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The Role of Indirect Versus Metalinguistic Feedback in the Discoursal Aspects of Argumentative Writing

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ABSTRACT
This study was carried out to investigate the teachers' provision of indirect versus metalinguistic error correction to EFL learners committed errors in their argumentative writing pieces. The discourse aspects that were the focus of this research include: unity, organization, cohesion, coherence and metadiscourse. For this purpose, six intact classes were selected where two classes received indirect correction, the other two were exposed to metalinguistic correction and two other classes functioned as the control group where there was no correction at all. Pre- and post-tests in terms of argumentative writing tasks were analyzed.The results of statistical analysis revealed a non-significant difference between the indirect and metalinguistic feedback types regarding organization. However, all the other comparisons were found to be statistically significant where the indirect feedback was more effective than the metalinguistic feedback, and both proved more fruitful than the control group. Additionally, on the whole, teachers were more inclined towards indirect corrective feedback compared to metalinguistic feedback in addressing learners' discourse problems. The teachers gave more comments to identify problems instead of providing corrections and suggestions. Teachers' responses to interviews regarding their views about corrective feedback targeting discourse dimensions of writing were further provided.

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1. Introduction

In the field of corrective feedback (CF), a significant distinction has been made between indirect and direct feedback. According to Shintani and Ellis (2013), the purpose of indirect feedback is to show mistakes without providing any correction. They asserted that "direct feedback acquaints learners with correct forms, but it is time-consuming because each learner's work must be corrected and it requires learner processing" (p. 288). Previous studies have attempted to experimentally compare the effect of direct and indirect feedback and have resulted in controversial outcomes (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008) so the effectiveness of each of these feedbacks has been concluded differently in different studies. Recent research mostly points to the benefits of direct feedback, and there are various opinions about indirect feedback. For example, Bitchener & Knoch (2008) investigated the effect of feedback on the photo captions that 114 language learners had written in private institutions in New Zealand. They found equal effectiveness for both types of feedback, however, direct feedback led to long-term impacts. Van Ashwell (2000) assigned 268 Dutch language learners to four conditions: direct feedback, indirect feedback, self-correction, and a group that received no feedback like the self-correction group and wrote new texts instead of text editing. Results revealed the effectiveness of both direct and indirect feedback on learners' learning from their non-grammatical errors. Contrary to these findings, other studies (for example Ellis, Shin, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008) showed the short and long-term effectiveness of direct feedback in increasing learners' accuracy. However, in the research of Ellis and Tod (2018), direct feedback was not effective in the development of students' reading accuracy, while metalinguistic feedback was effective. Truscott and Hsu et al. (2008) investigated the provision of feedback on the storytelling performance of 47 Taiwanese language learners. The findings showed that participants who received direct feedback performed better than the control group, although this advantage was lost in the writing performed a week later. Therefore, the inconclusive results regarding the effectiveness of direct, indirect, and metalinguistic feedback in previous studies reveal the need for more investigations in this field.

Although there are many studies on the role of feedback in increasing the grammatical and lexical aspects of second language writing, studies that have investigated the effectiveness of different types of feedback regarding the improvement of discourse have received less attention. For example, Malwlawi Diab's (2015) study showed that language learners can benefit from both direct and metalinguistic feedback in argumentative texts. However, this study has focused on linguistic mistakes and does not examine the discourse. Considering the importance of paying attention to language and discourse equally (Hughes, 1998), more studies are needed to investigate this issue. In response to this need, this study examined ways in which teachers can help language learners develop their writing skills beyond the sentence level. Most EFL teachers are familiar with learners who struggle with acceptable writing and lack even the basic skills to construct correct sentences. At the same time, many teachers tend to initially provide corrective feedback on grammar mistakes.

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In this regard, Hughes (1998) suggests that teachers should shift their attention from grammar to discourse because rules that are limited to sentences alone are not enough to help language learners write proper texts. This challenge is even more serious in the case of argumentative writing as this type of writing requires more discourse features. Al-Haq and Ahmed (1994) concluded that the teaching argumentative genre should be based on discourse because paying attention to structural and linguistic components and ignoring factors caused the poor performance of the participants in their research. They suggested that the attention of teachers should be more in line with the level of semantic relationship in argumentative writing than accuracy in grammar and vocabulary selection. Teachers also face special problems when they want to provide feedback at the discourse level. The present study presents new findings regarding writing feedback practices that address discourse-related writing problems going beyond traditional guidelines and correctness. As a result, this research increases our understanding of why teachers provide specific strategic reasons for providing corrective feedback.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Sasaki (2002) investigated the cognitive processes of writing in three groups of writers: expert writers, novice writers before training, and novice writers after training. His findings showed that the difference between expert and novice writers was related to educational intervention and revision strategies used. Expert writers used general planning and discourse revision. In contrast, novice writers engaged in thematic planning and did not use discourse revision at all. Saski's (2002) writing model, focusing on the difference between expert and novice writers, highlights the difference in planning and revising the discourse processes of these groups and predicts that the increase of students' attention concerning meta-discourse writing will have a significant impact on their writing process.

Although writing discourse approaches and individual differences have been outlined in modern models of writing (e.g., Hsu et al., 2008), these models make specific predictions about the role of corrective feedback options in writing and text quality. They are not written, which, of course, is very important for the development of writing, especially for foreign language learners.

2.1. Language Learners' Discourse-oriented Writing

Learning to write in a foreign language is not a separate curricular activity; rather, it is a social and cultural experience. Language learners from different cultural backgrounds may write in English in a way they express their opinions and values in their first language (L1). Since the 1980s, several studies have highlighted discourse problems in second language writing. The majority have relied on first language learning and have often shown a relationship between the use of language tools for integration and the overall quality of writing. For example, Leinonen-Davies (1984) examined 38 Finnish second language texts, each containing 150 words. The results showed that the authors tried to use textual coherence through coherence. However, they used elimination and substitution methods to a lesser extent. In contrast, lexical coherence was used more than usual. In addition to the use of specific and unusable conventions, there was an inappropriate choice of markers that

made the text "unstable, inefficient, and ineffective" (Leinonen-Davies, 1984, p. 97).

Cherry and Cooper (1981) did a study on 4th, 8th, and 12th-grade students as well as college students. They concluded that in their participants' writing samples instead of references or cohesive ties (substitutions and omissions); the highest frequency is related to lexical cohesion.

On the other hand, Crowhurst (1987) examined the fiction texts of students in grades 6, 10, and 12, and the results indicated that the use of coherence devices in the text was not influenced by age factors; rather, the implementation of integration depends on different writing styles.

