

Portfolio-based Writing Instruction as a Venue to Provide Corrective Feedback on EFL Learners' Writing Performance

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Abstract

It is an underestimated topic whether or not providing corrective feedback through portfolio-based writing instruction can be effective. Hence, the purpose of the current study was to investigate the effect of providing corrective feedback through portfolio-based writing instruction on the overall and componential writing performance of the Iranian intermediate EFL learners. To that end, 44 intermediate EFL learners participated in a writing program aiming to develop the writing skill of the L2 learners. The participants were divided into the experimental group (N = 20) in which they received the corrective feedback on their writing through the portfolio-based writing, and the control group (N = 24) who received the traditional paper-and-pen corrective feedback on their writing. A pre-test/post-test design was administrated to address the purpose of the study. The results indicated that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group both in overall and componential writing performance. Thus, it can be concluded that providing corrective feedback through portfolio-based writing can be constructive in developing intermediate EFL learners writing performance. This may be due to the features which portfolio-based writing brings to the L2 writing classroom including developing the motivation of the L2 learners to write, pushing them to be more autonomous learners, helping them to reflect upon their writing, and making the learners conscious about the process of writing. The study carries some implications for L2 writing teachers and learners.

Keywords: Corrective Feedback, Portfolio-based Writing, Writing Components

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1. Introduction

It may be, thoughtfully, mind baffling that Bae (2011) believes that writing is ignored in L2 classrooms since the L2 teachers address it as a warm-up activity to enhance L2 learners' vocabulary and grammar. Consequently, L2 learners find it marvelously tricky how to write in L2 for different purposes (Meihami & Rashidi, 2018). It is not, however, acceptable since L2 learners' writing skills and their ability to communicate in L2 through writing have a significant role in how they communicate in their real life. In this sense, Weigle (2002) declares that the ability to write effectively is becoming more and more essential and writing instruction is assumed to have an unignorable important role in L2 language learning. This makes L2 practitioners investigate alternative approaches to instruct writing skills (Bryant & Timmins, 2002). One of the alternative approaches used for teaching and assessing L2 writing is the portfolio assessment.

When talking about portfolio assessment as a method of writing instruction in L2 contexts, we should bear in mind that it is the so-called best-known alternative writing assessment in 1990s which can be defined as "a collection of texts the writer has produced over a defined period of time to the specifications of a particular context" (Hamp-Lyons, 1991, p. 262). The crucial point regarding the feature of a portfolio is that it can act as a bridge between writing assessment and writing instruction. Owing to this feature, the assessment of writing will become a less stress-imposing activity for the learners. It is also a method to enhance L2 learners' motivation (Crosby, 1997) and self-confidence since it provides an arena in which the L2 learners will observe their progress in writing skills and make them autonomous learners (Nezakatgoo, 2011). This feature of portfolio writing may be rooted in its potentiality in providing corrective feedback on the writing performance of L2 learners which, ultimately, leads to their writing development (Esfandiari & Meihami, 2017; Saeedi & Meihami, 2015).

The discussion of whether or not providing corrective feedback has turned into one of the most controversial debates in recent years of applied linguistics (Ferris, Lin, Sinha, & Senna, 2013, Han & Hyland, 2019; Storch, 2018; Tang & Liu, 2018). While some argued about the theoretical problems of providing corrective feedback and the capability of teachers in doing such a task (Truscott, 1999, 2004, 2007), others believe that providing corrective feedback can lead to an improvement in the writing performance of L2 learners (Ferris, 1999, 2004). Alongside, such a long-lasting debate is the discussion of how and through which approach corrective feedback should be provided on the writings of L2 learners; among them is portfolio writing assessment (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000; Lam, 2017; Nezakatgoo, 2011; Roohani & Taheri, 2015). However, not many studies pay attention to the

potentiality which portfolio has for providing corrective feedback on the writings of L2 learners; especially in the EFL contexts.

