The role of written corrective feedback in enhancing the linguistic accuracy of Iranian Japanese learners' writing

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A B S T R A C T

This study is an attempt to investigate the effect of direct and indirect feedback on the writing performance of Iranian learners of Japanese as a foreign language. During one academic semester, three indirect feedback types including underlining, coding and translation were used as well as direct type of feedback in order to see which one makes a difference in the written essays of students. The study targeted the impact of these feedback types on the correct usage of prepositions, adjective and noun phrases. Sixty students participated in the study. They were divided into control and experimental group; both were asked to write expository essays each session during a 10-week period; the experimental group were given feedback, either direct or indirect, every other session. Independent samples t- test showed that there is a significant difference between groups with the experimental group having a higher mean of accuracy in the use of three linguistic categories. Having time series design, we conducted repeated measure ANOVA which showed that just direct feedback enhanced the linguistic aspect of written essays of students with indirect feedback having little or no role to play in writing practice.

Keywords: direct feedback; indirect feedback; writing performance

A R T I C L E   S U M M A R Y

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Introduction

Recently, researchers and teachers raise questions on how to treat foreign language learners' errors. Responding to learners' errors is a crucial question open to systematic investigations since as Guenette (2007) observes, the problem of how to handle learners' errors lies in the paucity of research which deals with corrective feedback systematically and at the same time controls many a variable involved in the process of giving corrective feedback to learners. To give or not to give feedback is no longer the question, because, thus, the majority of studies on feedback (Ashwell, 2000; Amirghassemi, Azabdaftari, & Saeidi, 2013; Bitchener, 2008; Chandler, 2000; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1997, 1999, 2006; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Ferris & Helt, 2000; Ferris, Chaney, Komura, Roberts, & McKee, 2000 to name a few, and in Japanese context, Shizuka 1996; Myatani, 1999; Ishibashi, 2005; Yokota & Ijuin, 2009) reveal the importance of responding to learners' output either in oral or written form; Ellis (2009) states that research on feedback can be studied from two perspectives: "the teachers' provision of feedback and students' responses to this feedback" (p. 98). He categorizes the former into: Direct CF (Corrective Feedback), Indirect CF, Metalinguistic CF, Focused and unfocused CF, Electronic feedback, and reformulation; the latter deals with whether students are required to revise or not; however, the question of what and how to respond to second or foreign language learners' speech or written essays remains unresolved; some doubt the type of feedback given to learners, some are skeptical of focus of feedback, and where these two reach a consensus, the third party opposes by questioning both on methodological grounds.

The dichotomy of direct vs. indirect type of feedback has sparked interest among researchers who think of priority of one over another. Direct feedback, as the name suggests, focuses on overt correction of error which can be accompanied by metalinguistic explanations to vividly clarify the errors; of those who prioritize direct written corrective feedback we can name Farrokhi and Sattarpour (2012), Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005), Chandler (2003), Ferris, Chaney, Komura, Roberts, and McKee (2000), Ferris and Roberts (2001) and Komura (1999).

In contra, there are other scholars corroborating the indirect type of written corrective feedback, which does not involve the provision of correct form to learners; it is geared at involving learners in thinking processes during which they, by themselves, find the problem trying to self-edit on the basis of type of indirect feedback given, for example, underlining. Studies by Ferris and Helt (2000), and Lalande (1982) show the effectiveness of indirect type of feedback. There are other studies which support the idea of giving indirect written corrective feedback within a long term period (e.g., Ashwell, 2000; Ferris et al. 2000; Frantzen, 1995; Lee, 1997; Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986).

Despite the fact that the above-mentioned dichotomy has led many studies to find the response of learners to each, the results of some studies have shown no difference between the direct and indirect type of written corrective feedback; for example, Kepner (1991) did not find any difference between the two; along the same line, Semke (1984) and Sheppard (1992) reached the same conclusion.