To date, there is limited research to study the application of coherence theory to the teaching of writing. Liu and Robinett (1985) analyzed the use of cohesive ties in separate sentences by college learners in China and the United States. They found that native English speakers use a greater number of cohesive devices compared to Chinese learners. They believed that Chinese students' writing could hardly reach the level of their mother tongue due to insufficient use of text integration tools. Some other researchers (e.g., Crewe, 1990) reported that second language writers tend to overuse communicative vocabulary in the text. Therefore, it is not only using or not using textual coherence that is important but using them appropriately and logically without exaggeration or exaggeration is important as well. Xu (2000) investigated lexical coherence by comparing acceptable and poor writing in 50 texts written by Chinese English students and results revealed that lexical coherence, using synonyms, antonyms, and reference repetition, had an important role in the quality of language learners' writing. Song and Yung (2002) analyzed the frequency distribution of various cohesive devices and writing quality in acceptable and unacceptable texts written by 364 first-year non-English majors Chinese language learners. The results showed that among the used devices, lexical cohesion contributes more to acceptable writing, and grammatical cohesion is important. They concluded that more attention should be devoted to the teaching of second language writing.

Although all of these studies show the significant role of cohesive devices in second language writing, they do not provide suggestions on how teachers should use them when teaching writing and providing feedback for developing poor writing. Some researchers (Connor, 2002) conducted further research to confirm the contrastive discourse theory related to foreign language learners' cultural barriers in learning academic writing. For foreign language learners, metalinguistic and cultural patterns appear in other languages at the sentence and beyond sentence levels (Moran, 1991).

In foreign language writing classes, learners need to understand not only the metalinguistic use of language but also the cultural constraints associated with metalinguistic implementation and the consequences of choosing a particular speech structure. Estimating the various cultural limitations of their first and target language can be the most important step for foreign language learners to be sensitive to common mistakes that can be traced to their first language and culture. At the same time, it is important to know that all the challenges that EFL writers face in writing are not necessarily related to the fact that they write English as a foreign language. As with all writers, EFL learners may generally lack general writing

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experience or specific knowledge of English writing standards. However, research has shown that these writers lack knowledge about the lexical aspects of English, and some sources of difficulty are related to text features (e.g., Hinkle, 2002). Learners need instructional feedback to become aware of their writing problems at the discourse level.

It should be noted that in the present study, the aspects of discourse that include textual organization, semantic unity, coherence, cohesion, and meta-discourse have been examined. These aspects were chosen to provide a complete understanding of the different types of methods that lead to the creation of appropriate writing at the discourse level. Textual organization based on the definition by Hayes (2012) refers to the way of creating a text that relies on the description and reasoning of the topic and semantic unity refers to the degree of relationship that the text has with the subject or the overall content. In other words, semantic unity means the degree to which each paragraph follows the main heading in a unified way. Widdowson (1978) and Stubbs (1983) introduce coherence as the structural connection between sentences and coherence as the connection between the concepts that the sentences try to express. According to Hyland and Tese (2004), the word metadiscourse refers to a wide range of different ways that writers use to organize their text. Metadiscourse helps readers understand the connections between ideas, thereby making the text easier to understand. Metadiscourse is important in all types of writing, but it is claimed that it has a special place in argumentative writing because it facilitates the persuasion of the reader (Crismore et al., 1993, Hyland, 2004, Hyland & Tese, 2004).

2.2. Feedback Strategy

In the past decades, teachers and researchers in the field of foreign language writing have debated the value of error correction or corrective feedback. Several studies have been conducted in this area, but many of them have reported conflicting results (Russell & Espada, 2006; Truscott, 2007). For example, some researchers such as Truscott (2007) claim that in both first language and second language writing, grammar correction is not useful for two main practical reasons: First, correction hurts the natural learning process which is a gradual process and intervenes in the complex learning of second language structures. Furthermore, there are certain problems regarding the ability of teachers to provide appropriate feedback at the appropriate time for certain types of errors, and also the willingness of students to receive these feedbacks is uncertain.

Other researchers argue against corrective written feedback (e.g., Gulcat & Ozagac, 2004, Kepner, 1991, Krashen, 1982). For example, Krashen (1982) believed that when students' attention to language forms becomes flexible, the possibility of a negative impact on the natural and implicit process of language acquisition increases. Gulcat and Ozagac (2004) stated that correcting students' writing with red marks and notes can be quite discouraging for the writers. However, growing evidence suggests that written corrective feedback can improve writing accuracy in limited contexts (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 2007; Russell & Spada, 2006; Sheen, 2007, Ellis et al., 2008, Hartshorn, et al., 2010). In 1995, Ferris published an article on Truscott's claim and presented research evidence that in some cases effective

error correction can help learners' writing and their willingness to give feedback.

Studies of the overall benefits of feedback consistently show moderate to strong positive effects for feedback recipients compared to controls (Guzzo et al., 1985). Teachers implement several feedback strategies for different purposes based on different writing tasks or individual writers (Ferris, 2007; Ferris et al., 1997). The feedback strategy (Ellis, 2008; Ferris, 2002) summarizes several options for correcting learners' written work, with an emphasis on correcting linguistic errors: direct corrective feedback, indirect feedback, metalinguistic feedback, focused versus unfocused feedback, electronic feedback, and reformulation. While providing feedback, teachers have different options regarding ambiguity (direct or indirect), location (in the margins or at the end of the text), and interpersonal attitudes (positive and negative). Among different types of feedback, two types of indirect and metalinguistic feedback have been investigated in the current research.

Indirect feedback shows learners their mistakes without correcting them (Ellis, 2008). Indirect feedback can be given by underlining mistakes, using a cursor to indicate the error in the learner's text, or by placing an arrow in the margin next to the line containing the error. In contrast, metalinguistic feedback involves providing explicit forms directly about the nature of learners' errors (Ellis, 2008). Ferris (2002) has pointed out that teachers usually focus on five areas in their written corrective feedback: (1) direct and indirect feedback (2) error location vs. error detection (3) larger categories than smaller error categories (4) code and symbols vs. verbal comments, and (5) textual corrections at the end of notes. Studies have confirmed the positive attitude of learners toward indirect feedback on mistakes instead of direct corrections because they believe that it makes them more active in using these comments (Arndt, 1993, Hyland, 2001, Saito, 1994).

Considering the possible reactions of the learners and the relationship they have with their teacher, language teachers should choose a constructive style in their feedback to facilitate writing (Hyland & Hyland, 2001, 2006). Cardelle and Corno (1981) pointed out that in their sample; criticizing errors alone did not work as much as the combination of criticism and praise. Teachers often provide complimentary feedback to boost learners' self-confidence, but learners expect to receive constructive criticism rather than praise (Ferris, 1995; Hyland, 1998). However, negative feedback may have a positive effect on the writer's self-confidence, while premature and unhelpful praise can embarrass students and inhibit revision (Hyland & Hyland, 2001). Hyland and Hyland (2001) conducted a case study with two teachers regarding the practice of praise feedback, criticism, and suggestions (constructive criticism). They concluded that praise was often used by teachers, but it was used to alleviate criticism rather than respond to good work.

As previously mentioned, apart from their beliefs teachers' feedback about discourse features is very little. This study is an attempt to fill this gap by studying teachers' feedback strategies to achieve informational, educational, and interpersonal goals when providing feedback on discourse features from other written languages.

