

# Individual Differences in Learning and Corrective Feedback in Writing Skill: A Case for Self-Efficacy Beliefs

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**Abstract:** The present study was designed to see how individuals with different self-efficacy beliefs respond to and learn from the learning potentials of different types of feedback provided on linguistic aspects of their writing. More specifically, a multiple-case study approach was adopted and the performances of three EFL students with different levels of self-efficacy beliefs in writing were compared. The qualitative analysis and comparison of narratives constructed for each individual revealed that different individuals can benefit from the learning potentials of corrective feedback in different and their own unique ways. Accordingly, it can be concluded that we cannot suggest and provide a one-size-fits-all solution to the learning problems and writing instructors must, to the extent possible, consider the individual learners' cognitive and affective characteristics and their needs while providing them with corrective feedback in writing.

**Keywords:** Feedback, Individual differences, Self-efficacy beliefs, EFL writing skill.

## Introduction

Individual differences, as one of the most important psychological aspect of SLA, have been extensively researched in L2 studies and are considered as the most consistent predictors of L2 learning success (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003). It is widely acknowledged that individual differences variables must be taken into account in both the theoretical accounts of SLA and in practical pedagogical decision-making (Dörnyei, 2005). Consideration of individual learner characteristics has also provided a way out of some controversies or unresolved areas in second language learning like the roles and effective of written corrective feedback on students' writing ability. In fact, Ferris, Liu, Sinha, & Senna (2013) assert that besides the continuing practical need for classroom teachers to be equipped with the best available answers about written corrective feedback, there is a specific and obvious gap in the recent research base which is the lack of careful consideration of individual learner characteristics as they receive, process, and apply WCF. Bitchener and Ferris (2012) also suggest the use of both experimental and exploratory research methods to see how learners with different individual differences profiles respond to and benefit from different types of feedback.

Kormos (2012) also asserts that the degree of learners' motivation affects the extent to which they pay attention to feedback and engage more actively in revising their texts. In addition, the formation of positive self-perceptions with regard to L2 writing is also affected by the types of feedback learners receive. If learners receive appropriate and effective appraisal of their works and their writing abilities, they will attempt to benefit more from the learning potentials of feedback provided and consequently can enhance the quality of their writing. Ellis (2010) maintains that "The vast bulk of CF studies have ignored learner factors, focusing instead on the relationship and the effect of specific CF strategies and learning outcomes" (p. 339). Ferris (2010) also emphasizes the important role of IDs in L2 learners' response to CF by suggesting that "some students benefit more from CF than others, for a variety of reasons such as motivation, learning style, and metalinguistic background knowledge" (p. 197). Storch and Wigglesworth (2010) have further asserted that neglected individual differences such as learners' linguistic backgrounds and affective factors such as their beliefs and attitudes, their levels of motivation and cognitive competencies can influence the outcome of any writing interventions and the learners' uptake and retention of the feedback received to a great extent.

Few studies in the field of SLA have explored how different individuals respond to or make use of learning potentials of different types of feedback and how their motivational propensities may affect this process. In one of such studies, F.

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Hyland (2011) qualitatively analyzed a group of university students' attitudes and motivation to learn from the feedback provided on their written works. The findings of the study supported the fact that the students' learning goals highly affect their willingness to engage with and process the form-focused feedback and consequently to improve the accuracy of their texts. In the same regard, it is generally believed that the provision of appropriate feedback, which is effectively aligned with the instructional procedures and goals, can act as a scaffolding tool which help learners become more self-regulated and improve their writing (see e.g., Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Chandler, 2003; Frees, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2014; Lee, 2003). As a result of this gap in literature, there are renewed calls for identifying how different individuals respond to and learn from the learning potentials of different types of feedback in writing. Accordingly, in the present study a case study approach is selected to investigate the ways learners with different levels of self-efficacy beliefs in writing respond to and benefit from the learning potentials of different types of corrective feedback (namely, direct feedback, indirect feedback with notations and feedback with metalinguistic explanations) provided on linguistic aspects of their writing. More specifically, the present study intends to answer the following research question: How do individuals with different levels of self-efficacy respond to and learn from different types of feedback (namely, direct feedback, indirect feedback with notations and metalinguistic feedback) provided on linguistic aspects of their writing (that is, structure, vocabulary and cohesion)?