As writing teachers have been pondering on feedback and its types and their effects, L2 researchers started to put the emphasis upon the number of categories the feedback focuses on. They believe that focusing on one or two narrowly defined categories at a time could bring about better performance on the part of learners. Farrokhi and Sattarpour (2012), Bitchener (2008), Bitchener and Knock (2008a, 2008b, 2010a, 2010b), Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, and Takashima (2008), Sheen (2006, 2007, 2010), Sheen, Wright, and Moldawa (2009) are among L2 researchers studying the effect of focused and unfocused corrective feedback on the performance of learners producing one or two linguistic forms, for example, definite and indefinite articles. Moreover, they tried to have more rigorous research design by including control groups into their study. From these

scholars' point of view, narrowing down the research to a few categories may solve the problems of how to provide corrective feedback which previously faced writing teachers and practitioners.

Amirghassemi, Azabdaftari and Saeidi (2013) researched on direct (the teacher provided the correct forms above each student's linguistic errors), indirect (via underlining) and scaffolded corrective feedback (the teacher gave indirect CF to the group through underlining the errors and using a cursor for omissions) on English articles and past tenses. They report that scaffolded written corrective feedback is helpful in improving L2 students' written accuracy. Unlike that Rouhiand Samiei (2010) said that corrective feedback on EFL learners' writing did not result in improved accuracy in new piece of writing over the time. They understand that the effectiveness of corrective feedback is much dependent on the type of error to be corrected, and maintain that there were no significant differences among the four groups in accurate use of articles. The scaffolded corrective feedback group outperformed the other groups in accurate use of past tenses. They said that for certain linguistic categories, the amount and way of corrective feedback presentation are determining factors in efficacy of corrective feedback.

Afraz and Ghaemi (2012) researched on the effects of the corrective feedback (with no control group) on the acquisition of verb tenses (the perfect tenses, including past, present and future). They reported the performance of the participants was highly positive and "the learners gained high language analytic ability and they somehow became alert about the differences in the two languages" (p. 48).

Purnawarman (2011) used four feedback types (indirect feedback, direct feedback, indirect feedback followed by direct feedback with explicit corrective comments, and no feedback, focused on prepositions, articles, and past tense verbs) in his study; he concluded that providing teacher corrective feedback was effective in reducing students' grammatical errors in their essays, and teacher corrective feedback affected writing quality; this finding, in fact, supports our study believing that feedback has an effect upon the performance of students' writing and grammatical errors.

However, the new look by L2 researchers does not seem promising when a number of researchers like Bruton (2009) and Guénette (2007) questioned the methodology of corrective feedback studies; for them the design of these studies is problematic; they associate problems to chosen populations, the kind of treatment given (i.e., type of feedback and timing), and the procedures to correct feedback studies conducted so far.

Although it is likely to have a more rigorously and carefully chosen design for studies on written corrective feedback, it seems impossible to control many variables that intervene in all human science studies. The current study is an attempt to consider and follow some recent advances in written corrective feedback especially suggestions made by Ferris (2010).

According to Ferris (2010), the design would be conducive to better results if we (1) limit the number of errors targeted by written corrective feedback, (2) do not limit our studies to just "treatable" (p. 192) errors, (3) perform longitudinal and contextualized written corrective feedback studies, (4) incorporate revision as part of feedback research design, (5) investigate different written corrective feedback methods, and finally (6) consider contextual and individual characteristics.

This research, in fact, considered a number of the above-mentioned issues; first, it focused on Japanese as a foreign language rather than English; second three different linguistic categories were chosen to be corrected by feedback, that is, NPs (noun phrases), adjective phrases, and prepositions. The reasons for their choice are as follows:

 A contrastive analysis (CA)[i] between Persian and Japanese pictures different word orders for these categories in question. In fact, in Japanese adjectives come before the noun; however, in Persian the reverse is true; an example clarifies the point:

e.g.,   きれいな花   adjective + noun   beautiful flower

           gol-eziba   noun + adjective   flower beautiful

Noun phrases were chosen since the order in which they are placed are different in Japanese and Persian. Besides, some studies in Japanese reveal that when it comes to their learning, noun phrases trouble learners learning Japanese as a foreign language (Maeda, 2011). This example shows the difference.