2.3. Teachers' Beliefs

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It is argued that teachers' beliefs have a valuable psychological role in the field of teacher education (Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). However, there is no clear definition for them (Skott, 2015), because similar terms are used in this field such as work principles, teachers' personal cognition, perspectives, and practical knowledge (Kagan, 1992). According to Levin (2015), these beliefs emphasize how teachers' attitudes and cognitions develop during different stages of the language teaching process. Thematic belief of EFL teachers is the individual epistemology of the person, which both shows their knowledge about teaching and learning, and their views on their unique and individual self, as well as their views on the curriculum and language (Skott, 2015).

As an example, Yung (2002) showed the relationship between teachers' beliefs about their views on their teaching profession and learning and assessment practices in four dimensions: 1) teachers' beliefs about their position related to helping learners in language learning; 2) learners' responsibility for learning; 3) the nature of the teacher-learner relationship; and 4) the communication method of teacher-learner relations which is used in communication activities in the language class.

Although a large number of studies have been conducted on teacher feedback practices, there is less information about second language teachers' attitudes toward feedback and the methods that can potentially affect their correction practices. In a study, Diab (2005) examined the beliefs of an English teacher who had two foreign students. The results showed that there is an inconsistency between the teacher's beliefs and the learners' needs and expectations. The teacher had the idea that the feedback could not improve the learners' writing skills and that the corrections related to the organization of the text and the expansion of the topic were relatively more important. In contrast, learners expected to receive feedback about their grammatical errors. The results confirmed the impact of students' opinions on the way teachers provide feedback. This finding has also been proposed in some other studies that asserted that the perception and expectations of learners help teachers in choosing their educational options (Richards, 1998). For example, Zhu (2004) investigated the opinions of a group of faculty members about academic writing and reported that they considered themselves responsible for providing content-based corrective feedback and providing structured feedback about writing was the responsibility of EFL teachers. Lee (2008) conducted a study to assess the vocabulary which was used by teachers and their practices regarding written feedback through a questionnaire combined with post-teaching interviews. Several inconsistencies were found between teachers' beliefs and practices regarding feedback strategies and goals. In other words, even though the teachers supported high-quality writing beyond accuracy, most of the feedback resulted in grammatical errors, which went against the guidelines suggested in the school curriculum. Lee concluded that teachers' feedback activities are influenced by contextual features such as curriculum, assessment, teachers' beliefs, and teacher training.

In the current study, teachers' beliefs are defined as "psychological understandings, concepts, and propositions about the world that seem to be true" (Richards, 1998, p. 103). This is because of the objectives of this research, which are mainly related to teachers' beliefs about

discourse, English language writing, and giving feedback.

3. Methodology

3.1. Purpose of the Study

Correcting grammatical problems in learners' writing is an area that has been extensively researched (Ashwell, 2000; Ferris, 2001, 2004; Hyland, 2000; Lee, 2004). However, there is little research on teachers' feedback on discourse issues. A detailed account of direct and indirect spoken feedback by language teachers and an examination of learners' writing progress as a result of such feedback would improve our understanding of how teachers practice when discussing discourse and providing feedback. This research can also shed light on a range of factors that influence different aspects of discourse development, for example, whether aspects of discourse that are modified by explicit and implicit methods show an applied similar pattern of development as grammatical features. This study seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference between the type of implicit and explicit feedback regarding the writing performance of EFL learners in terms of textual organization?

2. Is there a statistically significant difference between the type of implicit and explicit feedback regarding the writing performance of EFL learners in terms of semantic unity?

3. Is there a statistically significant difference between the type of implicit and explicit feedback regarding the writing performance of EFL learners in terms of coherence?

4. Is there a statistically significant difference between the type of implicit and explicit feedback regarding the students' writing performance in terms of cohesion?

5. Is there a statistically significant difference between the type of implicit and explicit feedback regarding the writing performance of EFL learners in terms of metadiscourse?

6. What do teachers think about the comparative effectiveness of indirect feedback compared to metalinguistic correction in the writing progress of learners?

3.2. Participants

A total of 94 EFL students participated in the present study. Six intact classes of intermediate language learners in a language institute were selected which were randomly divided into three groups. Two classes (n = 30, including 10 males and 20 females aged 17-25) received only indirect feedback, the other two classes (n = 36, including 17 females and 19 males aged 18-25) were exposed to metalinguistic feedback and two groups acted as a control group (n = 28, including 15 male and 13 female with an age range of 16-29), in which the learners did not receive any feedback. None of these participants had the experience of learning English in an English-speaking country, and all of them learned English in middle school from 7th grade onwards. Their language proficiency level had been measured through the institute's placement test (Oxford Quick Placement Test). This test contains 40 multiple-choice items.

It should be mentioned that the standardized proficiency test which was used in the present research had already been checked by the institution itself on Iranian language learners and it showed acceptable validity and reliability

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values. Despite this, the reliability of the Oxford test in this research was 0.92 and its validity was 0.95. In addition, the teachers also confirmed the level and appropriateness of the selected writing topics according to the level of the participants. The participants were informed about the purpose of this study and their complete voluntary participation. None of the participants were absent during the experiment.

Six teachers (3 male and 3 female) participated in the current study as well. Two of them were Ph.D. candidates in the field of TEFL, and the other four teachers had a master's degree in TEFL. Their teaching experience was between 4 and 12 years, mainly in language institutions. In this study, the teachers were trained by the researchers about corrective feedback methods, so that explanations about how to provide feedback and relevant examples were provided to them. Also, they were asked to practice feedback in front of the researchers during the practice session, and they received the necessary guidance on how to provide their feedback. And then they were asked about their attitude towards the comparative effectiveness of indirect corrective feedback to metalinguistic correction in the development of the learner's writing skills. All teachers expressed their consent to this process.

3.3. Instrumentation

3.3.1. Argumentative Writing Activity

Learners were exposed to corrective feedback based on the writing activity. The argumentative writing activity in the present study was adapted based on the course book, i.e. Passages, taught in the language institute. In other words, the teachers adapted 12 writing topics that were related to the textbook lessons. Since the students' level was upper-intermediate, these topics were suitable for their level according to the level of reasoning and logic they needed. In addition, the topics were general and expected to be familiar to the participants. Participants were asked to write a passage including 200 words for each topic within 20 minutes. The first two topics were used as pre-test and post-test, and the rest of the topics were used for the experiment and teachers corrected learners' writing by giving indirect or metalinguistic feedback.

3.3.2. Interview

A semi-structured interview was conducted over three days after the teachers completed the written feedback. These interviews examined teachers' beliefs about whether they found it useful to focus on discourse features in learners' compositions, their ideas about the strategies they used to provide feedback in discourse, and their explanations of how feedback was effective. Each interview lasted about 20 minutes and was conducted at a time and place convenient for the participants.

3.4. Data Collection

As mentioned above, this study examined teachers' error correction in students' written essays based on discourse features including:

a) Textual organization is related to the patterns of a text to discuss its topic (Hoey, 2011).

b) Semantic unity indicates the connection of the text with the overall theme, and this usually indicates that the author needs to make the propositional content more relevant (Hayes, 2012).

c) Coherence indicates the basic logic of a text and how it creates meaning for the reader (Hayes, 2012).

d) Cohesion refers to how text components are mutually connected in a sequence (Hayes, 2012).

e) Metadiscourse is the use of signs to indicate the author's attitude towards statements and guide

readers to organize the text and interpret information (Hayes, 2012).

