CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

A quasi-experimental study along with a survey research was conducted to investigate the effect of three types of corrective feedback, that is, prompt, recast and explicit correction with metalinguistic information, on elementary EFL learners’ acquisition of definite and indefinite articles across two time intervals and examine teachers’ and learners’ preferences and views with regard to different aspects of error correction. In this final chapter, the findings are presented and discussed in relation to the research questions and hypotheses presented in chapter one and the factors that might have led to these findings are discussed in relation to the relevant theoretical and empirical work on CF in second language studies.

5.1. Research Question 1: Does CF on English article errors during the performance of communicative tasks contribute to Iranian EFL learners’ second language acquisition?

The first null hypothesis was: *CF on English article errors during the performance of communicative tasks does not contribute to Iranian EFL learners’ second language acquisition.* Analysis of data revealed that the explicit correction group that received CF in form of explicit correction with metalinguistic information improved considerably from pre-tests to post-tests. Therefore, the answer to Research Question 1 is affirmative, and the first hypothesis is rejected. Based on the present quasi-experimental study, CF contributed to Iranian elementary learners’ second language acquisition in terms of both knowledge of usage and the ability to use the language. These findings support the previous claims for the efficacy of focus on form (Doughty & Williams, 1998; Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Long & Robinson, 1998). The findings also lend support to the previous studies which have demonstrated the benefits of CF for second language acquisition (Carroll & Swain, 1993; Doughty & Valera, 1998). Carroll and Swain (1993) found that using different types of feedback was more effective than no treatment. The results of the present study suggest that providing elementary EFL learners with CF in the context of conducting communicative tasks (narrative tasks in this study) results in better performance in
post-tests. These results are a clear rebuttal of the claims that CF is not necessary and should be abandoned (Krashen, 1981; Schwartz, 1993; Truscott, 2007).

The fact that control groups’ interlanguage did not undergo any significant change from pre-tests to post-tests, despite performing the focused communicative tasks that entailed frequent use of articles, is important in showing that a meaning-oriented interaction which is not mingled with some kind of focus of form cannot be the best option. This finding is in line with the arguments that tasks which are accompanied with some kind of focus on form can help second language development more effectively than those tasks which exclude such a focus (Loschky & Beley Vroman, 1993; Muranoi, 2000; Skehan, 1996).

On a theoretical level, Schmidt (1990) first argued that when items are taught and later heard in the input, learning takes place. Schmidt (2001) states that along with teaching items and exposing learners to them in the input, linguistic items should be noticed to be learned. Therefore, CF in this study led to the noticing of target linguistic feature and in some cases understanding it, leading the researcher to conclude that embedding CF within communicative tasks is more beneficial that mere performance of such tasks. It can be argued that the treatment period was very short (almost one month) and acquisition of articles could have automatically taken place without intervention in the long run. Nonetheless, assuming that the acquisition of linguistic knowledge can occur in the absence of any focus on form in the context, our interest, as Doughty and Williams (1998) also mentioned, is sometimes to determine what compromises the most effective educational plan with reference to constraints of learning a second language in the classroom and hence the results of this study are revealing in this regard.

However, there are two caveats in order. The first point that needs to be taken into consideration is that CF in this study was intensive. Previous studies have shown that CF is beneficial to L2 learning when it is intensive and focuses on particular linguistic forms (e.g., Doughty & Valera, 1998). Extensive feedback which focuses on any specific form is reported to be less effective (e.g., Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Based on
the findings relevant to the first research question, CF can affect L2 learning when it targets a specific linguistic feature.

The second point is that the target feature in this study was articles and although in line with Muranoi’s (2000) and Sheen’s (2011) studies which indicated that CF was successful for rules of English articles, R. Ellis et al. (2007) found that beneficial effects of CF depends on the linguistic feature, too. Accordingly, we cannot extrapolate from this study and claim that CF on other types of linguistic errors can have similar results. It would be reasonable to argue that the extent to which these findings can be generalized depends on the type of the linguistic feature, too.

5.2. Research Question 2: Do different types of CF, that is, recast, prompt (i.e., clarification requests), and explicit correction with metalinguistic information, have differential effects on Iranian EFL learners’ second language acquisition?

The second null hypothesis posited: Different types of CF, that is, recast, prompt (i.e., clarification requests), and explicit correction with metalinguistic information do not have differential effects on Iranian EFL learners’ second language acquisition.

When considering the second research question concerning the effectiveness of different CF techniques, the results of both grammaticality judgment task and written picture description task indicated that explicit correction with metalinguistic information led to a higher rate of accuracy than recasts and prompts in post-tests. On the other hand, there was no significant difference between the recast, prompt and control group. The students in the control group also improved a little from pre-test to post-test, which can be attributed to the test practice effect. Therefore, in light of the findings of this study, the second hypothesis is rejected and the findings support superiority of explicit correction with metalinguistic information over other CF techniques under investigation.

The results lend support to Carroll and Swain’s (1993) study in which the learners who received CF in form of showing the learners the location of the error plus metalinguistic information acquired dative alternation. The results are also consistent with Carroll’s (2001) study which showed explicit correction with metalinguistic
information was superior to recasts. The findings also provide support for R. Ellis et al.’s (2006) study in which metalinguistic information showed its superior effect over recasts in delayed post-tests. The findings of this study are also congruent with Sheen’s (2007, 2011) studies which reported the beneficial effects of metalinguistic correction in comparison with recasts. Unlike Sheen’s and R. Ellis et al.’s (2006) studies, the recasts in this study were explicit, but similar to their findings recast group did not perform as well as the explicit correction with metalinguistic information in the post-tests, suggesting that explicit and implicit nature of a CF technique cannot be the only determining factor in efficacy of CF.

Although all types of the CF techniques were explicit in this study, considering the researcher’s intention to control for the explicitness of the corrective moves as well as the foreign language context which usually highlights the corrective nature of teacher’s feedback, these techniques differed in terms of the type of input they provided. While explicit correction with metalinguistic information and recast provided both positive and negative evidence, the prompt group served only the function of giving learners negative evidence. Although provision of both negative evidence and positive evidence has been offered as an explanation for the efficacy of certain types of feedback (e.g., Rassaei & Moeinzadeh, 2011; Sheen, 2011), the fact that both explicit correction with metalinguistic information group and the recast group received positive and negative evidence and yet only the explicit group with metalinguistic information excelled the other CF groups in post-tests, suggests that something more than simultaneous provision of negative and positive evidence might have led to these results. In fact, superiority of the effect of explicit CF with metalinguistic information over recasts in this study cannot merely be explained with reference to the importance of simultaneous provision of negative and positive evidence.

As far as prompts are concerned, interestingly enough, although the prompts in this study were explicit in the sense that they showed there was something wrong in the production and provided learners with negative evidence, they did not seem to work for acquisition as much as explicit correction. Nobuyoshi and R. Ellis, (1993) and Takashima and R. Ellis (1999) investigated the beneficial effects of clarification
requests on learners’ past tense verb errors during the performance of communicative tasks and found that clarification requests were useful in reducing learners’ errors. In another study less than half of the learners who had received clarification requests improved in immediate post-test and only one learner maintained the improvement over time. However, while the findings of this study do not reject the findings of R. Ellis and his colleagues, they suggest that prompts in form of clarification requests are not as effective as explicit correction with metalinguistic information for article errors. The results of scores on grammaticality judgement task are partially in line with McDonough’s (2007) study that showed no advantage for clarification requests over recasts.