田中さんのかばん   Mr + Tanaka + bag

Kif-e aghayetanaka   bag + Mr + Tanaka

As for prepositions, they come after nouns in Japanese language which is not the case with Persian in which they come before nouns except objective marker "ra" which is put before the object of the sentence. For example, in this sentence 学校へ行く, the preposition へ（e）comes after the noun 学校. But in Persian in the sentence "be madresemiravam" (i.e., to school I go), the preposition be (in English to) comes before the noun.

Moreover, the study attempted to encompass revision as part of the design about which detailed explanations would be offered in the method section; as a matter of fact, the design of the study was a "blended" (Ferris, 2010, p. 195) design that focuses on students writing a draft followed by teacher written corrective feedback, then students revise the same text and again the same processes repeat.

What's more, we opted for two methods of research: direct vs. indirect to see which one in this new framework works better for the students. Indirect method got different realizations in students' essays; errors were either underlined, coded or metalinguistic explanations appeared above the errors in learners' mother tongue, that is, in Persian.

Last, the participants of the study were divided into two groups, that is, the control group which did not receive feedback but they took up a writing course and their essays were corrected and scored regarding three linguistic categories; while the experimental group received feedback whose process would come in method section of this study. The current study is a bid to investigate the following questions:

Q1: Does receiving written corrective feedback change the linguistic accuracy of learners' writings?

Q2: Do direct and indirect feedback affect the learners' accurate use of prepositions, adjective and noun phrases?

Accordingly, the following null hypotheses were made:

$H0_1$: Different types of feedback do not affect the linguistic accuracy of learners' writings.

$H0_2$: Direct and indirect feedback do not affect the learners' accurate use of prepositions, adjective and noun phrases.

Method

As was mentioned before, the study would examine the effect of direct and indirect feedback on the correct usage of prepositions, adjective phrases, and noun phrases.

Participants

Iranian learners of Japanese as a foreign language constituted the participants of this study. They were 60 in number, all of whom studied Japanese as a foreign language at the same level (i.e., level four of the institute). These students began learning Japanese at the same institute having no experience of living in Japan at any time. Their age and gender were not the concern of the study hence they were not controlled by the researchers.

In order to assure the normality of the group participating in the study, the researchers gave them a standardized test of Japanese as a foreign language (i.e., Japanese Language Proficiency Test or JLPT, Level 4). The test is composed of three different sections: 1. Vocabulary (40 questions, 25 minutes, 100 scores); 2. Listening Section (17 questions, 25 minutes, 100 scores); and 3. Reading comprehension and grammar (47 questions, 50 minutes, 200 scores). Table 1 illustrates descriptive statistics of this test.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for JLPTScores

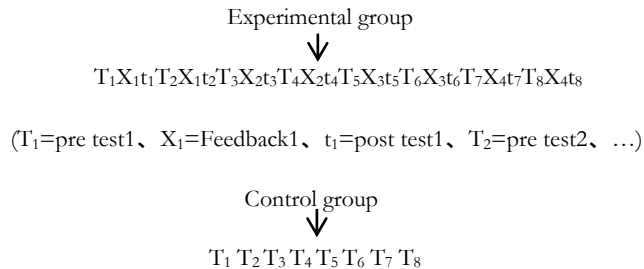|	Mean	5% Trimmed Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewedness	Kurtosis
JLPT	340.052	340.058	29.902	-0.210	-1.561

As is observed, when there is no or little difference between the main mean score and 5% trimmed[ii] mean score, the group is homogeneous. Besides, we can conclude the group is homogeneous when the kurtosis and skewedness range between + 2 and – 2 which is the case here in our study. However, another strong test of Kolmogrov-Smirnov[iii]was run showing the following result. Table 2 indicates the test.