Teachers provided indirect or metalinguistic feedback as two types of classroom correction. In this study, feedback methods include teachers' indirect comments or metalinguistic explanations of learners' argumentative texts. Writing instruction for a period of 12 sessions (i.e., two sessions for pre-and post-test and two sessions for each discourse feature) focused on argumentative writing needs. The main purpose of these classes was to help learners in the whole text and discourse level. After the test, each language learner's essay was evaluated in terms of the above-mentioned discourse features and compared with their pre-test performance. It should be noted that for the pre-test, the participants were asked to write an argumentative essay as a basis for comparison with the post-test. The total experiment continued for six weeks with two sessions per week. And for being informed about teachers' opinions, a semi-structured interview was conducted.

The metalinguistic correction group was not exposed to any individual feedback. The explanations prepared by the researchers about each aspect of the discourse were presented to the whole class by the teacher which lasted about 5 minutes. Participants had 5 minutes to refer to their writings, check their mistakes, and rewrite their writings without access to the original text and metalinguistic explanations. These explanations are described in detail in the following sections for each aspect of the discourse.

Indirect feedback

In indirect feedback, teachers gave their opinions to draw attention to a problem so that learners could find their solutions. They suggested the solution but did not offer any correction at all. In this way, in case of a mistake, they only mentioned its type next to the text. For example: lack of agreement with the subject. No other explanation about how to improve the writing based on the feedback was given to the learners.

Metalinguistic feedback

In this type of feedback, the teachers provided explanations related to each aspect of the discourse as follows:

Textual organization

The teachers provided the participants with their opinions on the organization of the main body of the text according to the argumentative genre. According to the five-paragraph formula of argumentative texts, there should be three reasons for the claim in the mind of the writer. Instead, their comments on the body of the text emphasized the need to develop the introductory part of the text based on the claim as a supporter and developer of the introductory paragraph. In other words, the teachers emphasized that there are three different reasons for the logical advancement of the ideas presented in the introductory paragraph. Their comments were further processed in the body of the text to develop meaning through the use of specific discourse features (e.g., coherence, cohesion, etc.).

Unity

Teachers commented on how learners can maintain semantic unity and avoid informational details that distract readers from the main meaning. In their feedback, teachers emphasized that the entire text should work together to support a main point. In their comments, they elaborated the focus on two levels - the entire text should be about only one main topic, and each

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paragraph should provide only one main idea in harmony with the main topic. First, by making comments such as "This is not like your topic," teachers indicated that learners should focus on the topic and not use inappropriate information. Also, if the text did not contain ideas related to the main topic, then there would be no unity and the idea would deviate from this topic. Second, they targeted the importance of the single generalization that served as the unifier of focus in each paragraph. For example, with feedback such as "What's your reason for this?" they stated that the "point" of the text is needed to monitor the content of every other sentence in the body of the paragraph. To achieve coherence, comments about unity were either about the need for a single topic throughout the text or about the need to write each paragraph about one idea that is related to the thesis statement.

Coherence

Teachers' feedback on coherence regarding the connection between meanings and sequence of ideas and especially the connection of the text concerning the logical relationship of sub-ideas woven into the main idea as well as the logical relationships between sub-ideas were presented. First, they described the logical connection of each paragraph's focus to the main idea to move toward the overall idea, conclusion, or main theme of the text. They stated that none of the ideas should be removed from the main topic; instead, the focus of each paragraph should be logically connected to the main topic (or claimed in the introduction section). For example, they gave feedback such as "What do you think?" and "Does this writing help you explain your claim more precisely?", or "Try to make them ". Their comments were aimed at the audience's attention to the coherence of the writing regarding the logical relationship between the second reason of the argument and its claim.

Cohesion

To facilitate the creation of semantic connections, which can lead to the coordination of ideas, teachers provided feedback on the appropriate use of text integration tools. When providing feedback on cohesion, feedback was provided on misuse of cohesive devices and unclear references. Feedback on conjunctions, they commented on the lack of contrast as a type of contextual conjunction (e.g., but, however) and misuse of causal conjunctions (e.g., because of, thus).

Metadiscourse

Finally, the teachers provided feedback on the metadiscourse. This was done by providing cues to organize the information and guide readers to interpret the information. They stated that the attention of language learners is on the need to use signs in writing and to show the writing position or attitude towards the ideas in the text.

It should also be mentioned that the control group had the same process as the two experimental groups; however, they did not receive any indirect or metalinguistic feedback. The decision to provide no feedback in the control group was based on Shintani and Ellis (2013) and in line with Truscott's (2010) argument. These researchers favor the lack of feedback in the control group to conclude whether feedback is the only effective component of writing or not. In order to eliminate any unequal training between the three groups, participants were provided with indirect and metalinguistic feedback after the research.

Scoring Criteria

Analytical assessment (Hyland, 2003) was used to examine the learners' texts against the

discourse features assessment criteria (see Appendix). Discourse features were classified into the above categories, and raters assigned points for each category. Each of these categories is determined by a numerical value (Hyland, 2003). Before conducting statistical methods for the research questions, the inter-reliability level between the evaluation of the post-test writings of the participants was estimated using the intra-category correlation coefficient. Each essay was marked by two raters and results showed that both raters provided similar information about the students' writing performance. Table 1 shows the results of this test.

Table 1. ***Intraclass Correlation Coefficient***

	Intra-class Correlation coefficient	Difference with 95% interval		Difference with 95% interval				
		Lower bound	Upper bound	Value	df1	df2		Sig.
Unit scale	٠,٩٤[b]	٠,٩٢	٠,٩٥	٣٢,٥٨	٤٦٩	٤٦٩	٠,٠٠	
Intermediate scale	٠,٩٦[c]	٠,٩٦	٠,٩٧	٣٢,٥٨	٤٦٩	٤٦٩	٠,٠٠	

4. Results

After ensuring the normal distribution of data (Table 2), multicollinearity (Table 3) and default equality of variance (Table 4) of the *MANOVA* test, this test was performed. This method shows the possibility of investigating the interaction between variables and reduces the risk of type 1 error. Because no significant difference was observed between the groups in the pre-test, the *MANOVA* test was run considering the post-test data.