Considering the fact that the CF techniques in this study were all explicit in the sense that they showed there was an error in production, and also considering the corrective nature of explicit correction with metalinguistic information and recasts that provided both positive and negative evidence, learners’ benefit from CF in the form of explicit correction with metalinguistic information in both knowledge of usage and the ability to use the articles in comparison with other CF groups in this study can be explained with reference to two main factors (1) deep level of attention, (2) proficiency. These factors are discussed below.

5.2.1. Deep Level of Attention
Schmidt (1995) makes a distinction between low and high levels of awareness and argues that while noticing is necessary for acquisition, understating results in deeper learning. Therefore, the logical explanation for the efficacy of explicit correction with metalinguistic information over the other CF types concerns the deeper understanding of the rule. It can be argued that since explicit correction with metalinguistic information helps learners develop awareness at both levels of noticing and understanding, it is a better candidate for the promotion of second language learning. Reviewing the studies that have focused on the effect of form-focused instruction, R. Ellis (2001), Norris and Ortega (1999), and Spada (1997) have concluded that the explicit techniques work for second language acquisition more than the implicit techniques. Based on the findings of this study, it can be argued that the explicit CF techniques which result in deeper understanding are more effective than other ones
and this superiority can be observed in both tests of knowledge of usage and the ability to use the language.

The explicit CF group received feedback through provision of the correct form that was accompanied by linguistic information on the error whenever an article error occurred. This type of correction helped learners to locate the exact problem and thus the learner was made to think about his production. As soon as the learner became aware of the existence of problem in his production, its nature and its locus, the primary condition for the effectiveness of CF, which was “noticing”, was fulfilled. Provision of metalinguistic information following the explicit correction made learners aware of the rule at a deep level which is referred to as “understanding”. Frequent exposure to explicit correction with metalinguistic information, intensified by the nature of CF which was intensive, served as kind of practice for learners to learn the usage and develop the ability to use definite and indefinite articles correctly.

As far as recasts are concerned, although the context of study (i.e., EFL) as well as teachers’ partial reformulation of learners’ errors made them explicit, it’s not clear if all the learners noticed the corrective nature of the recasts. Besides, even those who might have noticed the location of the error did not benefit from the deep level of awareness and understanding that resulted through explicit correction with metalinguistic information. Partial reformulation of learners’ errors did not lead to long time-outs from interaction to afford learners the opportunity to think about the rule and reanalyze their hypotheses as much as it occurred in explicit correction with metalinguistic information group.

As for the prompt in this study, they have been reported to be beneficial to language acquisition and it has been suggested that they are more useful than recasts (Ammar & Spada, 2006; Lyster, 2004). The Beneficial effects of prompts in these studies were attributed to the uptake or self-repair following the CF and thus their prompts were different from those used in the present study because clarification requests may result in learners’ successful self-repair where he/she produces the correct form, or peer and teacher repair. In fact, prompts in this study which were operatinalized as clarification requests did not give the learners the opportunity to find
out that what the exact error in their production was. They were explicit in showing that an error had occurred, but they were implicit in the sense that the location of the error was not indicated. Furthermore, clarification requests did not add to learners’ declarative knowledge which was incomplete at the time of pre-test for all the groups while it can be argued that explicit correction with metalinguistic information and recast did so. Explicit correction with metalinguistic information and recasts both provided positive and negative evidence with the difference that the former, explicit correction with metalinguistic information, entailed two extra elements of deep understanding and brief time-outs from interaction. Therefore, superiority of recast group in timed picture description task over control group, in comparison to clarification request, can be attributed to simultaneous provision of positive and negative evidence. In other words, in comparison to explicit correction with metalinguistic information, the clarification requests did not provide the prompt group with positive evidence and metalinguistic information to allow them process the CF deeply and reevaluate their hypotheses and, unlike recasts, it did not provide the learners with positive evidence. Therefore, it can be argued that not all output-pushing techniques seem to work in a foreign language context and only those techniques which have some metalinguistic ingredient such as Lyster’s (2004) prompts and R. Ellis et al.’s (2006) metalinguistic feedback seem to be effective. This can be explained with reference to skill building theories. In skill building theories, declarative knowledge (knowledge of definite and indefinite articles) is a prerequisite for procedural knowledge.

Lightbown and Spada’s (2006) recommend that when students have difficulty with forms that do not have a great effect on clarity or accuracy of their production, perhaps it’s better to sustain form-focused instruction. Therefore, recasts and clarification requests in this study could have contributed to learners’ second language acquisition if they had been provided over a considerably longer period of time. The provision of CF in the present study was limited to three treatment sessions for each group which lasted 30 minutes and were spread over a period of one month. It can be argued that explicit correction group outperformed the other CF groups in a short period of time because from the very beginning, that is, the first treatment session, the necessary declarative knowledge for subsequent proceduralization and automatization
was established and understood deeply and correct use of this declarative knowledge was reinforced in the second and third treatment sessions, whereas the recast group and clarification group might have been gradually figuring out the rule in the treatment sessions and if the treatments had continued a few more sessions, they could have also grasped the declarative knowledge and proceduralized it. Again, it can be argued that since positive evidence was not provided for the clarification request group, the group might have needed more treatment sessions to catch up with the recasts and explicit correction with metalinguistic information group

5.2. Proficiency

Another central factor which can be offered as a possible explanation for the superior effect of explicit correction with metalinguistic information is proficiency. A number of studies that have focused on the usefulness of different types of CF have reported that the variable of proficiency can affect the beneficial effects of CF techniques (e.g., Ammar & Spada, 2006; Van den Branden, 1997). Although the students’ proficiency as a possible intervening variable was controlled through administration of a General Proficiency Test for elementary learners at the beginning, and learners in all groups were homogenous in terms of general linguistic proficiency prior to the treatment, it can be argued that EFL learners at low levels of proficiency in language schools (elementary levels vs. intermediate and advanced levels) benefit from explicit correction with metalinguistic information more than recasts or clarification requests. Previous research on recasts has shown that low-proficiency learners do not benefit from recasts (Mackay & Philp, 1998; Netten, 1991). In fact, it can be argued that recasts may prove effective for those learners who are cognitively ready to process the information (Nicolas, Lightbown & Spada, 2001). A caveat is in order. One can claim that the arguments concerning the intervening role of proficiency in effectiveness of CF in the literature pertain to implicit recasts while the recasts in this study were explicit. This claim can be partially true. However, as it was previously mentioned, the recasts in this study were explicit in the sense that they were partial reformulation of learners’ erroneous utterances and also based on the assumption that learners’ orientation to form in EFL contexts such as Iran makes recasts didactic and explicit, no matter the learners are engaged in performing a communicative task or
some accuracy work. Therefore, the provision of recast in this study was not as explicit as explicit correction.