### Background

**Self-efficacy:** One key variable related to the motivation construct is the learners' self-efficacy beliefs which along with their self-concept is subsumed under the learners' personal agency beliefs and have the goal of regulating the learning goals and transformation of these goals into actions (Bandura, 1986). Efficacy implies that some degree of control exists within a person (Oxford, 1992). Self-efficacy beliefs are future oriented and generally refer to the learners' judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of actions to achieve designated goals (Bandura, 1997). Students' self-efficacy beliefs come from their mastery experiences, social persuasion, modeling and emotional states (Bandura, 1986; Van Dinther, Dochy, & Segers, 2011). Mastery experiences or the students' judgment of themselves in past performances are considered as the most influential source of self-efficacy and the students' perception of success or failure resulting from such experiences can affect their future performance. Social persuasion, as manifested through the feedback or evaluations provided by teachers, parents and peers, has the potential to affect the students' self-efficacy. Modelling the successful behavior of their peers can also act as a kind of implicit scaffolding that affects the students' efficacy beliefs and their successful accomplishment of the learning tasks. Students' emotional reactions and thoughts can in turn weaken or strengthen their efficacy beliefs and, hence, the extent of their engagement with the learning tasks will be affected.

On the whole, self-efficacy beliefs are essential in energizing the learners to engage in the learning behavior and to successfully complete the learning tasks. In fact, learners' beliefs about their ability may influence their goals, motivation and strategy use while performing on a given task (Bandura, 1986; Weiner, 1976). Pintrich (1989) maintains that "students' self-efficacy beliefs, or their perceived competence to perform a given task, can be related to their use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies and effort management for performance" (as cited in Conesa, 2013, p. 20). In the same regard, the learners who have strong beliefs about their abilities are more likely to be cognitively and affectively engaged in the learning process and they can make use of the strategies more effectively. Learners' self-efficacy beliefs can also be enhanced by using some instructional strategies such as goal setting and provision of feedback which may result in better performance and academic achievement (Schunk & Swartz, 1993). Numerous studies in L2 acquisition have also reported self-efficacy as a determining factor for student's L2 development (see e.g., Chularut & DeBacker, 2004).

**Self-efficacy beliefs and writing:** Learners pursue goals when they are confident about their abilities to achieve them (Pajares & Johnson, 1996). Learners' interest and their self-efficacy beliefs also determine the degree of their attention, efforts, persistence and time devoted to any learning activities (Bandura, 1986). Accordingly, since "writing is laborious, time-consuming and in many contexts often a voluntary activity, interest and self-efficacy beliefs might determine whether L2 learners engage in writing at all and, when given the choice, what kind of writing tasks they decide to perform" (Kormos, 2012, p. 399). Writing self-efficacy research starting from mid-1980s has illuminated relationships between writing self-efficacy and a number of other variables related to writing such as writing quality and standards, level of writing apprehension and also differences in self-efficacy of different individuals (see e.g., Bruning, Dempsey, Kauffman, McKim, & Zumbrunn, 2013). This body of research has shown that self-efficacy is a reliable predictor of students' writing performance and mediates between what they believe they can write and what they actually write (e.g., Ebrhimzadeh, Khodabandehlou & Jahandar, 2013; Jones, 2008; Meier, McCarthy & Schmeck, 1984; Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Johnson, 1996; Sanders-Reio, 2010; Sanders-Reio, Alexander, Reio, & Newman, 2014). Research also has shown that writing self-efficacy is related to students' achievement goal orientations, perceived value of writing, and their use of strategies throughout the composition process and it mediates the effect of gender and pre-performance on writing performance (see e.g., Pajares, 2003; Zumbrunn, 2010).