There is also a hot discussion in providing corrective feedback when the type of corrective feedback is focused. The main two types of corrective feedback are direct and indirect ones (Hyland & Hyland, 2019; Esfandiari & Meihami, 2017). According to Van Beuningen, De Jong, and Kuiken (2008) indirect corrective feedback implicitly points out the errors for the learners while direct corrective feedback helps learners explicitly by showing the target forms to them. The debate on whether to provide direct or indirect corrective feedback on the learners writing performance have yielded mixed results; each states that either of them can be conducive (e.g., Ferris, Chaney, Komura, Roberts, & McKee, 2000). Moreover, some believe in the effectiveness of both methods in a similar way (Frantzen, 1995, as cited in Esfandiari & Meihami, 2017, p. 41).

Writing skill has got different components including content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics (Jacobs et al., 1981). Each of the mentioned components needs to be addressed in the writings of L2 learners by providing corrective feedback to develop the overall writing performance of the learners. Given the importance of providing corrective feedback on different components of writing skill, the current study was an attempt to provide corrective feedback on the different writing performance of the Iranian EFL intermediate learners. The aim of the present study was to investigate whether providing corrective feedback, both direct and indirect one, through portfolio writing could have a constructive role to develop the componential and overall writing performance of the intermediate EFL learners. Thus, the study tries to answer the following questions.

1. Does providing corrective feedback through portfolio-based instruction improve Iranian EFL learners' overall writing performance?
2. Does providing corrective feedback through portfolio-based instruction improve different writing components including content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics?

2. Literature Review

Portfolio-based writing has a direct association with the alternative assessment which has been considered a new approach in assessment (Bachman, 2000). Hamayan (1995) believed that alternative assessment could be combined into the daily activities in schools and classrooms. Hence, it may be stated that alternative assessment can be used in the L2 teaching and learning classrooms. Moreover, it is pointed out that portfolio-based writing assessment has long been used in writing assessment (Hamp-Lyons, 2000). Two main reasons can be given for the popularity of this instructional

method. Taki and Heidari (2011) asserted that the first reason is the growing dissatisfaction with some of the limitations of timed spontaneous essay tests. As for the second reason, they believed that the development trajectory in writing instruction methodologies could be regarded as the popularity of portfolio-based writing assessment. Given that, one can declare that portfolio-based assessment in general, and portfolio-based writing assessment, in particular, remove some limitations of the traditional assessment such as the inability of traditional assessment in providing information to understand the learners' improvement and achievement (Moya & O'Malley, 1994). Consequently, it can be stated that portfolio-based assessment provides a platform through which corrective feedback can be provided on the learners' production (Epstein, 2005) and the process of learning.

Furthermore, the portfolio-based writing can be considered an authentic inventive technique of assessment and teaching (Weiser, 1992). Hamp-Lyons (2000) stated that when portfolio writing is focused, L2 learners are asked to select their best writing which they have learned during a period as for their assessment. During this period, learners' autonomy, critical thinking, and linguistic competence develop in a step-wise manner (Sharifi & Hassaskhah, 2011). This may be the reason for which "portfolio movement persists one of the most important catalysts for real change and growth in writing assessment" (Huot, 2002, p. 14). That said, the potentiality and the effectiveness of the corrective feedback provided through a portfolio-based writing instruction can be of utmost priority in L2 writing instruction contexts.

Hamp-Lyons (2000) asserted that L2 teachers' professional development regarding how to provide corrective feedback could be obtained in portfolio-based writing. This is due to the essence of writing instruction which is time-and-energy consuming. However, by using portfolio-based writing in L2 classrooms, L2 teachers can provide L2 learners with constant and continuous corrective feedback. Given that, it should be investigated whether the features which portfolio writing is focusing, such as providing an arena for doing self- and peer-assessment, addressing one's critical thinking, and monitoring one's learning can have any constructive effect on the L2 learners' approach to use the provided corrective feedback.