Although a number of studies have also shown that prompts benefit low proficiency learners (Ammar, 2003), the fact is that the prompt in this study was just limited to clarification requests and did not include other types of prompts such as elicitation which have been reported to benefit low-proficiency learners more than recasts. Learners at low proficiency levels can only notice there is something wrong in their production, but the clarification requests do not usually lead to successful repair on the part of learners because of their inability to reanalyze their production, especially in studies such as the present research that excludes any instruction on the target form at the outset of the study.

5.3. Research Question 3: Is there a difference in the effectiveness of different types of CF, that is, recast, prompt (i.e., clarification requests), and explicit correction, for Iranian EFL learners’ knowledge of usage and the ability to use the language?

The third null hypothesis posited: There is not a difference in the effectiveness of different types of CF, that is, recast, prompt (i.e., clarification requests), and explicit correction for Iranian EFL learners’ knowledge of usage and the ability to use the language. Results of the study and analysis of data indicated that Iranian Elementary learners’ improvement through exposure to explicit correction with metalinguistic information was observed in both knowledge of usage and the ability to use the language and this improvement was significantly higher than the recast, prompt and control groups in post-tests. Besides, in comparison with clarification requests, the recast group performed better than the control group in picture description task. Therefore, the answer to question 3 is yes and the hypothesis is rejected. Only those who received explicit correction with metalinguistic information had a considerable improvement in both their knowledge of usage and the ability to use the language. The findings contradict Loewen and Nabei’s (2007) study that compared the effectiveness of three types of CF on learners’ performance in timed grammaticality judgement tasks, untimed grammaticality judgement test and an oral production test and reported that the untimed grammaticality judgement test and oral production test
did not show any increase while the timed grammaticality judgment test did. One explanation for these different findings is that in Loewen and Nabei’s study, metalinguistic feedback in form of identifying the linguistic structure was not accompanied with explicit correction and no explanation of rule was provided while the explicit correction group in this study enjoyed simultaneous provision of the linguistic information and the correct form. This result is further support for the superiority of noticing at the level of understanding and also prediction of skill acquisition theory that posits declarative or explicit knowledge is generative. According to Johnson (1996), learners who have acquired declarative knowledge on a linguistic form can use the knowledge in different conditions or situations that presents itself.

However, a caveat should be borne in mind. Although the type of writing test in this study was a timed production test and aimed to measure students’ implicit knowledge, the students might have benefited from their explicit knowledge because the factor of time that was included in this type of measure to limit learners’ access to explicit knowledge might have not been effective and the learners’ deep level of understanding the rule which was the result of explicit correction with metalinguistic information might have made the learners monitor their writing. The effectiveness of explicit correction with metalinguistic information for the ability to use the language may be limited only to written tasks which are not complex and cannot be generalized to oral narrative production tasks.

In summary, the findings in relation to research questions led the researcher to conclude that (1) providing CF within communicative tasks is more effective than mere engagement in such tasks without CF, (2) explicit CF with metalinguistic information is more effective than recasts and clarification requests, and (3) explicit CF with metalinguistic informant causes an increase in learners’ scores in knowledge of usage and the ability to use the language.
5.4. Research Question 4: What are EFL teachers’ and learners’ preferences for and beliefs about different aspects of CF?

The findings of the survey study revealed that majority of the students (89%) agree that errors need to be corrected and as to the preference for frequency of correction, the EFL learners prefer something in between. They prefer their errors to be *usually* or *occasionally* corrected. Similarly, the study revealed that majority of the teachers (68%) agree that errors need to be corrected and as to the preference for frequency, 40% of the EFL teachers prefer the learners’ errors to be *usually* treated. The students’ favorable attitudes toward receiving error correction in the present survey study is consistent with the results of studies among ESL students (Cathcart & Olsen, 1976; Chenoweth et al., 1983; McCargar, 1993) as well as those in EFL contexts (Oladejo, 1993). EFL learners’ and teachers’ interest in error correction can be explained by the fact that grammar translation method has been a dominant method in Iran for a long time and teachers and learners believe that success in school language tests requires a good command of form which can be promoted through provision of CF. In fact, EFL learners in Iran are usually exposed to assessment instruments that are mostly form-oriented and CF can be regarded as a means for learning the form and achieving higher scores in such instruments. Teachers’ positive attitude to CF can be attributed to teachers’ fear of fossilization of incorrect forms if they are not treated regularly. Given that Krashen (1982) refers to error correction “a serious mistake” (p. 74) because he believes that error correction can put the students on the defensive, the findings suggest that EFL learners welcome error correction and ignoring their preferences in this regard can be a more serious mistake. A question that needs to be answered is which one is a bigger mistake? error correction or ignoring learners’ and teachers’ likes and dislikes. The findings related to the first and second question in the questionnaire also suggest that since a strong majority of EFL learners like to be corrected, teachers who are lenient about correcting learners’ errors might be unconsciously moving towards demotivating the learners.

As for the time of correction, 57% of EFL learners expect their teacher to correct them after they have finished speaking. An almost close and higher percentage of EFL teachers (62%) also prefer to correct their learners after they have finished
speaking. Therefore, a higher percentage of both EFL learners and teachers prefer error correction to be delayed. The findings are similar to Park’s (2010) study that showed correction after speaking is favored by both ESL learners and teachers. However, this preference for error correction is not in line with the recommendations of a number of SLA researchers (e.g., Doughty, 2001; Doughty & Valera, 1998; Doughty & Williams, 1998; Long, 1996; R. Ellis, 2009b) who believe that the best time for correction is the time that an error is committed. Doughty (2001), for example, holds that in order for CF to bring about change in a learner’s interlanguage, it needs to take place in a “window of opportunity” and attract the learner’s attention to form while his/her primary attention is on meaning. Doughty believes that delayed CF leads to focal attention on form resulting in explicit rather than implicit L2 knowledge. As it was discussed in chapter two, teachers’ and learners’ preference for correction after the speaking activity may be out of concern for the possible adverse effects that immediate correction can have on learners’ fluency and the overall communicative flow of the lessons as well as learners’ willingness to continue speaking. In fact, teachers’ preference for error correction is more consistent with the recommendations of teacher educators (Edge, 2000; H. Brown, 2007; Harmer, 2007) than SLA researchers.

With regard to the choice of corrector, a high percentage of learners (68%) expect their teacher to give them the opportunity to self-correct through provision of some linguistic information. As to the EFL teachers, 38% of the teachers prefer to provide some linguistic information and push learners to self-correct while 32% prefer the learner to self-correct without any linguistic information. The findings suggest that output-pushing techniques such as prompts which wait for learners to produce the correct form are popular with both EFL teachers and learners. The results lend support to previous studies that have shown learners prefer to get a hint from their teachers and self-correct (e.g., Katayama, 2007; Park, 2010). The findings also support Yoshida’s (2008) study that showed most of the learners preferred to have an opportunity to think about their errors and the correct forms before they receive correct forms by recast. Learners’ and teachers’ preferences for self-repair is consistent with the views of some SLA researchers who argue self-correction is very effective in restructuring the interlanguage (e.g., Ammar & Spada, 2006; R. Ellis, et
al., 2006; Lyster, 2004). However, majority of EFL learners prefer the output-pushing techniques to be preceded by some sort of linguistic information. A possible explanation for learners’ expectation of metalinguistic information from teacher is that perhaps learners prefer the correction to be explicit. A number of studies have shown that learners mostly prefer explicit correction techniques (e.g., Kim & Mathes, 2001; Nagata, 1993). Providing learners with metalinguistic information enables learners to locate the linguistic problem and producing the correct form themselves can save them from embarrassment. Besides, although a percentage of EFL learners prefer the teacher to correct them, almost no student welcomes peer correction. These findings suggest that EFL learners have negative attitudes towards peer correction in class or at least prefer teacher’s correction to peer correction. This negative attitude to peer correction can be explained with reference to the competitive atmosphere of some EFL classes, in which peer correction can be interpreted as a kind of damage to learners’ self-esteem.

