CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview and Background

1.1.1. Definition of Writing

The result of gradually developing a text is called writing which consists of some activities such as setting goals, generating ideas, organizing information, choosing the language, making a draft, reading and reviewing, and at the end, revising and editing. As it seems writing is one of the complex and long processes that is demanding for learners especially for second or foreign language learners. Lenneberg (1975) in a study about human beings' behavior mentioned that men universally learn to do some activities like walking and talking, some other tasks are merely cultural-specific though, like swimming and writing. For example, learning how to swim first demands enough amount of water and then a good instructor to teach us swimming. Writing also needs a good teacher and being a member of a literate society. In this section, three of the writing processes are mentioned briefly.

1) Planning

Before starting to write, good writers first concentrate on the entire organization and meaning of the context and involve in the activities of planning, that is, they think about the purpose of the topic. If the topic is, for example, about writing a letter to an old friend to invite him for dinner or it is about writing a letter to a manager for being employed in a post, they are fundamentally different and they demand two various organizations and styles since the first letter is an informal and the second should be written in a formal manner.

The amount of planning will vary, therefore, in relation to the type of writing task, from relatively spontaneous writing based on a quick mental plan to something carefully worked out beforehand in notes. However, it will also differ according to the preferred style of the individual writer, and considerable variation has been observed here. Some learners who appear to take very little time for thinking before starting to write nevertheless produce effective writing. They may, instead, pause frequently to reflect during writing (Mubarak, 2013).

2) Revising

Generally speaking, through alternative stages of writing and reflection, good writers do their best to proceed in this way and read several times the sentences and look back at the original plan and decide how to make the next sentences. After writing a part, they pass some questions in their minds about anything that they have written and those which would be written next because all the parts have to be organized and meaningful. Less experienced writers are always worried about grammar and this stops them from thinking about the correctness of organization and ideas (Perl, 1980; Sommers, 1982).

According to Faigley and Witte (1981), not only the writer's skill but also the purpose of the writing, the genre, the level of formality required, and the degree of familiarity with the readers, the subject, or the type of writing task all determine the nature and extent of revision. Therefore, an informal writing like a letter to a friend requires less carful revision in comparison with a formal letter to a manager.

3) Making a reader-based text

Taking the readers into account and trying to write a text based on them is one of the most important features of good writers (Flower & Hayes, 1980a). What the readers need to know, making the information clarified, and having the correct style that is formal, informal or persuasive are all in the writer's mind. Of course, the selection of style and content depend mostly on the group of readers and good writers are always careful about the audience of their writing. For example, writing about an old tradition will be organized and styled differently if the readers are children or adults, young or old, socially low or high class.

1.1.2. Different Views about Writing

Writing as one of the four language skills has traditionally played a significant role in most language education programs all around the world. Students need to write for academic purposes because learning how to communicate when another person is not in front of us listening to our words and looking at our gestures or facial expressions is an essential part of interaction with others in a new cultural setting (Raims, 1983). It is also one of the most frequently used ways of assessing learners' performance in

language classes. Students' knowledge of language can be studied through this very important skill. It is the skill through which it can be decided whether a person is literate or illiterate in the second language. Teachers can also diagnose learners' weaknesses and language problems on the basis of their written work (Rivers, 1981). As a result, ESL/EFL teachers often benefit from composition writing as an effective means of evaluation students' communicative competence in writing. Furthermore, in the eyes of the students, the ability to write maybe associated with evidence of having acquired the language. Therefore, writing serves a variety of purposes in both EFL and ESL settings. English writing instruction has thus an increasing role in foreign language education.

It is generally agreed that learning to write well is a demanding and time-consuming task (Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995). Writing effectively as a complex process which demands both cognitive analysis and linguistic synthesis requires the writers to strike a balance between several issues at the same time. Some of these issues include content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, spelling and mechanics such as capitalization. Writing is especially a painstaking job for most nonnative speakers because they are supposed to create the written products which indicate their mastery of all the above-mentioned elements in a new language (Rass, 2001).

Richards (1990) believes that writing well and organized requires something more than just basic mechanical control and this seems to be more problematic for nonnative learners since they have more anxiety and frustration for starting, designing and ending a writing project even though such learners have enough mechanical skills in the second or foreign language.

Historically, in the eyes of both learners and teachers writing has been considered as an obviously daunting activity. The learners have usually been left to their own devices to present a product which was supposed to be a coherent and well-written text to their teachers and the final product has often been seen and corrected by teachers. There was no or little attention to the intervening levels when learners were creating a text though (Holmes, 2002).Therefore, the final product was given feedback in terms of grammar and content.