Table 2. ***Kolmogrov Smirnov Test Results***

Text organization		Unity	Coherence	Cohesion	Metadiscourse		
Normal parameters	No ٩٤	٩٤	٩٤	٩٤	٩٤		
17.07	Standard Deviation	١٠,٤٣	٥,٨٥	١٠,٧٢	٧,٣٦		
٤,٩٢		٣,٢٠	٢,٤٧	٥,١٨	٣,٦٧		
Extreme difference	٠,١١	٠,١٦	٠,١٣	٠,٠٩	٠,١١		
٠,٠٩	Positive	٠,١٦	٠,١٠	٠,٠٦	٠,١٠		

-٠,١١Negative	-٠,٠٨	-٠,١٣	-٠,٠٩	-٠,١١
١,٠٦	١,٥٧	١,٣٣	٠,٩٤	١,١٥
٠,٢١ Kolmogrov Smirnov	٠,١٤	٠,٠٦	٠,٣٣	٠,١٣

Table 3. ***Multicollinearity Test Results***

Model	Linearity	Level of Sig.	t	β		Non-standardized β	Standardized β
			.00	29.94		.13	4.00
Textual organization	1.48	.97	.24	-1.18	-.05	.00	-.00
Unity	1.54	.77	.00	-3.48	-.19	.01	-.04
Coherence	1.04	.81	.00	-2.83	-.16	.01	-0.5
Cohesion	1.21	.92	.00	-6.29	-.44	.01	-0.6
Metadiscourse	1.09	.70	.00	-3.24	-.21	.01	-0.4

Table 4. ***Mbox Test***

Mbox	64.66
f	1.98
df 1	30
df2 level of Sig.	24146.43 0.11

The results of descriptive statistics are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. ***Descriptive Statistics for the Role of Feedback in Textual Discourse***

Std.	Feedback		M	N	
Textual organization	Indirect	٣,٩٨	١٨,٣٣	٣٠	
٣,٧٥	Metalinguistic		١٩,٩١	٣٦	
	Control	٢,٣١	١١,٧٥	٢٨	
٤,٩٢Total			١٧,٠٧	٩٤	
Unity	Indirect	٢,٤٣	١٣,٧٠	٣٠	
	Metalinguistic	٢,١٩	٩,٩٤	٣٦	
	Control	1.45	7.57	28	
٣,٢٠Total			١٠,٤٣	٩٤	

Unity	Indirect	1.35	٨,١٣	٣٠	
	Metalinguistic	1.88	5.83	36	
	Control	1.59	3.42	28	
Total		٢,٤٧	٥,٨٥	٩٤	
Coherence	Indirect	2.24	١٦,١٠	٣٠	
	Metalinguistic	2.16	11.11	36	
	Control	2.84	4.46	28	
Total		٥,١٨	١٠,٧٢	٩٤	
Metadiscourse	Indirect	1.70	١٠,٩٠	٣٠	
	Metalinguistic	2.85	7.50	36	
	Control	١,٧٠	3.39	28	
3.67 Total			٧,٣٦	٩٤	

Based on the information presented in Table 5, while the average scores of indirect (M = 18.63, Std. = 3.98) and corrective feedback (M = 19.91, Std. = 3.75) were close to each other, in all other groups, indirect metalinguistic feedback was better than correction. In addition, both feedback groups performed better than the control group.

Table 6. ***Results of the MANOVA Test***

Source	Dependent variable	Sum of squares type 3	df	∑M	f	Sig.	ηp2
Modified model	Textual organization	١١٥٧,٥١[a]	2	٥٧٨,٧٥	٤٧,٩٢	0.00	0.51
	Unity	٥٥٨,٠٧[b]	2	٢٧٩,٠٣	٦٣,٩٥	0.00	0.58
	Coherence	٣٢٠,٥٩[c]	2	١٦٠,٢٩	58.97	0.00	0.56
	Cohesion	١٩٦٩,٥٨[d]	2	٩٨٤,٧٩	١٦٩,٣٣	0.00	0.78
	Metadiscourse	٨١٧,٣٢[e]	2	٨٥,٢٢	٤٠٨,٦٦	0.00	0.56
Interception	Textual organization	٢٦١٣٠,٤٣	1	٢٦١٣٠,٤٣	2.16	0.00	0.96
	Unity	١٠٠٦٣,٧٩	1	١٠٠٦٣,٧٩	2.30	0.00	0.96
	Coherence	٣١٢٥,١٥	1	٣١٢٥,١٥	1.15	0.00	0.92
	Cohesion	١٠٣٦٢,٢٦	1	١٠٣٦٢,٢٦	1.78	0.00	0.95
	Metadiscourse	٤٩٠٥,٠٠	1	٤٩٠٥,٠٠	1.02	0.00	0.91
Feedback	Textual organization	١١٥٧,٥١	2	٥٧٨,٧٥	٤٧,٩٢	0.00	0.51
	Unity	٥٥٨,٠٧	2	٢٧٩,٠٣	٦٣,٩٥	0.00	0.58
	Coherence	٣٢٠,٥٩	2	١٦٠,٢٩	٥٨,٩٧	0.00	0.56

	Cohesion	١٩٦٩,٥٨	2	٩٨٤,٧٩	١٦٩,٣٣	0.00	0.75
	Metadiscourse	٨١٧,٣٢	2	٤٠٨,٦٦	٨٥,٢٢	0.00	0.65
Error	Textual organization	١٠٩٨,٩٦	91	١٢,٠٧			
	Unity	٣٩٧,٠٤	91	٤,٣٦			
	Coherence	٢٤٧,٣٢	91	٢,٧١			
	Cohesion	٥٢٩,٢٢	91	٥,٨١			
	Metadiscourse	٤٣٦,٣٧	91	٤,٧٩			
Total	Textual organization	٢٩٦٦١,٠٠	94				
	Unity	١١١٩٣,٠٠	94				
	Coherence	٣٧٨٦,٠٠	94				
	Cohesion	١٣٣٠٨,٠٠	94				
	Metadiscourse	٦٣٤٨,٠٠	94				
Total	Textual organization	٢٢٥٦,٤٧	93				
	Unity	٩٥٥,١١	93				
	Coherence	٥٦٧,٩١	93				
	Cohesion	٢٤٩٨,٨٠	93				
	Metadiscourse	١٢٥٣,٧٠	93				

a Coefficient of determination = 0.51 (Adjusted coefficient of determination = 0.50)

b Coefficient of determination = 0.58 (Adjusted coefficient of determination = 0.58)

c Coefficient of determination = 0.56 (Adjusted coefficient of determination = 0.56)

d Coefficient of determination = 0.78 (Adjusted coefficient of determination = 0.78)

e Coefficient of determination = 0.65 (Adjusted coefficient of determination = 0.64)

MANOVA test (Table 6) significant effects for textual organization, .51 F(2, 91) = 47.92, p = .000, ηp2 = ., unity, ηp2 = .58, F (2, 91) = 63.95, p = . 000, cohesion, ηp2 = .56 F(2, 91) = 58.97, p = .000, coherence, ηp2 = .78F(2, 91) = 169.33, p = .000, and metadiscourse, ηp2 = .65 F(2, 91) = 85.22, p = .000. These results are in line with the results of Wilkes Lambda, Pillars Trace, Hotling Trace, and Roy Trace shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Results of *Other Statistics of the MANOVA Test*

Effect		ηp2	Sig.	Standard error	Hypothetical error	f	Value
Interception	Pillars Trace	0.98	0.00	87.00	5.00	١٢٥٠,٣١	0.98
	Wilkes Lambda	0.98	0.00	87.00	5.00	١٢٥٠,٣١	0.01