To examine the effectiveness of portfolio-based writing, researchers conducted different investigations, each with a particular focus. Chen (2006), for instance, conducted a study to obtain the university students' opinions about using portfolio-based writing in their classes. The participants found that portfolio writing helped them to be better learners, readers, and writers. Moreover, they pointed out that they could do reflections on their learning. Furthermore, the results of the study conducted by Khoshshima (2006)

indicated that oral and written portfolio had a constructive role in developing the learners' writing and reading comprehension. Later, the results obtained from the two studies have been in the study conducted by Ghoorchaei, Tavakoli, and Ansari (2010) in which they found that portfolio assessment affects the students' achievement in their overall writing performance, as well as in terms of focus, such as elaboration, organization, and vocabulary. The effect of portfolio assessment on developing the metadiscourse awareness of academic writing produced by the EFL learners was the focus of a study conducted by Tavakoli and Amirian (2012). The results of their study revealed that the overall writing performance of the learners developed. Moreover, they found out that the learners whose academic writing instruction was integrated with portfolio writing utilized metadiscourse more correctly in their writings.

Technology also finds its way into portfolio-based writing as it is called electronic portfolio (EP). Saeedi and Meihami (2015) conducted a study to examine the effect of the corrective feedback provided by EP to the EFL learners on their writing performance. The results of their study indicated that the overall writing of the EFL learners developed when they were provided with corrective feedback through EP. However, there were variations on the effectiveness of the EP on componential writings of the learners. A recent study, Esfadiari and Meihami (2017) examined the effectiveness of direct corrective feedback provided through EP on writing performance of EFL learners across different levels. The findings of their study indicated that for the two components of writing, namely content and mechanics, there were statistically significant differences between beginning and intermediate, and beginning and advanced levels. Overall, the results of the study by Esfadiari and Meihami (2017) indicated that the higher the proficiency level is, the more effective the provided direct corrective feedback through EP can be.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

In this study, a total of 44 Iranian EFL intermediate learners with an age range of 20-26 participated in a writing program designed to develop essay writing. Among the participants were 25 female and 19 male learners. The participants were divided into two groups; experimental group (N = 20) in which the corrective feedback was provided on writing performance of the learners through portfolio, and control group (N = 24) in which the traditional way of corrective feedback provision was followed. These learners enrolled in a writing course aiming to develop the writing performance of the intermediate and upper-intermediate learners. The program took 16 sessions. The participants' background characteristics were also obtained during the registration. The participants were students of different majors of

engineering, humanities, and social sciences in Tehran. The other participants also had higher education degrees in different majors except for Teaching English as a Foreign Language, English literature, and translation studies. The reason for excluding these three majors was to exclude the interfering factors of their related background knowledge about writing since these majors have some writing-related courses that might interfere in the program.

Table 1 indicates the demography of the participants of this study. The age mean for female participants is 22 while it is 23.5 for the male ones. When the participants were asked about their previous English language attendance, their answers were almost the same (male, two years; female, 1.5 years). Moreover, 25 participants hold Associate of Art (AA), 10 hold Bachelor in Art (BA), and 9 hold Master in Art (MA) degrees. It should be stated once again that none of these participants were students of English language or a related discipline at the universities.

Table 1

Demography of the Participants

		Male	Female	Total
N		19	25	44
Age	Mean	23.5	22	22.5
Years of Attending English Class	Mean	2	1.5	2.75
Highest Degree Completed	AA	10	15	25
	BA	5	5	10
	MA	4	5	9

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. Rating Scale

In this study, a PET test was administrated in the start of the program to obtain the true proficiency level of the learners who enrolled in the program. According to Saeedi and Meihami (2015), PET test is an appropriate instrument to obtain proficiency levels such as intermediate ones. To assess the learners' writing performance in terms of overall and componential writing performance a paragraph rating scale first proposed by Jacob, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel, and Hughey (1981) and Hedgcock and Lefkowitz modified it (1994) was used. This scale determines the differences in learners' writing in both groups. It should be stated that there are four bands for each component of the scale: excellent to very good, good to average, fair to poor, and very poor.

According to Shehadeh (2011, p. 290), the scale defines the following five component areas on a 0-100-point scale:

“1. Content: knowledge of a subject; development of thesis; coverage of topic; relevance of details; substance; the quantity of details.

2. Organization: fluency of expression; clarity in the statement of ideas; support; organization of ideas; sequencing and development of ideas.

3. Grammar: use of sentence structures and constructions; accuracy and correctness in the use of the agreement, number, tense, word order, articles, pronouns, preposition, negation.