Furthermore, research evidence has shown that students with high writing self-efficacy write better and are less apprehensive about writing than those with low writing self-efficacy (Bruning, et al., 2013; Pajares, 2003). This finding is due to the fact that students with higher writing efficacy beliefs "enjoy and value writing, put more effort into writing tasks, persist longer with writing challenges, and write more inside and outside of the classroom" (Zumbrunn, 2010, pp. 26-27). It has been shown that while performing on difficult writing tasks, students with high self-efficacy consider them as challenging tasks, work attentively and use their cognitive strategies productively to master them (Lavelle, 2006). It is worth-mentioning

that high self-efficacy will not produce competent performance when requisite knowledge and skills about writing are lacking or the students do not know how to apply effective strategies and regulate their actions during the writing process. It is not clear how self-efficacy might influence the individual students' learning from and use of the feedback received. How the individual differences variables influence the use of feedback is still an under-researched area and few studies have explored the nature and effects of these individual differences within the subfield of writing. Saadat, Mehrpour and Khajavi (2017) also argued that "research on the interaction between individual differences and writing feedback is still at its infancy and there is still much to be learned in this area" (p. 86). Consequently, due to the importance of individual difference variables in how the individuals respond to different types of feedback, more research is needed to explore the relationship between IDs and specific corrective feedback strategies targeting specific language features. In the same regard, the present study uses a case study approach to examine how individual learners with different levels of self-efficacy beliefs in writing benefit from different types of feedback provided on linguistic aspects of their writing.

## Material and Methods

**Design of the study:** The current research on written corrective feedback (WCF) has been moving our knowledge and pedagogy forward, but most of these studies are controlled (quasi-)experimental studies which typically compare two or more WCF treatments across several different groups (Ferris, et al., 2013). These empirically rigorous, carefully designed studies have provided us with great insights about learning issues; however, it is also important to consider individual student responses to pedagogical treatments in addition to cross-group comparisons. Several authors discussing research on response to student writing in general and WCF in particular have recently called for more attention to individual student variables in such investigations (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Ferris, 2006, 2010; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010). Flahive (2010) also maintains that "few studies have been undertaken in the L2 writing literature whose primary focus is individual differences" (p. 135). In the same regards, Reynolds (2010) asserts that "individual differences may serve as a useful direction for future second language writing research" (p. 167). There have been few attempts in previous studies even to individualize WCF for different student writers, let alone to identify possible factors that might explain student variation in utilizing WCF. Accordingly, the present study used a multiple-case study approach and attempted to explore how learners with different levels of self-efficacy beliefs in writing respond to and learn from the learning potentials of different kinds of feedback (namely, direct feedback, indirect feedback with notations and feedback with metalinguistic explanations) provided on linguistic aspects of writing.

Though case studies have been rare in research on corrective feedback in writing, several researchers have utilized this methodology effectively for studies that looked more broadly at teacher commentary and its impact on subsequent student writing (e.g., Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997), studies which have examined various aspects of L2 writers' responses to teachers' written feedback (e.g., Hyland, 1998; Hyland & Hyland, 2001, 2006), studies which have examined variation in case study participants' willingness and ability to revise their writing after receiving a teacher's written commentary (e.g., Conrad & Goldstein, 1999) and studies which have investigated the extent to which L2 learners' individual differences (e.g., formal knowledge of language, field dependency and writing motivation) influence their monitoring behavior during the writing process and predict their retention of a teacher's written corrective feedback in the short and long run (e.g., Ferris, et al., 2013; Rahimi, 2015). These case studies on teachers' corrective feedback and learners' response have provided some insights which inform and influence the design and procedures of the current study: (1) Teachers must also pay attention to different learners' behaviors while providing them with corrective feedback since individual student writers respond differently to teacher feedback; (2) A number of other factors like the learners' L1 background, their cognitive and affective individual predispositions and factors such as social and pedagogical context might influence the way learners consider and apply feedback they have received. On the whole, this body of case study work on teacher response to student writing provided models for our own research design. Another important point is that this was a naturalistic study, so the instructor taught writing and gave feedback exactly as he would have if any research endeavor had not been present. So the data included the texts written by the students and the teacher's feedback on these drafts.