Table 2

The Result of Running Test of Kolmogorov-Smirnov

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Test scores	.194	60	.060	.877	30	.019

As can be seen, $p > .05$ therefore the group bears normality. During one academic semester which consisted of ten week, this group attended three hours of class each week when they were given different types of feedback. Eight different topics were given to the learners. Each session they were given a topic to write an expository type of essay. They were told not to write more than 250 words in each essay. Then next session learners turned in the first essay (i.e., Pretest 1) to the teacher and then they received the direct feedback with mistakes found and explained in written form by the teacher. During the same session after getting informed of their mistakes and the correct forms, they were asked to write the revised form of the same essay and gave it back to the teacher (that is, posttest 1 or immediate posttest). The same process continued for the following weeks and in fact they wrote 16 essays with four types of feedback allocated to eight different essay topics every other session. The design of the study is as follows:

<div align="center">

Experimental group

$\Downarrow$

$T_1X_1t_1T_2X_1t_2T_3X_2t_3T_4X_2t_4T_5X_3t_5T_6X_3t_6T_7X_4t_7T_8X_4t_8$

</div>

(T_1=pre test1、 X_1=Feedback1、 t_1=post test1、 T_2=pre test2、 …)

<div align="center">

Control group

$\Downarrow$

$T_1\ T_2\ T_3\ T_4\ T_5\ T_6\ T_7\ T_8$

</div>

Raters also were part of the group participating in the study. They were three in number and they were asked to participate in order to assure the inter-rater reliability[iv]. Correlation coefficient index of reliability showed acceptable reliability index. Table 3 shows the relationship among raters which is statistically significant.

Table 3

Correlation Coefficient of Raters' Scores

Raters	R1	R2	R3
R1	1.00	.5610	.6070
R2		1.00	0.960
R3			1.00

However, when the number of raters exceeds two, there are other ways to show the acceptable inter-rater reliability. According to Hatch and Lazaraton (1991), the following formula can be used to obtain the reliability of raters:

$$r_{tt} = \frac{nr_{AB}}{1+(n-1)r_{AB}}$$

r_{tt}= reliability of all the judges' ratings

n = number of raters

r_{AB}= average correlation among raters

The result showed that the inter-rater reliability amounted to 0.875 which is a strong inter-rater reliability index.

Materials

As was mentioned before, eight expository essays were given to students to write. The control group just wrote essays without any feedback. The teacher corrected their papers regarding the accuracy of noun phrases, adjective phrases and prepositions. The experimental group were instructed to write the essay at home and the next session they were assigned to submit the paper and at the same time the teacher gave feedback; then, they were asked to write the revised version of the paper at the end of that session. As far as raters are concerned, they were supposed to read and score the essays according to the formula suggested by Sheen (2007). What follows is the detailed scoring procedure.

Scoring procedure

In order to score each paper, raters used the following formula by Sheen (2007, p. 266):

$$\text{Score} = \frac{n \text{ correct suppliance in contexts}}{n \text{ obligatory contexts} + n \text{ suppliacne in non-obligatory contexts}} \; x \; 100$$

For example, for the prepositions, first all the prepositions used in the essay were counted; next, the number of prepositions used correctly and incorrectly was counted respectively for each and every essay students wrote. In fact, each essay was scored according to Sheen's suggested formula three times by the raters that is, scoring for prepositions, adjective phrases, and noun phrases.

Procedure

As was briefly touched before, the study focused on what Ferris (2010) called possible blended design. Now, we go through step by step procedure taken to investigate written corrective feedback. For each type of feedback, two topics were given to students to write; in all, we had 10 sessions in one academic term; in the first session, the topic of the first essay, as was previously stated, was introduced and the students comprising the experimental group were asked to hand in the essay the following session; since no treatment in the form of feedback was given to students, we called this essay as pretest 1; then, the next session, the teacher collected pretest 1, corrected them with regard to one type of feedback (in our case, direct feedback) and gave them back to students while asking them to rewrite and return the papers to the teacher at the end of the class;

we called this essay posttest 1; it should be noted that the topic of the prestest1 and posttest 1 was the same; afterwards, again the students were asked to write about the second topic and this essay was viewed as the pretest 2 which was due the next session and in the same session, in fact, the teacher received students' essay, corrected them regarding the same type of feedback, and gave back the papers to students to write another essay as to the type of feedback presented; we called this last essay as the posttest 2. As a matter of fact, they wrote on eight topics during eight sessions the timeline of which as well as the type of feedback are illustrated in Table 4. It deserves mentioning that session 1 and session 10 of the term were not included in the process and actually the feedback as the treatment began after the first session at which students just knew the topic they were supposed to write about.

