E-Mail Platform and Its Effects on Providing Corrective Feedback to EFL Students

Zari Saeedi[*]
Assistant Professor, Allameh Tabataba'i University
Hussein Meihami
MA Student, Allameh Tabataba'i University
Fatemeh Husseini
MA Student, Kashan University

Abstract

The thrust of this mixed methods study is to explore the effect of using e-mail as a ubiquitous electronic platform for providing corrective feedback on EFL students' writing. The study also investigates the students' perceptions of using Computer-Assisted Language Learning. A total of 40 upper-intermediate EFL students ranging from 23 to 30 years of age selected through convenience sampling participated in this study. They were divided into two groups, an experimental group (N=20) who received CF through e-mail, and a control group (N=20) who experienced paper-and-pen CF. In this study, a pre-test/post-test (paired t-test) was run. Moreover, to obtain the students' overall performance and their performance in different writing components including content, organization, and language, a 6-point analytic rating scale was used. In addition, a structured interview was employed to investigate the students' perceptions about using CALL in the writing classroom. The findings of this study revealed that providing CF through the e-mail platform has a positive effect on overall writing performance of EFL students, and on such writing components as content, organization, and language. After being interviewed, the students expressed their positive attitudes towards the use of CALL in writing classroom, which may be one reason for the observed significant effect. The findings of this study highlight the important application of CALL materials in a blended learning environment in L2 writing context, which carries some implications for writing teachers.

1. Introduction

With the improvement of the ubiquitous technology, computers have occupied the center of attention in many aspects of life (Kupelian, 2001). According to Saeedi (2013, p. 1), "computer as an offspring of modernity and its technological development is having a crucial impact on every aspect of human beings' relations with the world and of course language learning is not an exception" . Nowadays, the role of computers in contributing to second or foreign language learning is very outstanding (Lyster, 2007). According to Gonza´lez-Bueno (1998), Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has some features and characteristics that make it possible to be in the frame of teaching and learning second and foreign languages.

CALL, among other new terms in SLA, has been investigated for so long as 30 years. However, the point is that there is a lot to be considered in this field and it will take time (Chapelle, 1998; Felix, 2005). However, one may say that there were also some great research studies carried out in this field (Stockwell, 2007). The reason for this phenomenon, according to Jamieson, Chapelle and Preiss (2005), may be the high speed with which CALL materials improve. In this regard, there are also different specific areas of CALL that are used for different purposes, among the most important of which are Computer–Mediated Communication (CMC) and Technology-Mediated Language Learning. According to Brown (2007), each of these areas of CALL has its own specific materials to contribute L2 learners in L2 learning.

CALL can provide a number of advantages and contributions to language learning. According to Warschauer, Turbee, and Roberts (1996), what CALL provides for language learners can be interactive learning environment, collaborative writing in the second or foreign language learning, and fostering students' empowerment. In this regard, Li (2000) states that CALL can emphasize the role of social and affective factors in L2 learning.

One of the crucial language skills that can be affected by the use of the technological tools is writing. Moreover, the way the writing instructor provides learners with CF can be influenced by CALL. Providing CF has occupied the center of a controversial debate in recent years (Bitchener & Young, 2005).   Since 1996, when Truscott first published the article "*The Case against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes*", the debate over whether to give L2 students feedback on their written grammatical errors has earned a great interest among researchers (Ferris, 1999, 2002, 2003; Truscott, 1996, 2008). On several grounds, Truscott (1996) claims that grammar correction has no effect on

writing accuracy promotion and should be abandoned. From an analysis of studies by Kepner (1991), Semke (1984), and Sheppard (1992), Truscott concludes that there is no convincing research evidence that error correction ever helps student writers improve the accuracy of their writing.