Writing has often meant grammar. That is, in all foreign language settings when it comes to grammar, it is only in writing classes. When grammar is taught, students feel that they get some knowledge of writing and they have some good skills about how to write well. It is sad to say, in many cases this is a completely wrong idea because there are many similarities and differences between the first and second or foreign language and sometimes it happens that students are not able to convey the correct concept of the message. Consequently, even for producing a simple sentence students may have some big problems and teachers have to start the writing classes with the simple and basic grammar point. And teaching all grammatical points from the beginning stages requires much time and patience and may not be possible in a limited semester time.

Although to some instructors, writing is a supplementary component that does not deserve as much attention and instruction as other language components, among the four major skills, it has been one of the most important as well as demanding ones for Iranian EFL students. As a whole, how to write grammatically and in a native-like way has obsessed the Iranian EFL learners. As a result, teachers and learners have frequently attempted to find effective ways of addressing EFL learners' linguistic problems in writing to make their written products more native-like.

Ferris (2002) claims that in L2 research and pedagogy of second language, writing is an interesting and rapidly growing area and over the past 20 years the foundation of some important journals like *Journal of Second Language Writing* in 1992, is because of an explosion of interest in L2 writing. L2 writing now is a dynamic and essential area of specialization for researchers rather than just one of the four skills covered in language settings. In the past, L2 writing was simply one of the components of an integrated skill in language settings or just a separate offering for international learners in a composition program for university students. These days, L2 writers examine L2 learners in ESL programs, in foreign language areas, and in composition classes (Ferris 2009; Harklau, Losey & Siegal, 1999; Roberge, Siegal & Harklau, 2009; Scarcella, 2003).

Ferris (2009) believes that L2 writers have some similar characteristics. First, simultaneously they are learning both second language skills and writing expertise. Second, in comparison with L1 writers, L2 learners have not been in good exposure to

spoken and written input in the L2.Therefore, their knowledge to speak about their ideas effectively would be more limited. Third, because L2 writers have had less experience and background about producing and reading extended L2 texts, they lack enough fluency and even confidence to be able to write long texts in academic and professional settings.

In addition to the above-mentioned L2 writer's features, these students also face some challenges where there are some similarities and differences between L1 and L2 writings and they have to tell them apart. At the same time, these learners may also struggle with their relative lack of cultural knowledge needed to create effective texts and produce good argument. Thus, it is a heavy responsibility of writing teachers to show the cultural differences to the L2 learners and provide instructional support for them and make them able to complete such tasks successfully.

Another cultural issue for L2 students refers to modern composition pedagogy where instructional techniques such as multiple drafting and revision, exploratory writing tasks that are ungraded like free writing, teacher nondirective feedback, and peer response groups and so on are provided. L2 instructors should be sensitive to these subjects and clarify them to the learners; otherwise they will result in learners' confusion, frustration and can even be threatening.

To make this section short, since L2 writing learners are very diverse with various backgrounds and experiences and challenges to writing in another language, teachers should take these matters carefully into account when designing a course.

1.1.3. Problems of English Learning and Teaching in Iran

English learning and teaching for EFL students like Iranians have been influenced by some factors that directly or indirectly affect the second language acquisition. Some of these factors are mentioned as follows:

a) *Influence of L1 on L2*

In Iran students start going to the primary school at the age of seven and they learn two types of Persian. The first is the colloquial Persian which is informal. They hear, listen and learn it naturally at home and other places but not taught directly at school.

In fact, they use it to interact with others. The second one which is called classical Persian and is a kind of formal one is taught by teachers, and students have to learn and use it in academic and educational areas. Although Iranian students learn to write in L1 from primary school, they are merely taught to write English alphabet and just a few words at this level. They start learning how to write some sentences from middle school and this task that is sentence-level writing would continue to the end of high school. Therefore, text writing even in the form of informal ones, like writing a letter to a friend is not taught in Iranian schools perfectly and seriously. As a matter of fact, students learn writing in English as a foreign language in university and this is not the case for all and it is limited to only those majoring in English. Clearly speaking, it is understandable that the influence of L1 onL2 can take place and very late writing learning has a very negative and big effect on Iranian students' writing. Since they were faced with L1, they tend to transfer all sentences from L1 into L2. Consequently, this makes teaching writing one of the demanding tasks for both teachers and learners.