However, a strong majority of learners (74%) agree that when they engage in group work, they would like to be corrected by their peers. A very high percentage of teachers (98%) also prefer to allow peer correction during group work. Learners’ preference for peer correction in group work supports Katayama’ (2007) study that showed more than half of the learners in the survey liked peer correction during group work. The learners’ preference for peer correction in group work can be explained by the fact that learners who are corrected in small groups do not feel exposed as much as the time that they are corrected by their classmates in teacher-fronted classes. Teachers’ preference for peer correction in groups can be explained by teachers’ tendency to believe that learners feel less anxious and stressed when they are corrected by their classmates in group work. Teachers might also believe that interaction between learners and form-focused episodes through CF can contribute to learners’ second language learning. One of the disadvantages of group work is that the students’ chances to produce the correct form are minimized and thus the they are deprived of valuable output practice. However, since peer correction is reported to be successful in group work (Bruton & Samuda, 1980) and the feedback episodes in learner-learner interactions can lead to learning of forms (Adams, 2007), it seems that teachers’ preference in this regard is congruent with SLA findings.
Whereas almost 77% of EFL learners agree to being corrected when they are in front of the class, 76% of the teachers prefer not to do such a correction. These results reveal that EFL learners’ attitude toward error correction is more positive than their teachers’. A higher percentage of EFL learners would like to be corrected even when they are in front of the class, whereas most of the teachers prefer not to do such a correction. The researcher had included this question in the questionnaires and postulated that EFL students in Iran have negative attitudes toward correction in front of the class based on the assumption that such a correction damages learners’ self-esteem and results in anxiety and embarrassment. However, interestingly, the results suggest that while error correction in front of the class is proscribed by some EFL teacher educators, this recommendation is not in line with learners’ preference. This finding is in line with Martinez Agudo’s (2012) study that indicated a majority of Spanish EFL students (79.07%) preferred to be corrected in front of the classmates in the classroom. An explanation for teachers’ dislike for error correction in front of the class is that teachers feel the learners who are standing in front of the class are already stressed and anxious and any attempt at correction may be useless or counterproductive. Allwright (as cited in Yoshida, 2008) holds that teachers’ and learners’ behaviors in language classrooms can be related to social and pedagogical pressures because a language class can be a social and pedagogical event at the same time. The teachers may sometimes attribute more importance to the social aspect of classroom and show reluctance to correction in front of the class, fearing that it can trigger social embarrassment, whereas the learners are willing to risk the potential embarrassment for the pedagogical value that CF entails. However, this finding must be interpreted with caution. Cathcart and Olsen (1976) found that when a teacher provided error correction in accordance with the learners’ interest in their study, it resulted in communication which the learners did not like. Moreover, if language learners constantly receive corrective feedback, they may become discouraged and lose enthusiasm for speaking in the second language (Chastain, 1975; Vigil & Oller, 1976) and the situation is more critical when correction occurs in front of class. Therefore, it is not clear whether frequent correction of learners’ errors in front of the class is productive in the long run.
As far as correction during communicative activities is concerned, a large majority of students (82.3%) wish to be corrected even when they are not doing some accuracy work such as telling a story, a joke, or other activities that require the learner to focus primarily on meaning. However, majority of EFL teachers (72%) disfavor error correction during fluency work. The findings give partial support to Chenoweth et al.’s (1983) study that found second language learners would like to be corrected when they are speaking to native speakers. The results also corroborate A. Brown’s (2009) findings that learners seem to favor a grammar-based approach, whereas their teachers prefer a more communicative classroom. Teachers’ preference for avoiding correction during fluency work is again in line with teacher educators’ guidelines (e.g., H. Brown, 2007; Harmer, 2007; Hedge, 2000), but contradicts SLA researchers’ recommendations (e.g., Doughty, 2001; R. Ellis, 2009b; Long, 1996). Teachers’ avoidance of CF in communicative contexts can be interpreted to be deep-rooted in EFL teachers’ belief that frequent correction stifles students’ attempts at production and results in stress, and learners’ unwillingness for participation in similar communicative activities in the future. Apart from the findings of SLA studies in recent years that support giving CF during communicative activities, there is another danger in avoiding error correction during fluency work and that is allowing errors to go uncorrected during communicative activities can make students think that their spoken output is accurate (Schmidt & Frota, 1986), and this can result in internalizing incorrect language structures or fossilization.

With regard to the type of correction, 44% of teachers and 39% percent of learners prefer clarification request which is a type of output-pushing technique. In other words, the highest percentage of EFL learners prefer to refrain from providing the learners with the correct form and most learners also prefer the same. Recast is the least favorite type of correction among EFL learners while explicit correction and metalinguistic information are less popular among teachers, suggesting that teachers’ and learners’ preferences for the type of correction differ. The findings are congruent with Yoshida’s (2008) study that revealed most of the learners preferred to have an opportunity to think about their errors and the correct forms before they receive recast. Learners’ and teachers’ preferences for self-repair is consistent with the recommendations of SLA researchers who argue self-correction is better than recasts.
(e.g., Ammar & Spada, 2006; R. Ellis, et al., 2006; Lyster, 2004). However, the findings suggest that teachers and learners preferences for different types of correction are not evenly distributed.

A high percentage of EFL learners (58%) do not like their teachers to make a distinction between major and minor errors while majority of teachers (74%) wish to make a distinction between major and minor errors at the time of correction. In comparison with Oladejo’(1993) study that showed 84% of ESL learners disagreed with the teachers’ mere focus on errors that inhibit communication, this study showed that a lower percentage of EFL learners do not favor selective error correction. The findings of this study are closer to Katayama’s (2007) findings that almost half of the learners do not welcome selective correction. However, these differences can be attributed to the sample sizes. In comparison to Oladejo’s sample, the sample size in Katayama’s study was pretty large. Teachers’ willingness to distinguish between major and minor errors can be explained by possible negative effect of frequent correction on learners’ fluency and anxiety and the size of EFL classes in Iran that do not allow correction of all errors. Following the recommendation of some teacher educators and methodologists (e.g., Harmer,1983; Ur, 1996), teachers mostly prefer to correct those errors that block communication.

Intensive correction is not favored by a majority of students (58.6%) and teachers (88%). There is plenty of evidence in SLA that suggests focused intensive correction is effective in promoting second language learning (e.g., Bitchener, Young & Cameron, 2005; Lyster, 2004). Thus, EFL learners’ and teachers’ negative attitudes towards intensive error correction can be explained by their unfamiliarity with such a useful technique in language teaching and the fact that they are used to the traditional extensive correction. A number of researchers (e.g., R. Ellis, 2009b; Sheen, 2011) recommend intensive CF as an effective technique to teachers. However, this technique has not been investigated adequately in studies which address teachers’ and learners’ preferences in recent years.