	Hotling Trace	0.98	0.00	87.00	5.00	١٢٥٠,٣١	71.85
	Roy Trace	0.98	0.00	87.00	5.00	١٢٥٠,٣١	71.85
Feedback	Pillars Trace	0.61	0.00	176.00	10.00	٢٧,٥٤	1.22
	Wilkes Lambda	0.71	0.00	174.00	10.00	٤٢,٨١	0.08
	Hotling Trace	0.78	0.00	172.00	10.00	٦٣,١١	7.33
	Roy Trace	0.87	0.00	88.00	5.00	١١٩,٧٤	6.80

To further examine the differences in the two feedback modes, Tukey's post hoc test was performed. The results can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8. ***Tukey's Post hoc Test Results***

Dependent variable	Feedback	Feedback	Mean difference	Standard error	Sig. [a]	Difference with 95% interval	
						Lower bound	Upper bound
Text organization	Indirect	Metalinguistic	-١,٢٨	0.85	0.41	0.81	-3.37
		Control	٦,٨٨*	0.91	0.00	9.11	4.65
	Metalinguistic	Indirect	١,٢٨	0.85	0.41	3.77	-0.81
		Control	٨,١٦*	0.87	0.00	10.30	6.03
	Control	Indirect	-٦,٨٨*	0.91	0.00	-٤,٦٥	-9.11
		Metalinguistic	-٨,١٦*	0.87	0.00	-٦,٠٣	2.49
Unity	Indirect	Metalinguistic	٣,٧٥*	0.51	0.00	5.01	4.79
		Control	٦,١٢*	0.54	0.00	٧,٤٦	-5.10
	Metalinguistic	Control	٣,٧٥*	0.51	0.00	-٢,٤٩	1.08
		Indirect	٢,٣٧*	0.52	0.00	٣,٦٥	-7.46
	Control	Indirect	-٦,١٢*	0.54	0.00	-٤,٧٩	-3.65
		Metalinguistic	-٢,٣٧*	0.52	0.00	-١,٠٨	1.30
Coherence	Indirect	Metalinguistic	٢,٣٠*	0.40	0.00	٣,٢٩	3.46
		Control	٤,٧٠*	0.43	0.00	٥,٧٦	-3.29
	Metalinguistic	Indirect	-٢,٤٠*	0.40	0.00	-١,٣٠	1.39
		Control	٤,٩٨*	0.41	0.00	٣,٤١	-3.41
	Control	Indirect	١١,٦٣*	0.43	0.00	-٣,٦٤	3.53

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		Metalinguistic	-٤,٩٨*	0.41	0.00	-١,٣٩	10.09
Cohesion	Indirect	Metalinguistic	٦,٦٤*	0.59	0.00	٦,٤٤	-6.44
		Control	-١١,٦٣*	0.63	0.00	١٣,١٨	5.16
	Metalinguistic	Indirect	-٦,٦٤*	0.59	0.00	-3.53	-13.18
		Control	٣,٤٠*	0.60	0.00	8.12	-8.12
	Control	Indirect	٧,٥٠*	0.63	0.00	-10.09	-1.08
		Metalinguistic	-٣,٤٠*	0.60	0.00	-5.16	5.16
Metadiscourse	Indirect	Metalinguistic	٤,١٠*	0.54	0.00	4.72	2.08
		Control	-٧,٥٠*	0.57	0.00	8.91	6.10
	Metalinguistic	Indirect	٣,٤٠*	0.54	0.00	4.72	-4.72
		Control	-٤,١٠*	0.55	0.00	5.45	2.77
	Control	Indirect	-٧,٥٠*	0.57	0.00	-6.10	-8.91
		Metalinguistic	-٤,١٠*	0.55	0.00	-2.76	-5.45

The results of Tukey's test confirmed the descriptive statistics that do not show a significant difference between indirect and linguistic feedback regarding textual organization (p = 0.41). However, in all other comparisons (i.e., semantic unity, coherence, cohesion, and metadiscourse), it was statistically significant (p = .000) that indirect feedback was more effective than linguistic feedback, and both were better compared to the control group.

Interview Results

The teachers' responses to the following interview questions were analyzed based on the "constant comparison" method (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), and the results are as follows (see Table 9):

Table 9. ***The Main Topics Raised by the Teachers in the Interview***

Main ideas	**Sample**
Attitude towards writing and feedback	The importance of discourse features to express learners' ideas
	Feedback is good but only for critical mistakes
	Timely feedback to help edit text and co-write new texts
	The need for feedback to prevent the occurrence of similar discourse errors in new texts
Attitude towards feedback	The need to pay attention to discourse and language equally
	The importance of drawing students' attention to the differences between writing texts with different genres

	The need to provide feedback as an educational supplement
Attitude toward the type of feedback	Learners' slow process in understanding mistakes and the need for indirect feedback just to be aware of the source of the error
	Providing feedback immediately after the location of the error
	Clarifying mistakes without explaining them to avoid confusing learners
	Feedback only to guide learners

Attitude towards writing and feedback

When teachers were asked about the development of writing skills and the role of feedback in this process, they stated that writing leads to thinking, not just translating all the ideas in a student's mind into a text:

"Writing is not an explanation of ideas. It is a process that enables us to think clearly and perhaps differently from ideas of which we are consciously aware. For example, when you argue, you refer to things that are carefully understood by everyone. You pay attention to the aspects of the discussion".

A teacher believed that discourse features play an important role in writing an argumentative text. He said:

"Discourse features are necessary to clarify the topic. For example, write a main topic first so that your audience can identify your idea from the beginning. You support enough details so that your readers do not have to guess. They don't have their own meaning. . . . When you read a text without the proper unifying elements, it can be like traveling in a car on a bumpy road. Suddenly you see that you're getting nowhere."

Another teacher stated that her feedback was selective and that there was no need to try to correct every error or problem and that students needed to be motivated to give feedback.

"I can't mention all the mistakes. ... I think this method is also very useful for learners. I like to focus my corrections on the most important mistakes ... I also like to encourage learners sometimes. "

Another teacher stated that writing should be seen as a process of drafting and revising, where the teacher's feedback is essential. He believed that the teacher's careful and timely support in feedback comments can draw students' attention to their writing problems at the discourse level, and this method has a greater impact on the time when students work on writing a new topic instead of revising the existing text.

"I think improving writing skills is a long process and students should be able to solve their writing problems (at the level of discourse) not only in revising the same text but also in a new piece of writing."

The same teacher explained that speaking difficulties can be subject-dependent. This means that even if learners can eliminate their speaking problems after correction, they are likely to

commit them again when they write a new composition.

"What I've noticed is that when the subject matter is varied, the level of discourse in students' writing can also vary greatly Even if they can eliminate the (discourse) problems now, this suggests that similar problems will occur again."