b) Low proficiency

In primary school, Iranian students are made familiar with the English alphabet for the first time and they learn how to say and write just some words. Learning basic English grammar starts in middle school and it will continue to the end of high school through grammar translation method. Students have to repeat grammatical points and do a lot of drills in the class and at home and memorize a big load of rules. All these factors cause that those students to suffer from problems in different English skills especially writing which is very difficult and demands a lot of skills. As a consequence, many students are mostly weak in vocabulary, syntax, grammar and discourse.

c) School and university difference

There is a huge difference between schools and universities in Iran with regard to learning and teaching English. As it was mentioned before, in schools English is taught through grammar translation method where long drills, direct translation, repetition and memorization talk first and teachers speak Persian most of the time and there is just one simple English book for students, which is taught just two hours a week. However, when English students are in university, they have to study just English books in all classes and teachers only speak English most of the time and it is

for more than a decade that the teaching method has changed from grammar translation into audio-lingual where English is more spoken by participants and the focus is not just on grammar. This situation makes students slightly surprised when they enter an almost entire English area from a limited English place and this case may make some of them embarrassed and shocked and they lose their confidence and motivation as a result of stress.

d) The gap between students

Although, after finishing high school, students have to pass a university entrance exam in Iran, this exam never completely separates good and weak students from each other. Therefore, in every class there are different students with different English experiences, backgrounds and knowledge. Some students are good at English; some have the experience of traveling abroad and being exposed to native speakers directly; some could afford having English tutors and learning it much better; some are more interested in learning English, and so more motivated. All these differences along with some others make a class not homogeneous for teachers and lead to more difficulty to teach writing more effectively.

e) T.V Programs

Because English is a foreign language in Iran, there are not any special channels or programs in English on T.V. Every day people can only watch English news which is broadcast late at night and is not an appropriate program for all students at any level, but it can be good just for special literate people. All the programs are in Persian. So, the first occasion where the students can listen to almost complete English is in university, and this chance is provided late and the speakers are not native teachers and the situation will not be a natural and pure English one.

1.1.4. Teaching of Writing

Teaching writing is not at all an easy task since how to write in another language is not simply 'write things down' but certainly something beyond it, even in someone's native language. Most people who are very good communicators and are able to speak for a long time fluently confess that putting pen to paper to interact ideas and express ourselves clearly can be a slow and painful process.

Many researchers believe that to understand the complexity of writing stages, some special terminology should be suggested to make the distinction between the mechanical aspects of writing and the more sophisticated stages in written communication clear. For a case in point, Bizzell (1986) makes a distinction between composing and writing. He states that the former refers to all the processes that result in the writing of something and the latter refers specifically to the transcription of the material itself. So, in her eyes, writing is subsumed under composing because composing includes reflection about the topic, gathering of information, taking of notes, working on a series of drafts and revising. Dvorak and Kuipers (1989) put both transcription and composing under the more general term that is "writing though". She refers to writing as "all the different tasks that involve transferring thought to paper" (p. 145).

In the settings of second or foreign language learning in which students first of all have to struggle with the transcription of speech before engaging in written texts, writing may be considered as a continuum of tasks that start from more mechanical or formal stages of writing things down on the one side to the more complex act of composing on the other side.

Most of the second and foreign writing instructors rely primarily on findings and methods from first language studies because to date the superiority of writing research has been conducted with learners writing in their native language. Besides a lot of similarities between first and second language, the differences must be taken into account cautiously. According to Kroll (1990), writing is a very complex task in another language and all the time students have many problems with new codes in second language and simply transferring from first language into second language is a useless and wasting activity. She acclaims:

> In fact, while a background in first language writing may help inform the explorations of second language writing teachers and researchers, it should not be presumed that the act of writing in one's first language is the same as the act of writing in one's second language. For example, first and second language learners may not approach a writing task in the same way nor attend to feedback in the same way. (p. 2)

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1.1.5. Characteristics of a Good Writer

Ability to select from near synonyms the appropriate lexicon that involves one's meaning, select from a lot of different syntactic structures those that convey one's message most correctly, and use a way which will have the most positive rhetorical effect plus good knowledge of conventions of discourse in the second or foreign language culture are some important characteristics of a good writer. It is clear that such skills will not develop only from practicing language grammar and vocabulary. Krashen (1984) considers three ways that distinguish good writers from poor ones:

- *Planning*: good writers plan more than poor ones. That is, before starting to write their first draft, they plan and organize the topic and the outline in their minds. For poor writers sitting down and beginning to write down occur at the same time; however, good writers always ask for more time before starting to write. Good writers seem to have flexible plans and do not stick to their original ideas if they see a reason for changing the course of their thinking while in the process of composing.
- *Rescanning*: before keeping on composing, good writers stop and read again what they have already written frequently. In a study done by Krashen (1984), he found out that good writers tended to stop and rescan their writing three times more than remedial students did. He professes that rereading and planning for the next stage will end up with better products.
- *Revising*: while poor writers mostly concern about the surface and the amount of their writings, good writers are willing to revise the texts and make more changes and do their best to see if revisions are necessary. (pp. 17-18)

Among all the suggestions and solutions made by many experts and linguists about how to teach writing more effectively, corrective feedback is known as one of the most useful options. A great deal of research has been conducted on this subject i.e., corrective feedback and its role in writing acquisition of EFL students. As a matter of fact, feedback provision for learners has been considered as one of the writing teachers' most important responsibilities, whether in the form of written commentary, error correction, teacher-student conferencing, or peer discussion. These different forms of feedback will be discussed in different sections of this thesis.

First, let's start with the general word 'feedback':

When you are eagerly speaking to your old friend after many years but he just looks at his watch and says, "oh, it's 5", he is just trying to give you feedback which at the time means he has to go. So he is not as interested as you are in having the conversation.

Giving and receiving feedback is part of life. Sometimes the feedback you give or get is neither useful, nor meant to be. ("You're a jerk!" come to mind, for instance). Other feedback types, however, are sincere attempts to help the recipient improve his performance skills. This is corrective feedback, and all of us need it from time to time.

Corrective feedback is information provided to an individual or group about her or its behavior, actions, style and strategies. To have any real power, corrective feedback must be delivered in such a way and by such a person that it will be attended to rather than simply arousing denial. That means that the ideal provider of feedback is someone the recipient trusts and that the provider conveys the feedback as sensitively as possible. Feedback in general may have a number of possible purposes:

- To help individuals in their personal development
- To improve relationship between and among individuals and groups
- To improve communication between and among individuals and groups
- To cause individuals or groups improve their performance
- To enhance the climate within an organization
- To increase the effectiveness of an activity or initiative.

A frequent practice in the field of education and in learning generally is known as corrective feedback. It typically involves a student receiving either formal or informal feedback on her or his performance on various tasks by a teacher or peer(s).

In teaching, among all class tasks, feedback is counted on as an important one. In fact, teachers' feedback motivates learners and let them know how they are doing, and teachers should provide feedback in any situation whether the learners' response is correct or not (Good & Brophy, 2000). Corrective feedback means one that follows an incorrect, i.e., ungrammatical answer. Chaudron (1977) offers a definition for corrective feedback, that is any reaction of the teacher which clearly transforms disapprovingly refers to, or demands improvement of the learner utterance.

The providers of the feedback can be different people in any situation. For a case in point, in classroom settings they are teachers or other students, and in naturalistic settings it is provided by native speakers or other nonnative speakers. Corrective feedback mainly refers to any reaction of teachers which make the students pay attention to grammatical accuracy of anything they have just produced orally or in written texts. Thus, corrective feedback may happen in a grammar setting or in a communicative context for students' writing.

According to Long (1991), corrective feedback plays the role of a bridge that on one side there is the linguistic form and on the other side its meaning; so, they can understand the message more easily and bear it in mind for a longer period of time. Long believes that corrective feedback can give a hand to acquisition when learners make a problem or an error and then receiving feedback aids to make input comprehensible and enables learners to correct their errors.

In addition, corrective feedback is provided either immediately/on-line following the learner's error or may be delayed until later. Some researchers, for example Doughty (2001), claim that the efficacy of on-line feedback is higher than the delayed one since the learner can immediately find out the gap between his or her error and the correct target form. However, some other researchers argue that off-line corrective feedback is also effective in language acquisition.

It should be mentioned that different terms have been used to describe corrective feedback including negative evidence, negative data, negative feedback, corrective feedback and error correction. These terms have been used interchangeably even though some of them were originally defined differently. Ammar (2003) gave short definitions for these almost alternative expressions: Negative feedback is used to refer to any reaction of the teacher which asks for the improvement of the students' utterance.

Chomsky (1981) argues that there are two types of negative evidence: direct and indirect. "Direct means any correction by the speech community" (p. 89), and "indirect negative evidence is defined as certain structures or rules that fail to be exemplified in relative simple expressions, where they would be expected to be found" (p. 89).

In the present study, the researcher will use corrective feedback terminology where it refers to any teacher's move that helps with alerting the learner to the existence of an error and provides either positive or direct negative evidence.