4. Vocabulary: range; the accuracy of word/idiom choice; mastery of word forms; appropriateness of register; effectiveness in the transmission of meaning.

5. Mechanics of writing: conventions of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraph indentation, etc.”

3.2.2. Writing Prompts

A pre-test/post-test design was implemented in this study. During the pre-test and post-test, the learners were asked to write an essay about the given prompts. For the pre-test, the scores obtained by the learners in the modular test were analyzed. A post-test was run in the last session of the program. It should be stated that for the matter of inter-reliability of the scores on learners' pre-test and post-test, a Pearson Correlation Coefficient test was conducted to see whether both raters rate the learners' writing the same or not. Pearson Correlation Coefficient of the two raters was .83.

3.3. Procedures

After enrolling in the program, learners of this program participated in the PET proficiency test to assure the researchers that they were at the intermediate level of English language proficiency. Next, the participants were assigned into two groups: an experimental group (N = 20) in which the syllabus was designed to be in line with the characteristics of the portfolio-based writing and a control group (N = 24) that the syllabus was in the traditional format. In the experimental group corrective feedback was provided through the features and characteristics of portfolio-based writing classrooms while in the control group corrective feedback was provided in the traditional format. In the first session of the program, in the experimental group, the teacher asked the learners to write an essay no less than 200 words about the following topic: “Why is it important to learn the English language? What is your opinion about learning a language other than English?” The learners wrote an essay on this topic for the pre-test. From the second session on, the teacher covered a syllabus to teach the preliminary and introductory points of the writing skill. Each session, the teacher started his class by teaching the points and covering the lesson plan of that session, and

the learners were required to write a paragraph and to implement what has been taught.

From the second session on, the teacher required the learners to write an essay of no less than 200 words at home and to bring it to the class in the next session. The teacher gathered the essays and provided corrective feedback on each of them on different components like content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Then, in the next session, he brought the essays back to the learners to implement the provided corrective feedback, revise and submit them to the teacher. After that, in the two next sessions, they brought them back to the teacher, and the teacher provided the final corrective feedback on the essays and returned them to the learners. Then after, learners implemented the final corrective feedback on the paper and returned it to the teacher. During the 16 sessions, four topics were covered. Each time that the learners returned the essays to the teacher, he recovered their portfolio files. At the sixteenth session, learners were required to write an essay about "what is your most important reason for continuing your higher education?". This essay was for post-test of the design.

In the second group of the study, the control group, the same writing syllabus was covered with the same teacher. In the first session and for the pre-test, the learners of the control group were required to write an essay no less than 200 words about the same topic that the learners of the experimental group wrote: "Why is it important to learn English? What is your opinion about learning a language other than English?" Each session the teacher covered the same syllabus which was implemented in the experimental group. Each session the learners were required to write an essay of 200 words or more. Then, they gave their essays to the teacher, and he provided them with corrective feedback. The difference between the two groups was that in the control group there was no drafting, redrafting, and final revision as it was the case for the experimental group.

Consequently, the teacher provided his learners with corrective feedback just for one time. In this group, the number of essays that were written and provided with corrective feedback was on the edge of focus so that the learners wrote 14 writings during 16 sessions. In the sixteenth session, the post-test was administrated to the learners by the help of writing an essay of no less than 200 words on the same topic that was devoted to the experimental group "what is your most important reason for continuing your higher education?"

3.4. Data Analysis

After the essays were gathered from both groups in the pre-test and post-test, they were rated based on the rating scale. To do so, each paper was rated by two raters who had already practiced on the rating scale and had

experience in this regard. For the purpose of inter-rater reliability, two assessors rated the papers of the learners in the correlation between the two assessors calculated by Pearson Correlation Coefficient was .83. This shows that the practice that the raters conducted before starting to rate the papers was efficient. Each paper was assessed for five components of writing including content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. The descriptors of each component helped the raters to assess each component. The total score for each paper was 100, and the score of each component was as follows: content (30), organization (25), grammar (20), vocabulary (15), and mechanics (10). The scoring procedure was extracted from Shahedeh (2011) who stated that this kind of scoring is useful and practical for intermediate L2 learners. After the scoring was done, the researchers used a test of independent sample t-test to see whether or not there was any significant difference between the experimental group who received their feedback through portfolio and the control group who were corrected with the traditional paper-and-pen method. For this purpose, SPSS 24 was used.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

After gathering the essays written by the learners, the researchers analyzed them. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the total and componential scores in the pre-test.