**Participants and setting:** In order to investigate how learners with different levels of self-efficacy beliefs in writing (that is, high, mid and low self-efficacy beliefs) respond to and learn from different types of feedback, the researcher chose the students of an essay writing course in a State University in Iran. The class was held by the researcher during the whole semester and the students received instruction on different methods of supporting ideas and practiced how to write expository and argumentative essays in English. Due to pedagogical concerns and ethics of instruction, all the students in class received feedback on different aspects of writing after completing their assignments. However, through purposive sampling technique only 3 students, who had fully completed all their assignments and received the intended feedback, were selected as the main participants of the study. In addition, the care was taken to select individuals from the same gender (i.e., female students) and language proficiency level (i.e., upper-intermediate) to avoid the possible influence of any confounding variables on the findings of the study to the extent possible. Based on the design of the study, they were treated as individual cases and their responses to different types of feedback were compared. In fact, the researcher decided upon a qualitative, multiple-case study design so that the individual learners' responses to various types of written corrective feedback and the possible variations in their learning from corrective feedback and its retention could be explored.

## Instruments

**Instrument used to assess the students' self-efficacy beliefs in writing:** The self-efficacy scale developed by Yavuz-Er-



kan (2004) was used to assess the students' self-efficacy beliefs in writing. It contains 28 four-point Likert-scale statements which are preceded by the phrase "I can ..." to grade the strength of subjects' beliefs in their writing ability in the five factors of writing: content, design, unity, accuracy and punctuation. This questionnaire enjoys form a good reliability index: .89 Cronbach's Alpha. Total score for this instrument was 112 and the student who had a score of over 90 was considered as more self-efficacious (Bahareh), the student scoring over 70 as moderately self-efficacious (Elham) and the one scoring below this point was treated as less self-efficacious (Mahtab). A point worth-mentioning is that these cut-off points have not been specified in the original instrument, but are determined and used as the most practical method for classifying different individuals in terms of variations in their self-efficacy beliefs in writing.

**Writing assignments and feedback offered:** During the writing course, the students received instruction on different methods of paragraph development and practiced writing expository and argumentative essays. Their written assignments and the feedback received served as the main data of the study based on which an individual profile/narrative was constructed for each student. The first assignment students were required to write was a descriptive paragraph for which they described either a place they have visited or a person they are familiar with. After completing and delivering the assignment, the students received direct feedback which involves reformulating and rewriting the learners' texts while attending to errors in the linguistic aspects of their texts (Thornbury, 1997). The second assignment was a cause and effect paragraph for which the students were required to write about the causes and effects of some common issues in their lives like causes of car accidents, effects of women working outside home, etc. For this assignment, the students benefited from indirect feedback with annotations which refers to the use of codes marking the types of errors made by the learners (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010). Subsequently, they wrote a comparison and contrast paragraph for which they received metalinguistic feedback. In metalinguistic explanation, some negative evidence or (implicit) clues as to the rules of language are provided for the learners to enable them to understand the nature of errors committed and correct the erroneous parts. Metalinguistic feedback is defined by Lyster and Ranta (1997, as cited in Ellis, Loewen, & Elarm, 2009, p. 304) as "comments, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of the learner's utterance". A point worth-mentioning is that after receiving feedback for each assignment, the students were required to reflect upon the feedback and try to revise their texts or correct their mistakes accordingly. The students also completed two expository and argumentative essays which served as the standpoint to see whether they have learnt anything from and incorporated the feedback received while performing on the subsequent tasks or not.

**Procedure of data collection and analysis:** In this study, the students of an essay writing course (a total of 20 students) were chosen and then their written texts were analyzed for errors in the linguistic and discoursal aspects of the texts produced. Subsequently, these learners were provided with different types of feedback (i.e., direct feedback, indirect feedback with annotations and metalinguistic feedback with comments and explanations) and then they were required to revise their texts based on the feedback received. For the purpose of current study, five different texts from each student were collected: a descriptive paragraph, a comparison and contrast paragraph, a cause and effect paragraph, one three paragraph expository essay and one five paragraph argumentative essay which were written during the classroom sessions.