It is totally inevitable to stop making errors by learners. Because, as their names suggest, they are learning those linguistic forms and structures and on the way of learning errors always occur, and the concern of researchers and writing instructors is focused on a method to decrease error making which is most useful for learners. Error correction on this way is one of the best methods for ESL/ EFL students' linguistic accuracy which has shown a great deal of efficacy. Some researchers (Kepner, 1991; Polio, Fleck &Leder, 1998; Truscott & Hsu, 2008) consider written corrective feedback insignificant because they found no helpful evidence in their studies. Some other research on written corrective feedback has represented its efficacy over time for special linguistic structures though (Ashwell, 2000; Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009a; Bitchener, Young & Cameron, 2005; Chandler, 2003; R. Ellis, Sheen, Murakami &Tkashima, 2008; Ferris, 1997; Ferris & Roberts, 2001).

Although these days written corrective feedback is recognized as effective for EFL students, the findings of these studies are not without problems and it requires more research.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Teaching of writing to nonnative speakers of English is getting more emphasis currently, and this skill is treated to be important in its own right. Since writing in second language is described as a developmental process analogous to the process of reading (Brown, 1994), many EFL teachers practice it in different stages of language learning. And coping with the errors is one of the demanding tasks for both teachers and students. Students' grammatical errors are something inevitable that the composition teachers are always faced with. No matter how much creative freedom we might like to give to students, no matter how much we may dislike the focus traditionally placed on errors, and no matter how much we may dread the act of correction, we ultimately find ourselves with pen in hand, diligently scanning students' compositions in search of errors. The problem cases, those whose papers are

strewn with errors, constitute a majority of the individuals using a writing skill lab. Consequently, error analysis becomes one of the teachers' first responsibilities, that is a heavy one, especially when one considers that students' errors range from sentence-level problems to topic development or essay structure; from mere slips of memory to garbled syntax indicating the students' unfamiliarity with the acceptable forms of the written language. It will be more complicated when the teacher works with native speakers of English as well as foreign students. Both groups face with the same areas, the nature of the errors is different for them though, and therefore, the teacher has to understand how and why these problems differ in order to most effectively help the students work toward error-free stage (Richards, 1990). In this section, three major approaches to the analysis of learners' errors are discussed briefly.

1) Contrastive Analysis

Language is a conditioned response to the eyes of the proponents of contrastive analysis who believe that errors produced by a second or foreign language learner result from the interference of the native language. Primary tenets of the theory are:

1. Prime cause of difficulty and error in foreign language learning is interference coming from the learner's native language.
2. Difficulties are chiefly due to differences between the two languages.
3. The greater the differences, the more acute the learning difficulties will be.
4. The results of a comparison between the two languages are needed to predict the difficulties and errors which occur in learning the second language.
5. What needs to be taught is discovered by comparing the languages and subtracting what is common to them (Stevenson, 1974).

Purists of contrastive analysis support a strong approach: development of teaching methods based on a comparison of phonological, grammatical, and syntactical features of the native language and target language. A second or weaker version emphasizes analysis of errors after they occur. Some researchers believe the latter method to be the more valid of the two, and it is certainly a more realistic pedagogical approach. Both versions of contrastive analysis can aid the teacher, although the teacher should not expect himself or herself top practice the strong version (Kaplan, 1987).

Thoroughly researching and knowing the language of every foreign student who might use the lab would be physically and mentally impossible. However, the tutor ought to be aware of some basic language differences, and anticipate and recognize error that frequently result from native language interference or, at least, consider native language interferences as a possibility. For example, Chinese students will have great difficulty with the infinite and definite articles since they are not used in Chinese.

The second version of contrastive analysis is more useful for the tutor since he or she almost always sees the student and the student's work after the errors have been made. At this point, the tutor has a definite advantage over the classroom teacher, who, more likely than not, can only determine native language interference based on the student's written words. The tutor has the luxury of working closely with the student and can ask if the error reflects a native language pattern rather than a target language pattern. Through questioning, the tutor can help the student discover why he or she produced the error. Sometimes the student is aware of the native language interference; sometimes not. But in either case, the tutor's questions frequently enable the student to recognize and understand the interference. Once made aware of this particular dependence and shown how to form the correct expression, the student is more likely to watch for and to correct the error in the future.