Table 2 indicates that the total mean score for the experimental group is 55.35 while it is 53.23 in the control group. As for the components of writing, the experimental group score for content was 14.41, organization 13.76, grammar 14.35, vocabulary 10.67, and mechanics 3.76. Moreover, the control group means scores for different components were 13.82 for content, 12.82 for the organization, 14.29 for grammar, 11.47 for vocabulary, and 3.88 for mechanics.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the Total and the Componential Scores in the Pre-test

	Max. Score of scale	Experimental Group Pre-test	Min. Score	Max Score	Control Group Pre-test	Min. Score	Max. Score
		M	SD		M	SD	
Total	100	55.35	4.27		53.2	4.38	
Content	30	14.41	3.16	9	21	13.8	2.12
Organization	25	13.76	2.10	11	18	12.8	1.77
Grammar	20	14.35	2.26	11	19	14.2	2.39
Vocabulary	15	10.67	2.54	7	15	11.4	1.94
Mechanics	10	3.76	1.34	1	6	3.88	1.36

Although the mean scores, both in total and componential, were close to each other in the experimental and control groups, we run an inferential statistic to see either the mean difference between the two groups was significant or not. Table 3 illustrates the results.

Table 3

Independent-sample t-test in Pre-test

	<i>F</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Overall writing performance	.135	.716	42	.93

Table 3 shows that the total mean score between the two groups is not statically significant ($t(42) = .135, p < .05$) for all components of writing.

To examine the statistically significant difference in the mean score of different writing components another Independent sample t-test was run. Table 4 illustrates the results.

As can be seen, none of the components for the groups, the mean score difference is significant. The results are for content is ($t(42) = 1.63, p > .05$), organization ($t(42) = .274, p > .05$), grammar ($t(42) = .091, p > .05$), vocabulary ($t(42) = .86, p > .05$) and mechanics ($t(42) = .060, p > .05$). These results were not surprising since the researchers did their best to conduct the proficiency test to select those in the specific intermediate level.

Table 4

Independent-sample t-test of Different Writing Components in Pre-test

Components	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>F</i>	Sig.(two tailed)
Content	42	.636	1.63	.52
Organization	42	1.40	.274	.169
Grammar	42	.074	.091	.94
Vocabulary	42	-1.06	.86	.29
Mechanics	42	-.253	.060	.80

To see the effect of the treatment in this study, after the last session a post-test was administered to see what its effect would be. The participants of this study were required to write no less than 200 words. Table 5 indicates the descriptive statistics for the total and componential scores of the students in the post-test.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of the Total and the Componential Scores in The Post-test

	Max. Score	Experimental Group Post-test		Min. Score	Max Score	Control Group Post-test		Min. Score	Max. Score
		M	SD			M	SD		
Total	100	62.05	3.19			55.11	3.78		
Content	30	16.82	2.69	10	21	14.47	2.29	10	19
Organization	25	15.82	1.84	11	18	13.52	2.12	10	17
Grammar	20	17.11	1.86	14	19	15.11	2.47	11	18
Vocabulary	15	13.58	1.93	10	15	12	1.45	10	15
Mechanics	10	6.47	1.32	4	8	4.23	1.43	2	6

Table 5 shows that in the post-test while the total mean score of the experimental group reached 62.05, this is 55.11 for the control group. Moreover, the mean score difference for the experimental group in different components were 16.82 for content, 15.82 for the organization, 17.11 for grammars, 13.58 for vocabulary and 6.47 for mechanics. However, the control group means score was 14.47 for content, 13.52 for the organization, 15.11 for grammar, 12 for vocabulary and 4.23 for mechanics.

Although one can spot that the mean score difference between both groups, another inferential statistic test was run to see whether there is any significant difference between both groups or not. Table 6 shows the inferential for a total mean score between the two groups.