Table 4

Timeline of Presenting Feedback to Students

Type Of feedback		Direct feedback		Indirect feedback (underlining)		Indirect feedback (coding)		Indirect feedback (translation)		
Sessions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of essays written	Introducing the first topic	Pretest 1 on topic 1 / Posttest 1 on topic 1	Pretest 2 on topic 2 / Posttest 2 on topic 2	Pretest 3 on topic 3 / Posttest 3 topic 3	Pretest 4 on topic 4 / Posttest 4 on topic 4	Pretest 5 on topic 5 / Posttest 5 on topic 5	Pretest 6 on topic 6 / Posttest 6 on topic 6	Pretest 7 on topic 7 / Posttest 7 on topic 7	Pretest 8 on topic 8 / Posttest 8 on topic 8	--- --- --- --- --- --- ---

Results

First we attempted to see the difference between two groups receiving or not receiving feedback. The result of independent samples t-test showed a significant difference between the groups $(t (58) = 2.73, p < .05)$. Table 5 demonstrates the descriptive statistics and the amount of observed T.

Table 5

The Result of Independent Samples t-test and Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig.
Experimental group	30	17.89	1.33	58	2.73	.022
Control group	30	19.16	.43			

Another question we tried to answer in this study was the effect of direct and indirect feedback on the writing performance of learners in three distinct linguistic categories including prepositions, adjective phrases, and noun phrases. According to the question, the null hypothesis was made and we set our significance level at .05 in order to see if it is confirmed or rejected through statistical analysis. The repeated measure ANOVA was used since we had 16 pretests and posttests which were regarded as independent variables and three linguistic categories were viewed as dependent variables which were assumed to change for the better by exposure to feedback given to learners.

Each two sessions focused on one type of feedback and we began the analysis by the effect of *direct* feedback on the accuracy of linguistic categories. In fact, for each type of feedback we had four written essays, the first one of which had been written prior to any feedback given to students; therefore, the researchers sought to find the difference the feedback types made among three essays written after the feedback (i.e., posttest 1, pretest 2 and posttest 2). Keeping this in mind, we began our analysis with direct feedback and its effect on prepositions, adjective phrases and noun phrases. Tables 6 and 7 show descriptive statistics and repeated measure ANOVA.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Direct Feedback and Use of Prepositions, Adjective Phrases and Noun Phrases

	Essays written	No. of Participants	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Posttest1	30	78.26	15.84
Prepositions	Pretest2	30	43.17	19.35
	Posttest2	30	49.19	18.66
	Posttest 1	30	96.00	12.64
Adjective phrases	Pre test2	30	15.33	31.90
	Posttest2	30	100.00	0.000
	Posttest1	30	58.95	22.34
Noun phrases	Pretest2	30	50.47	37.43
	Posttest2	30	91.66	18.00

Table 7

The Result of Repeated Measure ANOVA for the Effect of Direct Feedback on the Use of Prepositions, Adjective Phrases, and Noun Phrases

	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig
Prepositions Wilks' Lambda	0.20	15.10	2.00	8.00	.02
Adjective phrases Wilks's Lambda	0.11	31.38	2.00	8.00	.00
Noun phrases Wilk's Lambda	0.38	6.36	2.00	8.00	.02

As can be observed, *p*<.05 therefore, direct feedback made a statistically significant difference in the use of prepositions, adjective phrases and noun phrases students used in their essays.