2) Interlanguage

Interlanguage can be best understood as an offshoot of error analysis which draws parallels between second language learning and first language acquisition. Current approaches to the interlanguage treat child language learning as a progression of self-contained, internally structured systems witch become increasingly similar to adult language system (Richards, 1974). Proponents of interlanguage profess that a second or foreign language learner constructs successive linguistic systems as he or she masters the target language. The teacher can use interlanguage theory pedagogically to formulate more reasonable expectations of target language performance from the student and should come to expect variability as the student continues to develop her or his language systems (Richards, 1974).

3) Error Analysis

In 1960s error analysis was developed as one of the branches of applied linguistics and its birth proved that many of the learners' errors were not due to the learners' mother tongue, but reflected universal learning strategies. Error analysis was therefore offered as an alternative to contrastive analysis (Richards & Platt, 1992).

Error analysis derives importance and significance from the assumptions that a contrastive analysis of two grammars or two languages can fully describe the reason and can show the sources of learners' errors. These assumptions seem to be fallacious. As Richards (1990) acclaims, "it is not clear how a systematic comparison of adequate grammar is to be affected or that the result of such a comparison would be significantly different from examination of student's errors. (p. 58)

The present situation of language teaching in Iran requires the students to pass some courses on writing in order to acquire the necessary ability to write in the foreign language with ease and accuracy, and since as Bowen and Madsen (1985) point out "writing in comparison with speaking is more rule-bound and so more error-prone" (p.235), we expect much practice and attempt on the part of the learners to write as correctly as possible. However, at the English institutes and university level in Iran, writing weaknesses in the area of grammar can still be observed at different proficiency levels. The weaknesses can be attributed to the fact that producing successful written texts is a complex task which needs simultaneous control over a number of language systems as well as the ability to the factor of the ways that the discourse must be shaped for a particular audience and purpose (Celce-Murcia, 1991). And one of the useful ways may be using different kinds of written corrective feedback.

Although in the earlier studies some experts considered grammar unrelated and inappropriate in acquiring linguistic knowledge especially when communicative language teaching came out (e.g., Krashen, 1981, 1982), more recent research has discussed the pressing need for formal instruction for learners to get higher level of accuracy (e.g., R. Ellis, 2006; Garcia Mayo, 2002; Loumpourdi, 2005; Mitchell, 2000; Mohamed, 2004; Nassaji & Fotos, 2004; Williams, 2005). Additionally, corrective feedback in any form- written or oral- is

realized to reinforce accuracy in language production (Lyster & Ranta, 1997), and many recent ideas about error correction techniques are validated by research. After all, despite all above-mentioned points, in Iran not all but big majority of teachers still follow the old deductive teacher-fronted approach which takes no notice of corrective feedback, and consequently, the result are just educated learners with little proficiency in language production. It is observed that by using the traditional methods, learners may perform successfully on discrete-point grammar test, but they stop to communicate fluently and accurately in communicative contexts (Hu, 2003). Long and Robinson (1998) acclaim that traditional teaching of isolated grammatical forms is not sufficient to develop learners' acquisition. Thus, an emergency need for making a more effective teaching system in Iran is felt and the present research has been done to address the grammatical problems that learners encounter in writing through the help of corrective feedback. Besides, everybody knows that teaching is not an easy task especially when it talks about linguistic points, and there teaching turns into strenuous work. The provision of corrective feedback can make the situation more amusing, motivating and advantageous for both teachers and learners (R. Ellis, 2003; Fotos & R. Ellis, 1991; Garcia Mayo, 2002; Loumpourdi, 2005).

The last and most serious problem is that there are some teaching systems in Iran that use communicative language teaching approach and they believe that grammar has no role in the classes because the aim is just communication. However, this kind of perspective results in students' fossilization of interlanguage and they cannot use language accurately in informal real life or in academic setting. According to some researchers, merely communicative systems fail to help learners to reach to high level of target language accuracy (e.g., Harley & swain, 1984; Swain & Lapkin, 1998). Teachers who follow this approach should know that totally focusing on communicative system can sacrifice accuracy because of fluency. Therefore, the need for finding more useful ways in Iran teaching settings is strongly understood. This study recommends using corrective feedback for writing classes and it studies the amount of efficacy of written corrective feedback and the best kind of it for elementary students in Iran.

To date, many studies have shown that writing correctly and grammatically mostly depends on the type of feedback learners receive by teachers and it may

result in student writers' improved accuracy and language development. Two types of written corrective feedback which have received more attention in recent decades include direct and indirect written corrective feedback. In direct corrective feedback the teacher simply provides the learner with the correct form (by crossing out an unnecessary word, writing the correct form above the erroneous form and so on). Indirect corrective feedback means indicating that the student has made an error without either locating or correcting it, and the learners have to locate their errors themselves and self-edit.