Table 6

Independent-sample t-test for the Post-test

	<i>F</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Df</i>	Sig.
Overall writing performance	1.30	3.28	42	.003

Table 6 shows that the mean score difference between the two groups is statistically significant ($t(42) = 1.30, p < .05$). For the purpose of obtaining the effect of portfolio-based writing corrective feedback on the componential writing performance of the learners, the researchers run another inferential Independent-sample t-test. Table 7 shows the results.

Table 7

Independent-sample t-test of Different Writing Components

Components	Df	<i>t</i>	<i>F</i>	Sig
Content	42	.322	.575	.01
Organization	42	1.48	.232	.002
Grammar	42	2.38	.133	.01
Vocabulary	42	2.35	.135	.01
Mechanics	42	.151	.700	.001

As can be seen, the mean score differences are statistically significant with regard to the different components of writing, when the writing performance of the experimental and the control group are compared. The results for content is ($t(42)=.575$, $p<.05$), organization ($t(42)=.232$, $p<.05$), grammar ($t(42)=.133$, $p<.05$), vocabulary ($t(42)=.135$, $p<.05$), and mechanics ($t(42)=.700$, $p<.05$). Overall, the results indicated that that the experimental groups in which they were provided with corrective feedback through the portfolio-based approach outperformed the control group who received the traditional way of corrective feedback both in componential and overall writing performances.

4.2. Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of using portfolio-based writing instruction in providing corrective feedback on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' overall and componential writing performance. The evidence achieved through the results of this study showed that using portfolio writing method for the provision of corrective feedback can benefit L2 learners to develop their writing performance. The results showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the overall writing and componential writing performance. The results of the current study can be associated with some of the features of portfolio-based writing. As Herbert (2001, p. 55) says, "in the portrayals of successful learning environments, it is considered essential to give children means by which they can express and expand their understanding of their learning processes". Portfolios can help learners to self-monitor their learning and help them to become more autonomous learners (Nunes, 2004). Moreover, possessing a procedural feature, the provided corrective feedback through portfolio helped the learners to make use of the provided corrective feedback in a stepwise manner which, ultimately, can increase the effectiveness and applicability of the corrective feedback.

According to Dysthe (2008), portfolios promote learners to take responsibility for their learning and enhance student-teacher communication. They can also provide opportunities for learners to show their strengths and

weaknesses and for teachers to direct their teaching based on the needs of their students. Dysthe also illustrated that the portfolio provides detailed information about learners' achievement in the learning process. In this regard, one may not cast doubt on the fact that portfolio is a beneficial learning tool for both the learners and the teachers. The teacher may reflect on the parts of writing that the students show weakness in their writing performances. The teachers may assure themselves about the problems of their students by the interactive feature of the portfolio writing; meaning that teachers and their learners can negotiate different issues of writing instruction during the portfolio writing. When a student indicates a specific grammatical problem, for instance, third person singular “s,” the teacher considers it a weakness for the student and direct his/her corrective feedback towards that part.

Moreover, the students may consider portfolio writing a tool to understand their strengths and weaknesses in writing. Being provided with corrective feedback on a specific writing feature for several times and in a stepwise manner, they may understand what their strengths and weaknesses are. Hence, both the teachers and learners can record the strengths and weaknesses by doing so; on the one hand, the teachers can obtain an overall understanding of their learners' writing performance. On the other hand, the learners may record their strengths and weaknesses to come to an understanding of the overall writing performance and do their best to improve their writing performance based on this understanding.

As suggested by Birgin and Baki (2007), portfolio assessment enables learners to display their weak and robust domain and to observe their progress through their learning process, enabling them to see their real performance. As a consequence, it stimulates learners to take responsibilities for their learning. Different studies indicated that portfolio could be used both as learning and assessment tools (Ersoy, 2006); hence, portfolio enables learners to learn during the assessment and to be assessed during learning (Birgin & Baki, 2007). Moreover, the learners' consciousness of their responsibilities in this study was another reason for their better performance in their overall writing performance. They came to the understanding that they are responsible for using and learning the corrective feedback that was provided by their teacher. Since it was a process that was done in several sessions, the learners were unable to ignore their responsibility, so they tried to use and take benefit from the provided corrective feedback by the teacher.