Due to the purpose of the current study in terms of comparing the performances and responses of individuals with different levels of self-efficacy in writing, three students' profiles, as the representative of high, mid and low self-efficacious individuals, were targeted. Similar to all the students in the class, these three students after receiving the intended instruction, wrote their drafts, reflected on different types of feedback received and revised their written texts. In order to come up with a unified picture of these learners' responses and their possible learning from different types of feedback received, at first the researcher created data files/narratives for each of the three students based on their marked and revised texts, their performance on the subsequent tasks which showed their responses and learning from feedback, and their preference for different types of feedback. We chose this narrative construction approach as a systematic and integrated way to organize the various pieces of information about each individual writer and then to compare the findings across the other case study participant. The use of narratives as an interpretive data analysis tool is well established in social science and educational qualitative research especially for analyzing and comparing the responses of individual cases to various types of interventions (see, e.g., Cresswell, 2007; Ferris, et. al., 2013; Gerring, 2007). The main written texts and the students' revisions were compared to see how they respond to different types of feedback and the essays served as a stand-point to compare different students' learning and consolidation of corrective feedback provided on the linguistic aspects of writing.

## Results

### The contribution of self-efficacy beliefs in writing to the individuals' responses to feedback

Bahareh is a student of English Language Teaching and has an upper-intermediate level of competence in writing. Her responses to the items of the self-efficacy beliefs scale in writing put her among high self-efficacious individuals. In the descriptive paragraph, she has committed many errors in pronoun references, parts of speech, choice of words, subject verb-agreement and structure of the sentences that are explicitly corrected for her:

*He show serious but he's so friendly and kind he makes others feel relaxed but he have so formal*

*relationship with others.*

Explicit correction:

*He seems serious, but he is so friendly and kind that makes others feel relaxed. He also has a very formal relationship with others.*

A similar pattern of errors emerged in the cause and effect and comparison and contrast paragraphs for which she had received indirect feedback with error codes and metalinguistic feedback with comments and explanations, respectively. She had also been required to reflect upon the feedback received and revise her texts.

Error and feedback in cause and effect paragraph:

*Also men can't have good life because he (Pro) sometimes need (VF) support by (Prep) her wife and (RO) she put (VF) time for him but when women work out, she don't (AGR) have time for him so her tiredness has effect on her life, and (RO) she don't have time for her children and husband.*

Error and feedback in comparison and contrast paragraph:

*Also now children are expose (verb tense marker is missing) to disease because they don't have any movement so they become fat usually (imprecise expressions and word order); however, in past children have (verb tense must be corrected) more movement and play (some words are missing) healthy (A run-on sentence that needs to be structurally revised).*

This pattern of erroneous run-on sentences plus imprecise words and lexical expressions continued to the expository essay as well. It seems that while starting to write this essay, she had kept in mind the feedback received and had tried to use shorter sentences, but as she had moved forward more run-on sentences had emerged. A closer examination of this essay also indicates that she had reduced the number of local errors, but there are still many cases of imprecise words and expressions in her texts.

Sentences at the beginning of the essay:

*Finding a job is so important for continuing your lives nowadays. These days, everybody should have a job for preparing their needs. Also your job determines your future even your wife or husband.*

Sentences in the middle of the essay:

*... one way is to prepare a letter of application and request every company or you can search internet for everywhere because you need a job for getting your needs, another step is performing well in the interview so if you are knowledge and have benefit information about your proficiency you can be well in your interview and be accepted in a popular and facilitable company.*

Because of her major problems in sentence structure, she again received some comments in this aspect of writing besides the comments on the content and organization of ideas. The analysis of her performance in the argumentative essay indicates that these comments had been able to persuade her to write shorter sentences in many cases, but there are still many grammatical errors which can be attributed to her perfunctory manner in writing or her inadequate grammatical knowledge, in particular, and limited L2 proficiency, in general:

*As a conclusion, if the couple stay with each other because of their children both of them sacrifice thmself and persecute each other also children don't grow in kindness situation. So they shouldn't bother themselves by staying. Finally they can make a better life when separate from each other.*

Mahtab, as the representatives of low self-efficacious individuals, is an upper-intermediate proficiency level student of English Language Teaching. In the descriptive paragraph she has used very simple structures and expressions. The following sentence represents one of the prototype sentences in her text and the other sentences have a rather similar structure:

*He is an easy-going person who make al people laugh but's it's the surface he is the sensitive type who get upset easily but never show it.*

Explicit correction:

*He is an easy-going person who makes all people laugh, but it's the surface; he has a sensitive personality who easily gets upset but never shows her feeling.*

Most other sentences, similar to this one, are run-on and contain errors in subject-verb agreement, verb tense markers, and imprecise expressions. These problems continue to the cause and effect paragraph which is very ineffective and inconsequential in terms of content and level of supporting details. Besides the errors in sentence structure, errors in mechanics of writing like spelling and punctuation abound in this text:

*Lots of factors may lead to these careless accidents. If we want to call (WW) some of them, we can reffer (Spl) to lack of attention to speed limitation (Spl) and not fasting seat belts (SS).*

Despite having some problems in the content and transition between the ideas, the comparison and contrast paragraph contains a good number of academic words and the structure of sentences has to some extent been improved as a result of the feedback received:

*Office jobs require seating on a chair in front of a monitor (I think it's better to add a coordinator here) working for many hours which cause (subject-verb agreement) neck pain and problems for eyes. In long time (use correct punctuation mark after introductory prepositional phrase) these jobs may cause overweight problem and put our health in danger. On the other hand, Active jobs require having (try to use a better verb) physical activities, (a comma splice: sentences are incorrectly connected) these jobs make humans more tired but more happy (needs to be more precise). (use a conjunctive adverb to show relationship of ideas) These jobs in long time cause pain in feet and back.*

In the expository essay in which she is elaborating upon the steps for finding a job, similar patterns of errors emerged. This shows that she has not been able to keep whatever she has learnt from the feedback given and continues to write in her own style. After writing an introductory paragraph, the whole body of supporting ideas is presented in a single paragraph which suffers from many grammatical errors which have made the whole text ineffective. Consequently, due to pedagogical concerns for the writing improvement of each single individual, the instructor again provided explicit comments and corrections for this essay.

The whole body paragraph in the expository essay:

*In order to search for a job in the Internet it's better to know your professional terms of your favorite job, it also help you in writing the letter of application, when you use specialized words it show you more professional. our last advice is about the way you represent yourself in the interview: you must dress formally and be polite.*

Due to the thorough comments and explanations received on the content, organization and connection of the ideas in the previous assignments, this student has been able to improve her performance in these aspects in the argumentative essay; however, she has not been able to remove many of the grammatical errors she had similarly committed in the

previous assignments:

*So all the families have to teach their children what is divorce and what it really is or is not, If they get prepare and be familiar they will effect and harm less in case of divorce.*

These deficiencies can be attributed to her inadequate L2 grammatical knowledge which cannot be expected to develop substantially during a single course and semester, but requires a high level of dedication and effort on the part of the learner. However, compared to her high self-efficacious counterpart, her true appraisal of her writing competence has enabled her to have concern for the feedback received and try to improve her writing.