This study will try to investigate the most effective method of error correction in writing as well as examining its usefulness in the long run.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The present study has the intention of investigating the role of written corrective feedback for EFL students in Iran and finding out whether using this method by teachers has any potential benefits for language acquisition in the long run.

Actually, a goodly number of investigations have been carried out on the effect of written corrective feedback and many studies have indicated positive effects for it (e.g., Ashwell, 2000; Bitchener, Young & Cameron, 2005; Bitchener et al., 2005; Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 1997, Sheen, 2007). Some of the studies have professed that provision of written corrective feedback has had advantages for students' learning in long run too (e.g., Bitchener, Young & Cameron, 2005; Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008). Most of the studies have been performed inclusively and each has included some deficiencies; for instance, having not any control group, small sample size and inappropriate time and so on. Simultaneously, the present research intends to understand if there is any difference in terms of effectiveness between two main different types of written corrective feedback - direct and indirect- for Iranian EFL students. For a case in point, Chandler (2003) acclaims that direct type is more effective than indirect one, whereas, Lalande (1982) and Chandler (2000) argue about the superiority of indirect feedback in writing classes. There have been other studies which have shown a difference between these two error correction (e.g., Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Robb, Ross & Shortreed, 1986).

The above-mentioned studies take one to the conclusion that the findings are inconclusive and further more accurate research is still needed in the field of written corrective feedback and its different types especially their effect on Iranian EFL students' writing development.

The present researcher has an idea about the provision of some pedagogical theories for Iranian teachers. It means that if the findings show the effect of written corrective feedback and particularly one or some kinds of feedback appear more superior and have more advantages than others, teachers may provide the best type in their writing classes to make the settings more efficient and enjoyable for learners.

1.4.   Significant of the Study

Traditional ways of teaching have been changing step by step from grammar-translation, behaviorism and audio-lingualizm into more communicative methods such as task-based and communicative ones. The recent methods have been playing a better role in language acquisition and affect ESL and EFL settings more positively. As every method has used some factors and clues to help students improve in language, corrective feedback has had a main role meanwhile.

The present researcher believes that written corrective feedback can be a good help for teachers in teaching grammar. Some researchers think that complementing written corrective feedback is more efficient and motivating in terms of learning grammar (e.g., R. Ellis, 2003; Fotos, 1994; Fotos & R. Ellis, 1991; Garcia Mayo, 2002; Loumpourdi, 2005).

In fact, using corrective feedback in writing classes can be a good way to bring language instructions more closely to their main goal, which is the development of communicative competence and making learners enable to use language for communicative purposes. In the last two decades, in laboratory and classroom settings, a lot of studies have been conducted about different types of corrective feedback and their efficacy (e.g., Ammar & Spada, 2006; R. Ellis & Sheen, 2006; Lyster, 2004; Lyster & Izquierd, 2009; Sheen, 2010a). Most researchers believe that the importance of corrective feedback, especially written one, is that in spite of high comprehension ability and oral fluency of second or foreign language learners in

communicative classrooms, their production accuracy in morphology and syntax does not build up (Fotos & Nassaji, 2007; Lightbown, Halter, White & Horst, 2002; Lightbown & Spada, 1990;).

Although the beneficial aspect of written correction has been found out by some researchers (Ashwell, 2000; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 2004; Ferris & Roberts, 2001), others have competed against it especially over time (Ferris, 2004; Krashen, 1982; Truscott, 1996, 1999a, 2004).

Written corrective feedback errors in spelling, lexis, grammar, the aim of the present research, has a big role in second language writing development and plays in some pedagogical theories which are essential in both teaching and learning a second/foreign language.

This study addresses the relationship between language pedagogy and language teaching. The ties between a study and pedagogy are reinforced when researchers and teachers both work with shared constructs (R. Ellis, 2003). R. Ellis (2012) states that language teaching methods have also adopted different views on error correction. So, as a whole, more research is required before we can deduce whether written corrective feedback and its different kinds are effective in language acquisition of EFL students. The need for more research in written corrective feedback is also felt when we come to Iranian EFL contexts where communicative language teaching is newly and gradually launched.

1.5. Research Questions:

The aim of this research is to find out about the effect of different kinds of the most common kinds of written corrective feedback, direct and indirect, on second language acquisition in an EFL context and the extent these different types of feedback play a role in the development of English writing. The present study will be an attempt to answer the following questions:

1) Does corrective feedback have any significant effect on Iranian elementary EFL learners' writing development?