A strong majority of EFL learners believe that error correction results in better performance in both grammaticality judgment tasks and written production tasks,
Almost similar percentage of EFL teachers are of the opinion that error correction leads to better performance in grammaticality judgment tasks and written production tasks, 90% and 96% respectively. The findings suggest that teachers and learners are well aware of the effectiveness of CF as it was previously shown in the responses to the first and second statement in the questionnaire. The results lend support to a number of studies that have revealed learners are aware of the effectiveness of CF in teaching and learning (Martínez Agudo, 2012; Schulz, 2001). Recent studies along with the present experimental study on CF have also shown that CF results in better performance in different types of tests (e.g., Muranoi, 2000) and it appears that EFL learners and teachers' predictions are in line with research findings.

With regard to the effect of error correction on learners’ fluency and affective state, 52% of EFL learners are of the opinion that error correction does not make them anxious. Only 52.1% believe that frequent correction affects their fluency and 57.7% of them believe that it has no role to play in their future participation in class discussions. The findings are partially in line with Oladejo’s (1993) study. Oladejo reported that majority of learners disagreed when asked whether constant correction can cause frustration and discourage the learner from using the language. As far as teachers are concerned, a high percentage of EFL teachers (70%) are of the opinion that error correction makes students anxious, 68% believe that frequent correction affects learners’ fluency and 58% believe that fear of being corrected affects learners’ participation in future class discussions and speaking activities. These results suggest that teachers are more concerned about the negative effects of CF on the quality of learners’ production and their affective state. These concerns have been voiced by a number of SLA researchers (Krashen, 1982; Schwartz, 1993; Truscott, 1999) too.

Interestingly enough, while 75% of EFL learners believe that ignoring their errors by the teacher irritates them, only a small percentage of teachers (36.2%) believe that ignoring learners’ error irritates them. The findings are partially in line with Schulz’s (2001) study. In Schulz’s study, majority of the Colombian and US foreign language students believed that they felt cheated if a teacher did not correct the written work they handed in. Although the question in questionnaire targeted written errors, the
findings of Schulz’ study along with the present findings suggest that contrary to the claims that error correction is a serious mistake (Krashen, 1982) ignoring learners’ errors and failure to pay attention to them is a bigger mistake because of the affective consequences that it has for EFL learners. The difference of opinion between teachers and learners can be explained with reference to the fact that paying equal attention to all the students in large-sized classes and constant correction may not be possible for all teachers and it is logical for teachers to ignore learners’ errors under certain circumstances, whereas EFL learners wish to receive equal attention and view teachers’ inadequate attention to their errors as a sign of teachers’ indifference to their learning.

5.5. Research Question 5: How compatible are EFL learners’ and teachers’ preferences for different aspects of CF?

Analysis of data and comparing it across two participating groups in the study along with the results of Chi-square tests of independence revealed that teachers’ preferences and views did not match those of the learners in some respects and there were sizable discrepancies in preferences and opinions of EFL Learners on one hand and EFL teachers on the other hand. The differences which were significant in a statistical sense included, first, while a high percentage of EFL learners (68%) prefer provision of metalinguistic information along with output-pushing CF techniques, 38% of teachers prefer this type of correction and 36% prefer using output-pushing techniques without any linguistic information. Second, a strong majority of EFL learners (76%) want their teacher to correct them even when they are at the board and in front of the class, whereas almost the same percentage of teachers (76%) prefer not to do such a correction. Third, although a strong majority of learners (82%) prefer to be corrected when they engage in communicative activities, the majority of teachers (72%) prefer not to correct during communicative activities. Forth, a high percentage of EFL learners (58%) do not want the teacher to make a distinction between major and minor errors and like the teacher to correct all the errors. However, majority of teachers (74%) prefer to make such a distinction. Fifth, as to the effect of error correction on learners’ affective states and anxiety, some discrepancies can be observed between learners and teachers. Almost half of the EFL learners in the study
(52%) stated that error correction does not make them anxious while (70%) of teachers think that error correction makes the learners anxious. Sixth, with regard to the effect of error correction on learners’ fluency, again teachers and learners do not hold similar views. While 52% of the learners believe that error correction does not affect their fluency, a high percentage of teachers (68%) believe it does. Seventh, as to the effect of error correction on participation in future speaking activities, learners and teachers differ in views. While a high percentage of teachers (68%) believe that fear of being corrected has a negative effect on learners’ future participation in speaking activities, 58% of learners do not share this view. Finally, almost 75% of learners agree that ignoring their error by the teacher irritates them, whereas 62% of teachers disagree.

The findings give partial support to previous studies that reported discrepancies between students’ and teachers’ views about oral CF. The results lend partial support to Schulz’ (1996, 2001) study that indicated considerable discrepancies between students’ and teachers’ views about oral CF. Schulz reported that students’ attitudes towards CF were more favorable than their teachers. The findings also support studies by Ancker (2000), Yoshida (2008), and Fukuda (2004) that revealed significant differences between students and teachers. A possible explanation of these results is that teachers feel that they must be more discreet in implementing CF techniques in class and follow their own practical experience and teacher educators’ recommendations and take contextual factors into consideration while EFL learners are more form-oriented and believe that error correction can help them acquire the grammatical system of language more quickly.

Overall the findings of the survey on preferences for and opinions about different aspects of CF raise two important issues that need to be addressed 1) necessity of minimizing the mismatch between teachers’ and learners’ preferences and beliefs 2) bridging the gap between CF research and teachers’ preferences and beliefs. Each will be discussed below.
5.5.1. Necessity of Minimizing the Mismatch Between Teachers’ and Learners’ Preferences and Beliefs

The differences of preferences and opinions between EFL students and teachers lead us to ask whether such differences can result in lack of success in second language learning. Expecting the teachers to abandon their preferences and beliefs which are rooted in their practical experience and, to some extent, teacher educators’ advice and recommendations does not seem to be logical. Nonetheless, we can expect teachers to hold a critical view toward their own preferences and views, and modify them when necessary. Pedagogically, this entails communicating with learners, seeking out learners’ perspectives and discussing different aspects of CF with them. Adopting a rigid approach and correcting errors based on intuition and previous teaching experience without taking learners’ likes and dislikes into account may not yield positive results.

It can be argued that learners’ preferences for CF are not necessarily effective (J. Brown, 1998), and teachers who adapt themselves to learners’ preferences and views in some respects sacrifice a practice that has proved to be useful in teachers’ opinion for the sake of a preference or belief that is not supported by research or teaching experience. While this argument holds true, it should be noted that attending to learners’ preferences and views does not necessarily imply yielding to them. Rather, it means adopting a humanistic approach to teaching and learning. Similar to teachers, the origin of learners’ preferences and opinions might be traced back to their previous language learning experience, and therefore, teachers should endeavor as much as they can to identify the differences, discuss them with the students and show flexibility when necessary in order to deliver the best CF practice. This can be accompanied with a teacher’s action research and a survey of his/her learners’ preferences and views. EFL learners should know about the rationale behind teachers’ practice with regard to different aspects of CF. When learners are asked about their preferences and views and are subsequently informed about the rationale behind their teacher’s practice, not only will they develop more positive attitudes toward error correction but also they will have more trust in the efficacy of teachers’ error treatment. Additionally, teachers should help students understand some empirically
founded principles of second language learning such as the importance of output and interaction in language learning to allow learners to see the reason behind teachers’ orientation to less error correction at certain times during the performance of some speaking activities. It should be noted that teachers are not advised here to provide learners with theoretical justification for their CF practice in language classes nor are they expected to bring about dramatic modifications in learners’ preferences and attitudes towards error correction. Rather, it is suggested that efficacy of teaching can be enhanced if learners are ensured about the positive outcomes associated with certain pedagogical activities.

