 1-7)**

**Please write a composition and express your opinion about the topic (at least 100 words).**

- ➢ "The most useful invention"

- ➢ "My favorite sport/sportsmen"

- ➢ "Letter to my parents"

- ➢ "I want to grow up because…"

- ➢ "Environment in Armenia: possible problems and solutions."

- ➢ "Future life"

- ➢ "My day"

**Appendix D**

*Table 1* **of certain grammar aspects for teacher written feedback**

| Symbol | Kind of error |
|--------|---------------|
| C | Capitalization |
| S | Spelling |
| P | Preposition |
| V. F. | Verb form |
| # | Subject verb agreement |
| WF | Word form (part of speech) |
| A | Wrong or omitted article |
| ↔ | Word order |
| ≅ | Unclear meaning |
| ○ | Plural/singular mistakes |

**Appendix E (Questionnaire)**

Answer the questions by marking the appropriate option. Thank you for your sincere opinion

1. Was the teacher written feedback helpful for improving your grammar knowledge?

    A. Yes (Please go to question 2)

    B. No (Please go to question 3)

2. If helpful what improvements do you see in your grammar after receiving teacher written feedback? (choose all that apply)

    A. I now make fewer grammar mistakes

    B. I do not make any grammar mistakes

    C. I notice my grammar mistakes better

    D. Others (please specify)

3. If not helpful, please mark specific problems you've experienced (choose all that apply)

    A. I make the same grammar mistakes as before

    B. I make even more grammar mistakes

    C. I am not able to notice my own mistakes any more

    D. Others (please specify)

4. Which types of feedback do you find most effective for improving your grammar? (choose all that apply)

    A. When my teacher points out my grammar mistakes and lets me correct myself

    B. When my teacher points out my grammar mistakes and corrects them for me

    C. When my teacher focuses more on strengths in my grammar and praises me

    D. When my teacher points out weakness in my grammar

    E. Other (please specify)

5. Sometimes teacher's feedback could be useless for improving your grammar. What are the main reasons for it? (choose all that apply)

    A. I don't understand my teacher's handwriting

    B. I don't agree with my teacher's written feedback

    C. My grammar mistakes are not clearly explained

    D. There are too many grammar mistakes to revise

    E. Others (please specify)


6. What do you usually do if you don't understand your teacher's grammar feedback? (choose all that apply)

    A. I ask my teacher for further explanation

    B. I ask my classmates for help

    C. I ask other teachers for help

    D.  I use print resources for help (grammar textbooks, dictionaries, manuals, etc.)

    E. I use internet for help

    F. Others (please specify)

7. What forms of grammar feedback do you like best? (choose all that apply)

   A. Questions (e.g. ""Why did you write this noun in a singular form?")

   B. Statements (e.g. "This sentence is not clear, correct it.")

   C. Imperatives (e.g. "Change your sentence, use another word ")

   D. Exclamations or praises (e.g. "Good!")

   E. Underlining or circling the grammar mistakes

   F. Giving correction codes/symbols

   G. Others (please specify)


8. If you have other comments or suggestions about receiving grammar feedback in your papers, please leave them here.

   Thank you for your sincere opinion.