Elham is an upper-intermediate proficiency level student of English Language Teaching and has a rather good level of writing competence. Her individual difference profile indicated that she is moderate in self-efficacy beliefs in writing. Elham's performance in the descriptive paragraph confirms her good competence in writing. She has used a variety of sentence structures in this text accurately. One main problem in her writing that is very common among Iranian EFL learners is the imprecise use of words and expressions to express the intended ideas. The following extract represents one of these problems that is explicitly reformulated for her:

*She never stops thinking about me and when I do something that want her not to understand (without her awareness), she can understand what I'm doing in her dreams.*

She has also committed some minor errors such as missing tense markers (-s/-es/-ed) and incorrect use of subordinator at the beginning of a noun clause, which are explicitly corrected for her. She has also received some comments about the appropriateness of the topic sentence which was again somehow problematic in the cause and effect paragraph:

*Many factors can be the effect of women working outside the home (SS) and there are lots of advantages and disadvantages of this issue that we will discuss some of them here (too explicit and rather ineffective).*

There are also some other cases of errors in this paragraph, but they do not disrupt meaning. In fact, they can be attributed to her carelessness or inability to pay enough attention and simultaneously manage different aspects of writing while composing her text. For instance, after the introductory sentences, she has written a run-on sentence containing further grammatical errors in word form, comma splice and use of incorrect prepositions and pronoun references:

*First of all, women can benefit from financial independent (WF) and they don't have to request money of (Prep) of their father or husband, (Com) because there are lots of problems in life that all of them need money and if she doesn't word (Com) they (Ref) have to control money to control their life (SS).*

There were also some errors in word order and sentence fragments for which she received error codes and was required to reflect upon the feedback received and correct her mistakes. The analysis of this participant's performance on the comparison and contrast paragraph revealed the repetition of errors of the same nature (that is, run-on sentence and imprecise words and expressions):

*Second, their internal spatial (imprecise word) are (verbs must agree with their subject in number and tense) different that Roudaky building has some broken and crapy chairs without data shows (imprecise word) and bad smell as you enter the building but Faraby building has chairs and most of their classes are supplied with data shows, classes are neat and bright (the sentence is unnecessarily long and must be broken into smaller segments).*

Repetition of errors of the same nature in this text may be attributed to the fact that either indirect feedback has not been effective enough in enabling the learner to notice and understand the point of the error codes and correct her errors or the learner herself has not been conscious and competent enough to realize the intention behind this type of feedback and



apply it while writing the subsequent drafts.

Moreover, the examination of her performance on the expository essay led us to make the hypothesis that despite of her good competence in writing, Elham has not been able to regulate her actions and manage the information flow in a proper way because the ideas presented in the body, though relevant to the general topic, do not effectively support the thesis statement she has written and there are also some cases of logical flaws in her reasoning. Regarding the structure of sentences, as she starts to write unnecessarily long and run-on sentences to pack many ideas in a single sentence, the pattern of local errors emerge:

*As all of us are aware of today's societies conditions and competitions among all people related to any kind of job that you are interested to do or which you must do without any motivation (in this case it will cause more hardness to the person), all of us must compete to each other and without any planning or using time tables this competition is the start point of being successful.*

Based on the comments she has received regarding the content and organization of ideas in the expository essay, she has been able to manage the ideas and write a more unified argumentative essay. Moreover, by paying conscious attention to different issues while writing, she has given variety to sentence structures in which the number of local errors has been reduced substantially. However, the incorrect connection of ideas which in turn has led to some sentence fragments is still evident in some parts of the essay:

*But when their parents get divorced, although children will get upset and a feeling of lack will improve in them, whether their parents have a successful remarriage or stay single those children will have a better life without challenges in their family.*

The comparison of responses of these learners to different types of feedback indicated that they could learn and apply the specific types of feedback received for a short term, but for varying degrees. It was also revealed that complexity of the task and the students' level of engagement can affect the quality of their writing and learning from the feedback. After qualitatively comparing the performances of learners with different individual characteristics on different writing tasks and scrutinizing their responses to different types of feedback, a number of considerations and patterns emerged in the data that are presented and discussed below.