Attitude towards feedback

In line with the results obtained for feedback focus, a teacher explained her understanding of the necessity of argumentative writing as well as her previous teaching experience:

"I correct students according to several aspects, such as the structure of the argument, and the fit and practicality of the ideas are as important as the main vision, whether the ideas are related and the problem is expressed coherently. I mean, because of my experience in teaching writing courses, I pay attention to the connection of these ideas. There is usually a topic sentence, but the sub-ideas that students write can be unrelated. This can also happen with the main topic. I believe that this problem often happens in their writing. And finally, I also consider the language in terms of word choice, sentence structure, etc. ... I pay attention to these elements."

Another teacher highlighted the importance of genre-specific comments to raise students' awareness of the imperatives of argumentative writing and how argumentative writing differs from expository writing.

"In argumentative writing, sometimes students explain the topic instead of arguing for or against the topic. Some of their writing can take the form of an explanation rather than an argument. I think that I should have my own opinions to provide students with an opportunity to examine opposing views so that learners can think about it and come up with a solution. "

In addition to genre-specific writing issues, one of the teachers also pointed out students' writing problems regarding the text perspective in general, such as organization, unity, coherence, etc. This teacher explained the characteristics of discourse that he thinks should be focused on. He believed that these features are necessary for good writing and said that he corrects these problems because it helps students to enjoy writing in English."

Another interviewee believed that providing in-text feedback after written instruction is necessary and should be an integral part of instruction, as this feedback helps students use the skills and strategies they have been taught. She said:

"It is easy to teach grammatical structures in class but students still don't know how to use it in their writing. They need to write and then get feedback from the teacher. For example, I usually suggest helping students express a clear opinion about their claim and to deal with different points of view. This is a basic structure for the introduction section of an argumentative text. ... They have different ways to start the essay. Some students start the text in a very common way; others use more innovative and interesting ways. But for an argument, the premise must contain a clear claim. Based on this, language learners need to understand the discourse features of the text in general, including the features of organization, integration, cohesion, coherence, and meta-discourse."

In the interviews, one of the teachers said that he rarely uses speech terms such as cohesion, coherence, and metadiscourse because these terms confuse learners:

"I try to avoid saying "you need to have better text integrity" because they can't understand what integrity means. I instead try to say: There is no reasonable relationship between these two parts or what relationship might there be between this idea/cause and the other parts?" Using abstract terms only confuses students and I try to use simple words so that they can be easily understood."

Finally, regarding feedback for text organization, one teacher expressed that it was important to focus on both supra-sentential organization and sentence organization. For example, she expressed her concern about learners' weaknesses in terms of overall text structure.

"You should write the introduction section to help e readers understand your topic. Sometimes students can't identify the main topic or express their point of view, but if I don't correct it, they won't realize their problems in these cases. In addition, sometimes they finish their text without a final concluding paragraph. I believe they need to be aware of the nature of conclusions for good writing, and this is possible through feedback, especially when the feedback is without additional explanations."

Attitude toward the type of feedback

One of the teachers explained that her heavy workload prevented her from explaining all of the students' mistakes in detail, and her critical comments and suggestions for individual writing were always given with time constraints. She believed that students spend a lot of time learning writing skills, but she believed that her students became interested in solving problems after paying attention to the problem that the teacher mentioned.

"I think it's important for students to know their problems in their writing, but I don't think I have enough time to describe the same problem over and over again. Once they know their problem, they can solve it. After realizing that there is a problem, they identify the nature of the problem. I think they need time to figure out how to avoid writing problems (at the discourse level).

Another teacher thought that students needed to find problems, and she preferred text-specific feedback to make students aware of text-related issues. At the same time, she places her comments in different places in the text to cover different speech problems:

"Generally, I'll correct at the end of the text after reading the whole text based on structure and content. For language issues like cohesion, I'll just give feedback in the text where there's a problem". She also felt that effective feedback can help promote independent learning and help students understand their problems. She preferred to guide students by highlighting their problems rather than correcting them, and she trusted the students' ability to understand her comments on specific problems:

"I think that if the effectiveness after reading the comments leads to a quick understanding of the students, I will provide feedback and solutions. But I doubt that they will understand my correction. I hope that I will make them think. ..., I don't try to explain the reasons, but I always clarify the problems. I will explain when I feel the problem may be too complicated for them. At the same time, I believe if they listen carefully to the teaching, they can understand my explanation of their mistakes. "

At the same time, a teacher stated that he wanted to guide the students in their future writing. That is why he offers many comments

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about the main problems of language learners. In addition, indirect feedback is more often done to point out problems rather than correct or give suggestions. He believed that feedback should be used to guide students without correction. According to him, discourse features such as unity and coherence should be related to what students want to express for their reasons. He thought that his role as a teacher was to encourage students not to make mistakes in their writing and to point out the parts they didn't follow easily.

5. Discussion

The results of the analysis showed that, in general, teachers were more willing to use indirect feedback than metalinguistic feedback in dealing with students' discourse problems. Instead of providing corrections and suggestions, teachers provided more comments to identify problems. This finding is based on other studies that show the fact that teachers' feedback should not be too much complicated and technical. For example, Oxford (1990, p. 49) advocates implementing strategies that "help students become more fluent in what they already know and can help teachers acquire new information about what they already know." Likewise, Hyland and Hyland (2006) emphasized the fact that teachers' feedback to students should not ignore students' perspectives, neglect teachers' commitments to them, and hold them to the standards needed to achieve success in writing. The importance of providing feedback on discourse is consistent with Tarone's (1980) view who believed that by helping students express their intended meanings, communication strategies can contribute to language development. Discourse-focused feedback does not have actual instructions, but rather focuses on the subjective dimensions of writing related to the development of meaning. Abandoning the habits of correcting grammar instead of helping students to find and know their weak points in writing by using feedback related to discourse, can bring teachers to see students' flawless writing.

In the existing literature, it is not yet clear whether written corrective feedback can enhance the development and accuracy of EFL learners (Ferris, 2004, 2010, Truscott, 2010). In addition, as Truscott (2010) stated, corrective feedback on grammar and content in students' writing may help them to make certain improvements in their written texts, but whether students become advanced-level writers in the future, more research is needed. In the present study, language teachers' attention to students' discourse-related writing challenges and their feedback strategies contributed to our understanding of what teachers are willing to express about extra-sentence features, which is quite different from previous studies in which teachers' feedback has been focused only on metalinguistic and grammatical aspects (e.g., Ferris, 2010, Lee, 2004, 2008). A common analysis of teacher feedback in the existing literature is direct and indirect correction (Ferris, 2010). Some teachers do not provide feedback on discourse features because they do not know what to offer as a specific type of correction. The freedom to address discourse problems in students' writing without feeling obligated to provide solutions or corrections can easily encourage teachers toward discourse-focused feedback. This can be taken into account in training to prepare teachers to provide oral feedback perspectives.

To understand teachers' opinions about the discourse, we need to understand their understanding of foreign language writing and learners' needs. In the interviews, it was found

that teachers believed that they tried to match the purpose of their feedback with the purpose of reading. They hypothesized that students are more likely to learn how to use discourse features when exposed to feedback rather than classroom instruction.