In order to examine the effect of *underlining* as a type of indirect feedback on the use of prepositions, adjective phrases and noun phrases, the researchers used another again repeated measure ANOVA, the results of which are shown in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Underlining and Use of Prepositions, Adjective Phrases and Noun Phrases

	Essays written	No. of Participants	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Posttest3	30	90.31	14.70
Prepositions	Pretest4	30	69.21	20.10
	Posttest4	30	88.52	17.51
	Posttest 3	30	87.00	21.10
Adjective phrases	Pre test4	30	43.33	49.81
	Posttest4	30	100.00	0.000
	Posttest3	30	88.33	24.90
Noun phrases	Pretest4	30	51.57	34.19
	Posttest4	30	83.84	27.35

Table 9

The Result of Repeated Measure ANOVA for the Effect of Underlining on the Use of Prepositions, Adjective Phrases, and Noun Phrases

	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig
PrepositionsWilks' Lambda	0.57	2.90	2.00	8.00	.11
Adjective phrasesWilks's Lambda	0.40	5.80	2.00	8.00	.02
Noun phrases Wilk's Lambda	0.55	3.19	2.00	8.00	.09

Table 9 illustrates that just in the case of adjective phrases $p<.05$, underlining has an impact on the correct use of the category; however, as far as prepositions and noun phrases are concerned, $p>.05$, the difference is not significant.

Now we would like to see whether *coding* has a role to play in changing the use of prepositions, adjective phrases, and noun phrases. Tables 10 and 11 indicate descriptive statistics and the result of repeated measure ANOVA. As is clear, coding does not make a statistically significant difference in the use of prepositions, adjective and noun phrases since the significance level is greater than .05.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics for Coding and Use of Prepositions, Adjective Phrases and Noun Phrases

	Essays written	No. of Participants	Mean	Std. Deviation
Prepositions	Posttest5	30	90.31	14.70
	Pretest6	30	69.21	20.10
	Posttest6	30	88.52	17.51
Adjective phrases	Posttest 5	30	87.00	21.10
	Pre test6	30	43.33	49.81
	Posttest6	30	100.00	0.000
Noun phrases	Posttest5	30	88.33	24.90
	Pretest6	30	51.57	34.19
	Posttest6	30	83.84	27.35

Table 11

The Result of Repeated Measure ANOVA for the Effect of Coding on the Use of Prepositions, Adjective Phrases, and Noun Phrases

	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig
PrepositionsWilks' Lambda	0.50	3.94	2.00	8.00	.06
Adjective phrasesWilks's Lambda	0.74	1.39	2.00	8.00	.30
Noun phrases Wilk's Lambda	0.76	1.24	2.00	8.00	.33

And finally, we would investigate if translation as the last indirect type of feedback improves the correct use of prepositions, adjective, and noun phrases. Tables 12 and 13 picture the information on descriptive statistics and result of repeated measure ANOVA.

Table 12

Descriptive Statistics for Translation and Use of Prepositions, Adjective Phrases and Noun Phrases

	Essays written	No. of Participants	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Posttest7	30	68.41	31.70
Prepositions	Pretest8	30	62.97	19.94
	Posttest8	30	66.38	26.59
	Posttest 7	30	82.66	28.83
Adjective	Pre test8	30	72.77	41.61
phrases	Posttest8	30	83.33	36.00
	Posttest7	30	79.84	24.57
Noun phrases	Pretest8	30	67.64	26.65
	Posttest8	30	80.79	25.98

Table 13

The Result of Repeated Measure ANOVA for the Effect of Translation on the Use of Prepositions, Adjective Phrases, and Noun Phrases

	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig
PrepositionsWilks' Lambda	0.97	0.09	2.00	8.00	.91
Adjective phrasesWilks's Lambda	0.93	0.28	2.00	8.00	.76
Noun phrases Wilk's Lambda	0.84	0.75	2.00	8.00	.49

As is seen, translation as a type of indirect feedback has got an impact neither on prepositions, adjective phrases nor on noun phrases *(p>.05)*.

Discussion and Conclusion

The controversy surrounding error feedback and its usefulness still exists without conclusive results. In this study, we could see that students who were exposed to feedback, in all, performed better than the ones who were not. This is quite in line with previous studies confirming the efficacy of feedback. As was mentioned throughout the result section, direct feedback enhances the use of three linguistic categories which in the long run contributes to the quality of the essays written by language learners. As far as indirect feedback and its types are concerned, just underlining in the

case of adjective phrases changes the writing performance of learners for the better; both coding and translation have got no effect upon the use of prepositions, adjective and noun phrases.