5.5.2. Bridging the Gap Between CF Research and Teachers’ Preferences and Views

The findings of the survey on teachers’ preferences for and beliefs about CF revealed that there might exist a gap between research and pedagogy with regard to some aspects of CF. If surveys on teachers’ preferences and views reveal that what teachers prefer and believe are not congruent with SLA researchers’ recommendations, we should be concerned that at present teachers are basing their CF practice on their own practical experience and do not seem to follow research findings. According to the findings of the present survey, majority of teachers prefer unfocused CF, prefer to avoid correction during fluency work and their attitudes toward CF do not match those of the learners. These preferences contradict what SLA researchers (e.g., R. Ellis, 2009b; Sheen, 2011) recommend as guidelines for language teachers. Three of these guidelines relevant to present study include (1) Teachers should consider learner’ goals and attitudes towards correction (2) Error correction should occur during both fluency and accuracy work, and (3) Teachers should use focused correction.

What seems to be necessary and needs to be addressed is bridging the gap that exists between SLA researchers’ findings, teacher educators’ recommendations, and teachers’ preferences and views. The reason behind the existence of such a gap can be attributed to the fact that the bulk of SLA publications including CF studies are written for researchers and not practitioners (Ellis, 1997). Nassaji (as cited in Fotos & Nassaji, 2007) found that many teachers, despite acknowledging the importance of
SLA research, do not read such research. Therefore, there is a pressing need to make CF findings accessible to teachers and the responsibility for doing such a job lies with applied linguists and teacher educators. It should be noted that the researcher does not suggest that teachers should become consumers and passive recipients of CF research findings. Rather, the researcher believes that teachers should be informed about the latest developments in CF studies in teacher education programs so that they can enhance the effectiveness of their CF practice by integrating their own practical knowledge with the relevant technical knowledge and thus develop reflective practice.

5.6. Brief Overview of the Experimental Study and the Survey

CF in meaning-focused L2 lessons is a topic that has generated interest in recent years. There is increasing evidence that CF, which is an important component of form-focused instruction, contributes considerably to second language learning and this study offered more confirming evidence in this regard. The group that received explicit correction with metalinguistic information in the context of performing communicative tasks improved and got gains in linguistic accuracy from pre-test to post-test. The post-test scores on measurement instruments which included an untimed grammaticality judgment task and a timed written picture description task revealed that the improvement can be observed in both knowledge of usage and the ability to use the language. Additionally, the quasi-experimental study reported in this thesis provided empirical evidence to suggest that although CF is considered to be effective in prompting learners’ accuracy in second language acquisition, its effectiveness might vary based on the type of provision. With regard to the previous studies which have indicated that CF can and does occur in EFL and ESL classes (R. Ellis et al., Loewen, 2004; Sheen, 2004) and considering the studies which show recasts are the most frequently used CF techniques in EFL classes (Ellis, et al., 2004), it seems reasonable to expect teachers to ponder on their CF practices. Superior role of explicit correction with metalinguistic information in second language acquisition of EEL learners in comparison with clarification requests is another issue that needs to be contemplated by teachers and learners who prefer clarification requests as their favorite unobtrusive CF technique.
As it was argued in chapter two, a number of language educators and researchers (e.g., Horwitz, 1988; Nunan, 1987) believe that matching the expectations of teachers and students is important for successful language learning. Some researchers (e.g., Schulz, 2001) go even further and maintain that, “discrepancies in students’ and teachers’ belief systems can be detrimental to learning” (p. 244). The exploratory study in form of a survey revealed that teachers’ and learners’ preferences regarding certain aspects of error correction differ substantially. The findings were illuminating in a number of respects. First, it was revealed what teachers’ and learners’ preferences for different aspects of CF are. In fact, the study showed that a strong majority of EFL learners have positive attitudes towards error correction, prefer error correction during fluency work, believe that error correction results in better performance in recognition and production tests, and ignoring errors is irritating for them. Second, the survey study showed that teachers and learners’ preferences for and views on certain aspects of error correction were significantly different. While a high percentage of teachers preferred not to do correction in front of the class, preferred to avoid correction during fluency work, believed that ignoring learners’ errors had no negative effect on learners’ feelings, and were of the opinion that error correction caused anxiety, a lower percentage of EFL learners had similar preferences and views. An issue of interest here is whether teachers who do not take stock of learners’ preferences and views and implement CF based on their own preferences are following a methodology that is theoretically founded and pedagogically sound.

CF has provided an ideal tool for theory testing and building in L2 learning. SLA researchers are interested to know if CF plays any role in second language acquisition. Language pedagogy also benefits from CF studies because error correction is a common phenomenon in ESL and EFL classes. In the following sections the theoretical and pedagogical implications of the findings are presented and then the limitations of the study as well as areas for further research will be discussed.

5.7. Theoretical Implications
As it was discussed in chapter two, the results of experimental research has a number of implications for theory. As the researcher pointed out in chapter two, theories of second language acquisition hold different stances regarding the role of CF. These
stances range from rejection of CF as totally unnecessary and useless to really beneficial.

First, considering the fact that CF was found to contribute to second language acquisition in the present quasi-experimental study is consistent with the contention that negative feedback plays a facilitative role in second language acquisition (Long, 1996; White, 1991). The findings also contradict the claims of some supporters of Universal Grammar (e.g., Schwartz, 1986) that only positive evidence triggers UG and negative evidence is not necessary and when it is provided, it just leads to the acquisition of explicit knowledge. The findings of this study reveal that CF facilitates second language acquisition both in terms of knowledge of usage and the ability to use the language. The findings also contrast with the warnings of Krashen (1982) that correction is not useful for acquisition and may result in negative affective response.

Besides, it can be argued that although there is consensus over the effectiveness of CF in most theories and among researchers, while the findings of this research support interaction hypothesis and the importance of focus on form in a purely communicative context, they cast doubt on Long’s (1996, 2006) argument that supports providing learners with the correct target forms in a non-intrusive manner in a context of primary focus on meaning. This study indicated that this technique, although useful and nonobtrusive, is not the most beneficial type of CF and the explicit forms of correction which are mingled with metalinguistic information work best for acquisition. This claim based on the finding of this study is in line with Schmidt’s (1990, 1994, 2001) noticing hypothesis and the importance of noticing at the level of understanding.