Moreover, teachers insist on paying attention to discourse features since this is a subject in which their students are weak. Teachers reported that students' writing difficulties at the discourse level were due to the challenging nature of writing in English. The current studies show that foreign language writers do not have enough knowledge about the lexical features of English (Hinkel, 2002). Targeting the weak learners' weak points in writing by teachers shows the theory of Vygotsky (1980) related to learning through participation. Teachers provided feedback on problematic discourse features because they assumed that using these features was something students could not do on their own without help.

Another important result of this research was that there was harmony between the views and beliefs expressed by teachers and their feedback methods. In most of the analysed texts, teachers seemed to use feedback at the discourse level in a manner consistent with (1) their beliefs about their teaching of writing, and (2) their belief that an acceptable text is influenced by how they express themselves. The meaning is clear and logical in the text as a whole. In the interviews, they expressed their views on what writing should be and students' weaknesses in English writing. The foundations of their beliefs were mainly their own learning and teaching experiences. From what the teachers said in their interviews, it appeared that there was a lack of teacher training on ways to cover discourse-related writing problems.

7. Conclusion and Implications

In Iran, writing used to be taught as an aspect of reading ability or grammar, and language teachers traditionally focused on aspects of language such as grammar, vocabulary, etc. In recent years, writing has become the focus of attention, and the focus of writing has expanded to include discourse features such as text types, text structure, and cohesive devices that link sentences together (Lee, 2004, 2008). EFL teachers should pay attention to the characteristics of written speech and consider their students' weaknesses. This study may have significant implications in helping teachers understand how to provide feedback on conversational writing problems to EFL students. Findings revealed how teachers pay attention to the role of corrective feedback according to the characteristics of the discourse and also identify the indirect metalinguistic strategies focused on the speech. Findings also provide significant suggestions in educational practice regarding the way teachers draw students' attention to writing activity at the discourse level. Learner writing, along with teacher comments and feedback, may enable teachers to recognize the benefits of examining student texts as discourse rather than simply focusing on sentences. For example, teachers should pay attention to the learner's ability to create and organize their intended meaning, as well as the appropriate selection of grammatical structures and vocabulary. These results might also be used in developing instructional materials to emphasize solving problems related to discourse in students' writing. Discourse features used in teacher feedback provide examples of the application of

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metalinguistics in the real classroom by providing instruction on text organization. This study encourages EFL teachers to think about how to teach writing as written discourse and explore ways of conceptualizing and presenting discourse features to learners.

This study can also encourage teachers to think about how they can teach learners to learn by helping each other through peer feedback. Learners can provide examples of texts containing specific speech features in which they are asked to discuss the use of these features. They can then compare this text with their own writing and that of their peers to increase their understanding of written discourse. Raising learners' awareness of discourse-related writing problems may help to further develop students' discourse when writing in another language. Also, understanding learners' level of thinking may affect the effectiveness of various types of feedback. Since this case is beyond the scope of the present research and needs more detailed studies, it is suggested that future studies investigate this issue among Iranian language learners. The following point can be mentioned as a limitation of the present study, which requires future research in this field. The standardization of the educational protocol to do experiments by people other than the researchers was not available in the present study, which is suggested to be considered in future studies. In addition, further research can investigate other types of feedback to improve students' knowledge of their discourse problems.

Finally, the important point in this study is the use of real classes, classroom hours, and language learners. A classroom-based quasi-experimental design was chosen to increase ecological validity so that the findings could be transferred to the real classroom (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). In the field of applied linguistics, Spada (2015) warns that the misuse of second language theories in education can occur when there is a "lack of attention to the environment in which the research is conducted" (p. 70). The present study fits well with this call for classroom-based research. Two instructional features -writing and corrective feedback- have been explored, both of which are applicable and relevant to second language teaching.

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Appendix

Mark	Format and content 40 marks
31–40 *excellent to very good*	Fulfills task fully; correct convention for the assignment task; features of chosen genre mostly adhered to; good ideas/good use of relevant information; substantial concept use; properly developed ideas; good sense of audience
21–30 *good to average*	Fulfills task quite well although details may be underdeveloped or partly irrelevant; correct genre selected; most features of chosen genre adhered to; satisfactory ideas with some development; quite good use of relevant information; some concept use; quite good sense of audience
11–20 *fair to poor*	Generally adequate but some inappropriate, inaccurate, or irrelevant data; an acceptable convention for the assignment task; some features of chosen genre adhered to; limited ideas/moderate use of relevant information; little concept use; barely adequate development of ideas; poor sense of audience
1–10 *inadequate*	Clearly inadequate fulfilment of task; possibly incorrect genre for the assignment; chosen genre not adhered to; omission of key information; serious irrelevance or inaccuracy; very limited ideas/ignores relevant information; no concept use; inadequate development of ideas; poor or no sense of audience
Mark	**Organization and coherence 20 marks**
16–20 *excellent to very good*	Message followed with ease; well organized and thorough development through introduction, body, and conclusion; relevant and convincing supporting details; logical progression of content contributes to fluency; unified paragraphs; effective use of transitions and reference
11–15 *good to average*	Message mostly followed with ease; satisfactorily organized and developed through introduction, body and conclusion; relevant supporting details; mostly logical progression of content; moderate to good fluency; unified paragraphs; possible slight over- or under-use of transitions but correctly used; mostly correct references
6–10 *fair to poor*	Message followed but with some difficulty; some pattern of organization – an introduction, body, and conclusion evident but poorly done; some supporting details; progression of content inconsistent or repetitious; lack of focus in some paragraphs; over- or under-use of transitions with some incorrect use; incorrect use of reference
1–5 *inadequate*	Message difficult to follow; little evidence of organization – introduction and conclusion may be missing; few or no supporting details; no obvious progression of content; improper paragraphing; no or incorrect use of transitions; lack of reference contributes to comprehension difficulty

Mark	Sentence construction and vocabulary 40 marks
31–40 *excellent to very good*	Effective use of a wide variety of correct sentences; variety of sentence length; effective use of transitions; no significant errors in agreement, tense, number, person, articles, pronouns and prepositions; effective use of a wide variety of lexical items; word form mastery; effective choice of idiom; correct register
21–30 *good to average*	Effective use of a variety of correct sentences; some variety of length; use of transitions with only slight errors; no serious recurring errors in agreement, tense, number, person, articles, pronouns and prepositions; almost no sentence fragments or run-ons; variety of lexical items with some problems but not causing comprehension difficulties; good control of word form; mostly effective idioms; correct register
11–20 *fair to poor*	A limited variety of mostly correct sentences; little variety of sentence length; improper use of or missing transitions; recurring grammar errors are intrusive; sentence fragments or run-ons evident; a limited variety of lexical items occasionally causing comprehension problems; moderate word form control; occasional inappropriate choice of idiom; perhaps incorrect register
1–10 *inadequate*	A limited variety of sentences requiring considerable effort to understand; correctness only on simple short sentences; improper use of or missing transitions; many grammar errors and comprehension problems; frequent incomplete or run-on sentences; a limited variety of lexical items; poor word forms; inappropriate idioms; incorrect register