As to the result of statistical analysis, direct feedback has got constructive influence on improving three linguistic aspects of students' essays. Ayoun (2001) believed that direct feedback is the most beneficial; Chandler (2003) also asserted that learners like direct type of feedback. The current study was also in accord with Ayoun and Chandler's studies.

Underlining was just effective in the case of adjective phrases having no impact on the use of prepositions and noun phrases. Lee (1997) did a study in Hong Kong concluding that no difference was observed between the group which received underlining as a type of feedback and the one who did not. However, Nicholas, Lightbown, and Spada (2001) contended that the result of administering feedback differs as to the type of feedback and specific linguistic categories. Sumita (2004) cited that we cannot apply a certain type of feedback for improving all aspects of written essays although it is quite likely to give different types of feedback as to the kind of error learners make in their essays. Also, Nishikawa (2009) stated that correct usage of language structures requires different strategies which cannot be the same for all syntactic categories. Even different errors call for a certain type of feedback which can be shown to be effective in changing the accuracy of learners' essays. Our study also showed that different types of feedback do not have the same effect on three categories of prepositions, adjective phrases, and noun phrases.

In their study, Robb, Ross, and Shortreed (1986) reported that two groups one of which received coding feedback and another did not receive any coding feedback did not show any significant difference, that is in parallel to what we reached in this study. In another study, Sumita (2004) compared several groups receiving underlining and coding feedback concluding that there was not much of difference between them.

Translation was the last indirect feedback which was the focus of the current study. As was previously stated, translation was of no effect regarding the improvement of learners' ability to use prepositions, adjective phrases, and noun phrases correctly in their essays. Cohen and Brooks-Carson (2001) stated that translation got some effect upon certain type of essays and it can induce some changes in the essays of second language learners.

Now the question is why feedback of different types cannot equally improve the quality of students' essays. Hyland and Hyland (2006) believed that some students cannot understand their teachers' comments and/or if they understand, they do not know how to change the incorrect into the correct. That is the probable reason why in our study learners of Japanese as a foreign language did not benefit from indirect type of feedback especially because they were not used to taking feedback from their teachers. It can be concluded that teaching practice is a determining criterion in making students ready for the type of exercise teachers present to enhance students' language ability.

Zamel (1985) stated that teachers had distinct strategies to practice feedback in the classroom; besides, by applying different methods of giving feedback to students, the time needed for learners to understand and implement these pieces of information was not the same. Here, we can associate this fact to the result of our study. We are not aware of students' reaction to different types of feedback included in the study. Although direct feedback was more effective than indirect ones, we can expect another outcome if we lengthen the process of presenting feedback to learners.

Generally speaking, finding students' errors and explaining the correct forms to them is quite challenging in teaching practice. However, some factors are quite determining.

We cannot find two teachers presenting and explaining errors in the same way to students. Usami (2006) asserts that directing students into the right path to correct their errors requires different methods. In fact, these methods are prone to change while working with different groups of learners of diverse linguistic and cultural background.

Sumita (2004) believes that the simplicity and difficulty of a certain type of grammatical category is a determining factor in planning to implement a specific type of feedback; for example, for errors which students can easily spot and change, underlining can be quite effective whereas for difficult errors maybe detailed explanation seems necessary for students to deeply understand the issue. This can be regarded as a new line of research in the future.

Another point to be made concerns the research design researchers choose to investigate feedback. Having or not having control group is an issue for many studies conducted so far and just some studies considered the issue (Ashwell, 2000; Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knock, 2008a, 2008b; Bitchener & Knock, 2010a, 2010b; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Kepner, 1991; Polio, Fleck, & Leder, 1998; Sheen, 2007; Yang & Lyster, 2010). However, these studies lacked other factors to be viewed as significant such as the absence of pretest (Kepner, 1991) or having one revised version of learners' writing as the evidence for improvement of accuracy (Aswell, 2000; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). According to Hyland and Hyland (2006), "it is difficult to draw any clear conclusions and generalizations from the literature as a result of varied populations, treatments, and research designs" (p. 84).