5.8. Pedagogical Implications
Although research might not supply definitive answers to teachers about the best pedagogical technique to employ (Johnson, 1992), it has the capacity to inform language pedagogy by subjecting excising pedagogical practices to critical scrutiny (R. Ellis, 2003), and provide new insights into learning and teaching (McKay, 2006). Classroom research has a very important role in language pedagogy, not because it informs teachers about how to teach but because it raises their awareness about
teaching and helps them develop reflective practice (R. Ellis, 2012), and the present research is not an exception. Although a number of pedagogical recommendations and robust implications can be put forth in accordance with the findings of this study, it should be noted that the implications gleaned from this research must be treated with caution because CF is a complex phenomenon and its benefits cannot be considered without giving due attention to a myriad of cognitive, social discourse, internal and external factors (Sheen, 2011). Besides, although the internal validity of the two studies was strengthened due to the fact that the research was situated in an EFL context and all the participants shared the same first language (L1) and similar amount and type of prior exposure to English, the findings may not be used for EFL learners with different characteristics in other contexts. With these caveats taken into consideration, the pedagogical implications which this research on CF may carry for language teaching in an EFL setting are discussed. These implications pertain to issues like effectiveness of CF in language classes, type of CF, the effectiveness of feedback in terms of outcomes, teacher education programs and syllabus design.

First, findings of this study concerning the efficacy of CF in the context of primary focus on meaning suggest that it is possible for teachers to enhance language learners’ accuracy of certain linguistic features through CF. Engaging learners in focused communicative tasks and providing them with CF is an effective means of addressing both accuracy and fluency. To put it simply, teacher educators’ recommendations about refraining from provision of CF in fluency activities need to be reevaluated because as the findings of this study reveal CF works in both accuracy and fluency work. Although in this study intensive and extensive CF (CF addressing a wide range of linguistic targets vs. CF addressing one or two feature in a task at a time) were not compared, the effectiveness of focused CF (i.e., intensive feedback) was demonstrated. It seems logical to recommend teachers to include intensive CF treatments in their communicative teaching classes.

Second, those explicit types of CF which include provision of correct form plus metalinguistic information seem to lead to deeper processing on the part of learners and thus contribute to language acquisition more. This implication is dawn based on the level of the students in this study who were elementary students in a public
language school in Iran. It can be argued that students at advanced levels might benefit from other types of explicit CF equally.

Third, the effects of CF can be observed in both usage (i.e., grammaticality judgement tasks) and the use of language (written picture description tasks). Usage in this study was operationalized as the ability of participants to judge the ungrammaticality and grammaticality of sentences to ensure that their judgment is correct in terms of the linguist feature in question and the ability to use was measured based on the learners’ ability to write a story based on a series of pictures. A teacher can be assured that explicit CF with metalinguistic information works in these two measures.

Fourth, the results of the experimental study and the survey can be used in teacher education programs. Teachers can be provided with the findings of this research and asked to compare them with their own pedagogical practice for reflection and possible action research. The question concerning the best way to handle learners’ errors should not be answered with prescriptions or proscriptions which might be rooted in experience or empirical research. Rather, the teachers in education programs should be asked to evaluate the research findings that they are provided with, requested to try a similar informal research in their own classes and see if they work for their context and if the techniques can be improved to be more effective. This recommendation is almost in line with R. Ellis’s (2010b) approach to incorporating SLA research into a teacher education program.

The fifth implication of this research is in line with the findings of studies on tasks and CF which lend support to the use of focused tasks in language teaching programs in EFL contexts. The main concern since 1970’s has been enhancing the quality of communicative approach to language teaching to meet the needs of students in both accuracy and fluency with the former being the main focus during the last decades. Selecting focused tasks and gradation of them in syllabi which are designed for EFL learners and integration of some kind of focus on form into the tasks can be an ideal way to strike a balance between fluency and accuracy.
Last, this research also enlightens teachers about the mismatches that exist between their preferences for and beliefs about different aspects of CF and those of learners’. Although learners’ preferences might not be necessarily in line with teachers’ practical experience and, in some respects, the results of relevant empirical findings, teachers can communicate with learners and discuss the areas of discrepancy with them, and in some cases adapt their CF techniques according to individual learners. Additionally, teachers can also endeavor to find out if there is a scientific and empirical rational behind their preferences. The findings showed that some of teachers’ preferences are not in line with the recent developments and findings of SLA studies on CF.

5.9. Limitations
Although the researcher endeavored to the best of his ability to control for the intervening and moderating variables in both the quasi-experimental study and the survey, there are still some limitations to these two studies that should be acknowledged. First, one intact class was chosen for each treatment group and this raises the possibility that individual differences such as anxiety (e.g., Sheen, 2008), aptitude (e.g., Sheen, 2007), attitude (e.g., Sheen, 2011) might have had a possible effect beyond CF type. These studies have shown that those learners who have low levels of anxiety, high levels of aptitude and positive attitudes toward error correction benefit from CF more. Using more crowded classes with comparable participants in terms of individual differences would yield more robust and reliable results in future studies.

A second limitation of the study is that only one type of prompt namely clarification request was compared with the other types of CF moves. Lyster’s (2004) categorization of prompts include repetition, metalinguistic clue and elicitation besides the clarification requests which were used in this study. In future studies, comparing different types of prompts and explicit correction with metalinguistic feedback and recasts will shed light on the differential effects of output-pushing and input-providing techniques.
Third, this study focused on one linguistic feature and three functions of it, and as it is obvious, findings of a study which is limited to one linguistic feature cannot be generalized to a whole range of features. Linguist features differ with reference to complexity and simplicity (Spada & Tomita, 2010) and physical salience and communicative value (Long & Robinson, 1998). Although Spada and Tomita’s distinction between simple and complex features was based on the number of transformation rules a structure involves, and these researchers claimed that there may not be interaction between the type of linguistic feature and type of instruction, R. Ellis’s (2007) study indicated there might be an interaction between linguistic feature and type of CF used. Future studies need to replicate this study with different linguistic features.

A fourth limitation of this study is that the communicative tasks used in this study were all narrative types. Although all tasks were focused communicative tasks in R. Ellis’s (2003) categorization of tasks based on whether the task designer has the intention of eliciting a certain linguistic feature or not, other design variables of tasks might vary in terms of complexity (Skehan, 2001) and the kind of gap they contained, i.e., information, opinion, reasoning gap (Prabhu, 1987). It can be argued that if the CF techniques in this study had been used with more complex tasks and different gap tasks, the results might have been different.

A fifth limitation of the study is that the measurement instruments in this study included just one measure of knowledge of usage and one measure of the ability to use the language. The findings of this study could have been more rigorous if like other researchers more measures of explicit and implicit knowledge had been used in the post-test (e.g., Loewen & Nabei, 2007; R. Ellis, 2007). Future studies which specifically aim implicit and explicit knowledge are desirable.

A sixth limitation of this study is that like most of the CF studies, this study also employed a quasi-experimental design which avoided random assignment of participants into different groups. This can be considered a limitation and an advantage. Using Nunan’s (1991) terminology, this study was kind of classroom research conducted with the intention of finding both pedagogical and theoretical
implications. A number of researchers (e.g., Foster, 1998; Nunan, 1991) argue that classroom-oriented research that is conducted in laboratories cannot be generalized to classrooms while Gass, Mackay and Ross Feldman (2005) believe that it is possible to extrapolate from laboratory studies to classroom studies. Considering the fact that many confounding variables might affect the income of research, future replication studies in both classroom and laboratory settings should be done to find out if the CF techniques in question have similar effects in both settings.