## Discussion

The initial and the most important observation which can be driven by the findings of the present study is that different individuals respond to and benefit from the learning potentials of different types of corrective feedback in different and their own unique ways (Ferris, 2012; Kormos, 2012; Rahimi, 2015). The finding of the present study also supports Ferris's (2010) conceptualization that "some students benefit more from CF than others, for a variety of reasons such as motivation, learning style, and metalinguistic background knowledge" (p. 197). More specifically, it was revealed that the learners' affective states like their writing interests, attitudes and apprehension can also affect their writing performance (Wong, 2012). In fact, if the students feel anxious during the writing process, they cannot persist while facing writing challenges and will not be able to come up with a refined text. Previous research has also indicated that self-efficacy beliefs can make an independent contribution to the prediction of writing competence (Bruning, et al., 2013; Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Johnson, 1995; Zumbrunn, 2010). Low self-efficacious individuals might turn to less effective strategies like translation from their L1 which may disrupt their thinking processes and can endanger the accuracy and fluency of the texts.

The performance of these participants also indicated that they are incapable in managing their actions and resolving their problems in writing, which confirm the fact that they have not been effectively taught and, thus, have not applied these strategies effectively while composing their texts. Learners' strategic behavior during the writing process can also help them manage this complex task effectively because it has been identified that expert writers make use of well-developed writing strategies to enhance the efficacy of their performance while writing. In fact, the research on the role of strategies in writing has indicated that the effective use of writing strategies can enhance the quality of learners' performance and possibly can result in better writing competence (e.g., Boshier, 1998; Cumming, 1989; Raimes, 1987; Roca de Larios, Manchón, Murphy, & Marín, 2008; Sasaki, 2007; Zamel, 1983). It has also been identified that learners who have problems in writing and mostly struggle with this skill lack the knowledge of writing strategies and, as a result, cannot perform effectively in planning, generating and organizing their ideas or proofreading and revising their written texts (e.g., Harris, Graham, Mason, & Friedlander, 2008).

These students also make many local errors which can be attributed to their careless and perfunctory manner in writing. It



seems that many of the students have not been effectively engaged in the process of writing and have not done any revisions. Consequently, it can be asserted that feedback can improve some aspects of wiring and consolidation of learning only occurs for the features that are important for the learners and they give conscious attention to them. This finding is in line with the idea that the uptake and learning from corrective feedback is highly dependent on the learners' depth of engagement with errors (Storch & Wiggleworth, 2010). Moreover, the learners must be concerned about their writing improvement and be motivated to do so because previous research has indicated that there is a link between motivation and writing development and retention of the feedback (Chenoweth & Hayes, 2003; Goldstein, 2006; Kormos, 2012; Rahimi, 2015; Troia et. al, 2013).

The results also indicated that besides the students' commitment and effort for improving their writing, the students' educational background and the level of their L2 proficiency have also mediating roles in their uptake and learning from the feedback. This assertion verifies the idea that "if students have a high proficiency level in the target language, they can more easily recognize teachers' implicit CF, so they can notice and potentially correct their erroneous utterances" (Lee, 2013, p. 228). Consequently, feedback alone however precise and elaborate does not lead to improvement in writing.

### Conclusion

The findings of the present study confirmed the idea that there are both inter-individual and intra-individual differences in how the students engage in writing process and how they orchestrate their mental resources while performing on different writing tasks. They also respond to various types of interventions in their own unique ways and we cannot suggest a one-size-fits-all solution to the learning problems. The learners' self-efficacy beliefs can also make a difference in their response and learning from feedback. The positive effects of both cognitive and motivational/affective variables in foreign language learning and performing on different tasks have been proved and the evidence indicates that each variable makes a unique if not specialized contribution to learning. Consequently, an attempt must be made to identify specific conditions and particular language tasks that are maximally dependent on each set of factors and try to maximize their facilitating potentials and minimize their inhibiting roles. It might not be feasible for all teachers in all instructional settings to give their learners different tests and instruments to become familiar with their individual characteristics, but they must try to the extent possible become familiar with their preferred approaches to learning and their problems and needs while performing on different learning tasks. As for writing skill, dialogue journals or individual contact through conferences can be effective tools for providing a channel of communication that can make teachers aware of their students' personal characteristics, their level of knowledge and experiences, their preferences, interests and needs.

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