The problems as such do exist and although many recent studies took these issues into account, we cannot ascertain the result of our study to be quite effective in enhancing the accuracy of learners' writing by the type of feedback given. There are several studies which doubt the efficacy of corrective feedback (Bellah, 1995; Billings, 1998; Brooks, 2000; Lafontana, 1996; Sommers, 1982). Other studies show that editing symbols are sometimes confusing for learners (Giffin, 1982; Richardson, 2000; Straub, 1997). Also studies by Cohen (1987), Truscott (1996, 1999, 2007), Hyland (2000), Muncie (2000) and Zinn (1998) question the usefulness of corrective feedback. As it seems, there are conflicting ideas on the effectiveness of written corrective feedback and the number of studies, although growing in number, cannot reach a consensus about the type and focus of feedback given to improve learners' accuracy in writing. Perhaps further studies had better not look at direct or indirect type as two separate approaches but as complementary ones; the focus of feedback also raises another concern because so far accuracy has been the criterion in students' essays, however, the construct of writing is much more complex and is not limited to linguistic accuracy, hence the need to delve into contextual, organizational, rhetorical aspects of essays as well as linguistic categories.

Finally, feedback studies are just directed at changing the thinking or cognitive processes of learners ability rather than affective factors intervening in these processes, a concern which Storch and Wigglesworth's study (2010) correctly raised. In all, the results of this study pinpoint the efficacy of direct feedback on the accurate use of prepositions, adjective and noun phrases; however, underlining was effective in the case of adjective phrases having no impact on prepositions and noun phrases and the other two indirect types of feedback that is, coding and translation affected none of the given categories. Regarding these results, prospective studies may concentrate on other linguistic errors like the ones considered for this study going beyond some focused errors like definite and indefinite article. Reliability of feedback studies call for a concentrated effort of researchers to replicate studies with other foci on errors to see what the result would be when different types of feedback are used by teachers and/or researchers in the classroom context.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

Any study does its best to look deeply into issues and variables affecting the experiment; however, controlling all variables seems impossible. This study, likewise, happened in a foreign language context; therefore, generalizing the result to other contexts should be taken with caution. In fact, replication studies are needed in Japanese speaking countries to assure the accuracy of these findings. Moreover, we may have different results if we will choose other groups of participants like university students learning Japanese as a second or foreign language.

The sample of the study was limited since the number of students learning Japanese as a foreign language in our country do not reach 100; with this sample size we cannot expect a high inter-rater reliability; the genre chosen for the study is was expository one, therefore, it would be a good idea to choose other genres like narration, in future studies. The study focused on three linguistic categories, that is, prepositions, adjectives, and noun phrases; future studies can investigate linguistic categories other than these three we chose for this study. As was previously mentioned, gender and age were not included in the design of the study, hence we may consider these two variables when doing other feedback-related research.

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[i]From Fries (1945) point of view, contrastive analysis is a scientific description of the target language by a careful
comparison of a parallel description of the native language of the learner. It entails the systematic comparison
of two or more languages to search for similarities and differences.

[ii]A method of averaging that removes a small percentage of the largest and smallest values before calculating
the mean. The trimmed mean looks to reduce the effects of outliers on the calculated average. This method is
best suited for data with large, erratic deviations or extremely skewed distributions. A trimmed mean is stated
as a mean trimmed by X%, where X is the sum of the percentage of observations removed from both the upper
and lower bounds. According to Pallant (2005), if you compare the original mean and this new trimmed mean
you can see whether some of your more extreme scores are having a strong influence on the mean. If these
two mean values are very different, you may need to investigate these data points further.

[iii]The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (Chakravart, Laha, & Roy, 1967) is used to decide if a sample comes from a
population with a specific distribution. According to what Ghasemi and Zahediasl (2012) assert, Kolmogrov-
Smirnov test "compares the scores in the sample to a normally distributed set of scores with the same mean
and standard deviation; the null hypothesis is that sample distribution is normal; if the test is significant, the
distribution is non-normal" (p. 487).

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