Genesee and Upshur (1996, p. 99) believed that the positive effects of portfolios on students' writing performance are due to the “opportunities they afford students to become actively involved in assessment and learning”. Therefore, one can come to the conclusion that learners in the portfolio group were actively involved in the process of assessment and learning. These

learners could revisit, reflect, and revise their writing during the course and put their selected pieces of writing in their portfolios. Given that, as Mirador (1998) stated, learners learn to be independent thinkers when they are allowed to monitor their learning and they can develop their learning autonomy after they are trained to think for themselves and trust their abilities. Since they monitored their writing performance, they became, more or less, independent thinkers and conscious about their learning. All in all, this would help them to use the provided corrective feedback in their writing performance and, finally, developed their writing performance compared to the control group.

Moreover, Little (2003) declared that the learner autonomy depends on a series of components including perspective to independent learning, positive attitudes toward this process, one's practice reflection and peer collaboration. In this regard, Dafei (2007) maintained that the more autonomous the learners become, the more possibly they achieve high language proficiency. It can be stated that portfolio-based writing and the corrective feedback provided on the writing performance of the learners have the features stated by Little (2003) and Dafei (2007) in that the learners could be more autonomous.

As previous research has shown, portfolios increase students' learning motivation and confidence (Murat & Sibel, 2010). Accordingly, demonstrating and completing a portfolio task make learners feel confident when they want to complete a language-related task. Hence, providing corrective feedback through portfolio-based writing can increase the motivation of the learners to write in L2. Since the learners see their writing improvement in this process, they will become motivated to write for different purposes. The development in the motivation of the learners to learn L2 writing and to be able to communicate through L2 writing for different purposes can be another reason of better writing performance of the experimental group in the current study compared to the control group.

5. Conclusion and Implications

This study was an attempt to explore the effect of providing corrective feedback through the portfolio-based writing instruction on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' overall and componential writing performance. The results of the present study support the hypothesis that using portfolios in providing corrective feedback had a statistically significant effect on learners' overall and componential writing performance. Thus, it can be say that portfolio-based writing instruction can establish a collaboration arena between teachers and learners to develop writing performance in L2 contexts.

It can be concluded through the results of the current study that the outperformance of the experimental groups who received their corrective feedback through portfolio writing over the control group who received their corrective feedback through the traditional paper-and-pen is due to the features that portfolio-based writing brought to the writing learning environment. These features are, for instance, developing the motivation of the L2 learners to write, pushing them to be more autonomous in their learning, helping them to reflect upon their writing, and making the learners conscious about the process of writing. These features are the very basic prerequisites for developing one's L2 writing skills and they can be provided by the portfolio-based writing instruction.

The pedagogical implications of this study regarding providing corrective feedback through portfolio-based writing can be both for L2 teachers and learners. On the part of the L2 instructors, the teachers can use portfolio-based writing to provide individualistic corrective feedback on their students' writing performance since they have individualistic interactions with each of their students. This will lead to a good rapport between the teachers and learners which in its own place develop the motivation of the learners to write in L2. Moreover, the L2 teachers can assess the writing performance of their learners through portfolio writing which is more reliable than the traditional approaches (Brown, 2007). Moreover, the L2 learners can involve in portfolio-based writing to self-assess the development in their writing performance. Furthermore, they can perceive their weaknesses and remedy them in the interactions which they have already involved with their teachers.

It is without saying that no research is without limitations including the current study. There are two main limitations for the current study which can be addressed by other researchers of the field. The first limitation is the few number of the participants in this study. It will be very informative if the study will be repeated with more number of participants. Furthermore, due to institutional limitations, we were able to conduct the study just on the writing performance of the intermediate EFL learners. Other researchers can attempt to investigate the effects of portfolio-based writing instruction on the writing performance of the EFL learners who are at upper-intermediate and advanced proficiency levels. Moreover, further studies are necessary to investigate the collaborative feature of portfolio-based writing in developing L2 learners writing performance.

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