A seventh limitation of this study is that there is no measure of spontaneous spoken English production in pre-test and post-test which could have been done through a similar picture description task. The production instruments in this study consisted of a timed written picture description task (i.e., picture narrative task) which was used for the purpose of getting a clinically elicited focused sample. This kind of instrument can induce learners to use certain linguistic features (articles in this study) while they are “oriented primarily to message-conveyance” (R. Ellis, 2008, p. 919), which is the main feature of communicative tasks. Considering the fact that writing and speaking are two different processes, including a spoken production test could have contributed to the robustness of the study.

An eighth limitation of the experimental study was that the learners’ academic program prevented the research from including a delayed post-test in the study to demonstrate that the effect of CF is durable. With the passage of time, the effects of an instructional intervention may atrophy. A number of studies have shown that CF has an immediate effect on the acquisition of a certain linguistic feature and a delayed effect on the acquisition of another one (e.g., Ellis et al., 2006; Mackey, 1999). Therefore, a delayed post-test could have been more revealing about the durability and effectiveness of the effect of explicit correction with metalinguistic information.

The ninth limitation was that the present researcher administered all the CF treatments sessions in the study himself. This can be considered as an advantage and a disadvantage at the same time. The advantage lies in the fact that teachers’ variability as an extraneous variable was controlled and, it can therefore be argued that all the groups received CF almost exactly based on the operationalizations that
were given in the first chapter. However, despite the fact that the researcher tried to the best of his ability not to influence learners’ performance, this research may have suffered from “researcher expectancy” (J. Brown, 1988) and the researcher might have influenced the participants’ performance based on the predictions that he had following the review of related literature.

As for the survey on teachers’ and learners’ preferences, there were two main limitations. First, although maximum attempt was made to use a questionnaire with the items that were clear and relevant, there were only one question for each aspect of CF. The fact that actual wording of questions and minor differences in how a question is formulated in a questionnaire can result in different levels of agreement or disagreement among the respondents (Dörnyei, 2003), using a multi-item or summative scale to reduce the extraneous influences unique to the wording of items could have been more desirable. Second, despite the fact that the language schools in which the surveys were conducted were randomly selected and the teachers were asked to respond to the questionnaires, irrespective of the adopted methodology of their schools, it is possible that teachers’ preferences were influenced by the teaching method that they had been asked to follow in teacher training sessions of their schools.

5.10. Directions for Further Research
There are a number of research agendas that can be taken in the future. Acquisition in this study was operationalized as an increase in accuracy and most of the CF studies have focused on this operationalization of acquisition. However, acquisition can also refer to (a) learning a completely new linguistic feature, and (b) moving along a sequence of stages that learners experience before they acquire a linguistic feature (R. Ellis, 2012). Since all the CF types in this study were explicit, future studies need to investigate which of these CF types can lead to the acquisition of completely new rules. It can be an interesting avenue of research to find out if certain linguistic features can be acquired through just reactive focus on form in the context of complete focus on meaning which in this study was defined as task-based language teaching.
CF treatment in this study was a focused type, addressing just one specific linguistic form (i.e., articles). Since the communicative tasks in this study were also focused, a question that needs to be addressed is whether the explicit forms of correction discussed in the study benefit learners equally if a syllabus is designed based on unfocused communicative tasks which are not intended to elicit any specific type of linguistic feature, and grammatical problems of any kind might emerge in the process of communication. In other word, this study lent support to the beneficial effect of explicit correction with metalinguistic information for intensive feedback in the context of focused tasks, while it is open to debate if this technique also works in the context of extensive correction which targets a wide range of linguistic features in the context of unfocused communicative tasks.

Another line of research which can prove fruitful is investigating oral and written corrective CF together. Although these types of feedback differ with regard to approach and purpose, researching the effects of these two types of feedback enables us to find parallels between oral and written CF, and informs us about whether oral and written CF techniques have differential effects (R. Ellis, 2010a). Alongside oral CF, written CF has also attracted the attention of researchers and its role in teaching second language writing has raised a great deal of controversy in recent years (see Ferris, 2004; Truscott, 2004). The future studies addressing oral and written CF and the relation between them can not only reduce the controversy over written CF, but also give us insights about whether the same types of oral CF in terms of explicit vs. implicit, input-providing vs. output-pushing can be useful for writing classes.

Another important avenue of research which needs to be explored in future studies is whether students’ and learners’ preferences for different aspects of CF can mediate the effect of CF. It can be argued that a number of variables such as the time of correction (immediate vs. delayed) and the type of correction (explicit vs. implicit), might have adverse effects on anxiety and self-esteem which can lead to a decrease in the efficacy of an instructional technique. Interestingly enough, the bulk of CF studies in the literature including this study have investigated CF usefulness in terms of pre-test and post-tests and have argued in favor of a certain type of CF without referring to the fact that the CF technique might put learners on the defensive and run short of
achieving its goal which is development of second language acquisition. It seems reasonable to argue that although explicit types of correction are more useful in restructuring learners’ interlanguage in comparison with other types of CF, they may prove to be counterproductive in the long run if they result in learners’ low self-confidence and high anxiety.

Future studies can also compare teachers’ beliefs about and preferences for CF with teachers’ actual practice. Research has indicated that there is a lack of congruence between teachers’ stated beliefs and their actual practice (e.g., Basturkmen, Loewen & Ellis, 2004). Investigating teachers’ stated preferences and opinions about CF through in-depth interviews and well-designed questionnaires and comparing the results with teachers’ “theories of action” (R. Ellis, 2012) through actual observation of the classroom practice and investigating whether they are in line with the findings of CF studies can be another line of research that needs to be addressed in future studies. This line of research can bridge the gap between teachers’ “accumulated wisdom” (Dörnyei, 2009) and the finding of empirical studies on CF.

5.11. Concluding Remarks

A final point which is worth mentioning is that there is no agreement among researchers about the pedagogical value of SLA research, and providing insights and reasonable expectations are what teachers are mostly told to anticipate (see R. Ellis, 1997). However, some lines of research like “focus on form” in general and “corrective feedback” in particular can hold both important theoretical and pedagogical implications for theory and practice, and thus can certainly afford teachers insights to question the validity of some of their current pedagogical practices and instructional techniques not for the sake of abandoning them but to make them more effective. Based on the felt gap in previous studies and the need for continuation of previous research as well as the need to answer the questions that I as a teacher and a researcher had in mind, this thesis was written to report the findings of an experimental study that aimed to investigate the beneficial effects of different types of corrective feedback on L2 learning and a survey which was designed to get an understanding of learners’ and teachers’ preferences for and beliefs about different aspects of CF in EFL language classes in Iran. The findings of the study indicated that corrective feedback affects second
language acquisition and different types of corrective feedback techniques might have different effects on L2 learning. Besides, as the survey revealed, there might be discrepancies and mismatches between teachers’ and learners’ preferences for different aspects of corrective feedback. The findings also suggested that in a number of aspects, teachers’ preferred practice of corrective feedback, which is mostly based on their practical knowledge, is not consistent with SLA research findings. Nonetheless, as mentioned above, this study had also its own limitations and the present researcher endeavors to consider these limitations and explore new avenues in this line of research in his future studies.