2) Do different types of written corrective feedback, that is, direct and indirect, have differential effects on Iranian EFL learners' second language acquisition?

3) Can direct and indirect written corrective feedback have differential effects in the long run?

4) Can the effect of direct and indirect corrective feedback be different with regard to the type of linguistic error corrected?

1.6. Null Hypotheses:

The following hypotheses were formulated on the basis of the research questions that mentioned earlier:

1) Corrective feedback has no significant effect on Iranian elementary EFL learners' writing development.

2) Different types of written corrective feedback, that is, direct and indirect, have no differential effects on Iranian EFL learners' second language acquisition.

3) Direct and indirect written corrective feedback cannot have differential effects in the long run.

4) The effect of direct and indirect corrective feedback cannot be different with regard to the type of linguistic error corrected.

1.7. Scope and Delimitations

This quasi-experimental research that focus on the efficacy of two main written corrective feedback types, direct and indirect, on the language acquisition of Iranian EFL students has faced the following delimitations:

1) Since the study was conducted in Mysore, one of the cities in India, and the researcher targets working on Iranian students there whom English is a foreign language for them, the number of the participants who accepted to enter the classes and join to the end of the study was limited to 60. Although the number is a standard one and acceptable in the eyes of linguistic researchers, the researcher would like to have more access to greater population of the participants.

2) Another delimitation comes up when the researcher merely investigated two grammatical category problems, that is, articles and simple past time. These errors have been the most common errors among elementary students that occur in ESL and EFL learners' speech and writing; the more scope of errors could be taken into account.

3) The present research also was limited to the investigation of one linguistic activity by the students which was written task. The researcher believed that through writing some short stories, the elicitation of article and simple past time errors would happen and the researcher would elicit production easier than doing some communicative tasks.

4) The study was another limitation when it came into choosing only 3 intact classes of elementary students at Iranian Islamic Institution in Mysore during the spring of 2014. The researcher chose the students randomly out of 124 students at the institute and there was no actual randomization of single learners into different groups.

5) A large number of Iranian students are studying in Mysore, the researcher could not find and have some students from one single field of study though and she had to select them from various fields of study.

6) The last limitation that resulted from carrying out this research in Mysore was dropping out of students during the first three weeks that was about 15 students because of some personal problems and the duration of the research.

1.8. Definition of Key Terms and Operationalizations
1.8.1. Corrective Feedback (CF)

Teachers give response to students to assist them notice the shortcomings in what they have produced. Corrective feedback is sometimes defined as an interlocutor's answer to a non-native speaker's error.

1.8.2. Written Corrective Feedback (WCF)

When learners receive feedback in the form of comments or corrections on their written texts, it is called written corrective feedback. This kind of feedback has two main types which are direct and indirect.

1.8.3. Direct Written Corrective Feedback

The provision of the correct form or structure by teachers by means of substitution, insertion, deletion or reformulation on learners' texts is called direct written corrective feedback. In this kind of feedback the teacher directly shows the error to the students and writes the correct form and linguistic information next to the error.

1.8.4. Indirect Written Corrective Feedback

If teachers merely indicate or imply that an error has been made and they make the opportunity for the learners to self-edit their texts, indirect corrective feedback takes place.

1.8.5. Focus on Form

Whenever teachers do their best to direct students' attention to grammatical forms in the context of communication, focus on form occurs (Long, 1991).

1.8.6. Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

According to Selinker and Gass (2008), the study of how learners create a new language system is called second language acquisition. When research is conducted on what is learned of a second language and what is not learned, it is called research on second language acquisition.

1.9. Summary and Organization of the Thesis

The organization of the next chapters of this thesis is as follows:

In chapter two the history of previous studies on corrective feedback especially those supporting or disfavoring written error corrections, which is the central point of the present research, are reviewed. The reasons of paramount importance for using corrective feedback in language teaching of second and foreign settings are fully discussed. Chapter three consists of different parts on methodology and design of the study with detailed descriptions of participants, method, instruments, materials, sampling, human subject issues, and design. In addition, reliability and validity of the research is included along with data collection procedure as well as the way of coding and scoring the tests. The chapter ends with analysis of the study's data. In chapter four all the findings and results of the tests on the data are showed quantitatively and the related tables and figures are represented to clarify the statistics more obviously. Chapter five is the final point section where the findings and results of the research questions and hypotheses are discussed and some implications on the theory and pedagogy are given. Besides, the main limitations of the study are stated and also some suggestions for future researchers are offered.