Putting the debate aside, one big problem with providing CF is the way a teacher can do it (Beauvois, 1994; Hackett, 1996; Silvia, Meagher, Valenzuela, & Crenshaw, 1996; Wang, 1998). With the increase in the importance of learning second or foreign languages around the world, the number of learners of L2 classes has increased. This fact has caused providing CF to turn into a difficult job for L2 teachers (Li, 2000; Liaw, 1998). To magnify the situation, providing CF for L2 learners' writing is harder because writing has a nature of being time-consuming both in its writing process and also in providing feedback on learners' writing (Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2006; Lyster, 2004). In this regard, some scholars offer that technology can solve the problem (Chapelle, 2001; Hegelheimer, 2004; Pica, 1994). This can be achieved because CALL tools have three important features; Warschauer (2007) discusses these three main technological issues with regard to writing instruction: synchronous (real time) communication, such as chat and instant messaging; asynchronous communication format, such as e-mails and bulletin boards; and hypermedia authoring, such as designing webpage. He asserts that for many second language writers electronic media provide more access to authentic communication.

By knowing the problems that exist in providing feedback on different aspects of L2 writing, it seems that asynchronous kinds of CALL may solve the problems such as time constraint aspects of feedback in L2 writing classes. In this regard, the present study intends to investigate the effect of using e-mail platform in providing CF on EFL students' writing performance. This investigation also has a quest for obtaining EFL students' perception with regard to the feedback provided for them through e-mailing.

2. Literature Review

A series of studies have borne out different observations of using CALL in classroom (Sun, 2010). In recent years, there has been a growing body of research on CALL regarding different skills of second language learning and how it might help learning L2 skills and also teaching them (Coryell & Chlup, 2007).

According to Recep and Aysel (2010), writing has a process-oriented nature and it is a non-linear activity involving planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. In this regard, authors assert that some

concepts such as audience, purpose, and interaction with peers and instructors are of great importance. Accordingly, using blog, for instance, has some features that are in accordance with these processes of writing, and in its own place they may help to promote writing skill. In a similar research, Campbell (2003) states that by establishing blogs created by students, teachers are able to work on different writing processes, from drafting to publishing and finally to assess students based on their activities in blog writing.

In a study by Dippold (2009), the effect of peer correction through blog writing was investigated. The results of this study confirmed that students might take advantages of their peer correction. The author asserts that when peers correct each other's writing, they work on the parts that may go unnoticed by the teacher. One more advantage of the blog writing, according to Dippold, is that during the use of blog all students along with their teachers are able to use and demonstrate different stages of writing.

In the area of CALL, there are two sorts of communication: synchronous and asynchronous. According to Liu (2003), synchronous can be defined as "to have real time written conversations and was originally developed to teach English composition and literature to native speakers of English" (p.2). He also asserts that some benefits of synchronous types of CALL can be meaningful conversations along with authentic ones, and saving the language input. In this regard, learners can benefit from the reflection of what others say, thus learners have the opportunity to monitor their own language production and learn from others' language usage (Hui-Fang, 2007).

On the other hand, asynchronous types of CALL materials, such as e-mail exchanging, were defined by Kupeliam (2001) as "magnifying the power and immediacy of the written word and as such represent authentic communication with a delay which allows students to think and compose a message" (p.2). He maintains that "this delay reduces anxiety that students may otherwise feel when using other forms of communication, such as face to face encounters or conversation by telephone" (2001, p. 1). Others like Hoffman (1994) state that "anonymous quality of network communication can be face saving as well" (p.54), relieving students from the inhibition associated with face-to-face communication and allowing them to express themselves more freely. The face saving feature which is part of synchronous CALL is of great importance in providing feedback for L2 learners (Xu, 2009). It is always seen that some of L2 learners have difficulty being provided with feedback in the classroom.

There are not many studies investigating e-mail as one tool to be used in classroom to improve students' writing skill; in addition, the already conducted papers have controversial tastes. In a study by Leppanen and Kalaja (1995), students' peer feedback on writings given via e-mail was compared with a teacher feedback given with paper-and-pen. The findings of the research indicated that students provided more CF to each others' writing than the teacher could provide. Finally the results showed that those who received their feedback through e-mail had a greater mean score regarding writing performance improvement.

In Sotillo's (1997) study, native speakers used e-mail platform to provide CF on ESL students' writing. The results of this study showed that ESL students applied different types of feedback provided by the native speakers in their next writings. The findings of Sotillo's study also indicated that the more proficient students used up to 70% of the provided CF in their revised written work.

In an investigation on the effect of dialogue journaling through electronic mail on the language produced by learners of Spanish as second language, Gonzalez-Bueno and Perez (2000) conducted a comparison between dialogue journals and paper-and-pen version. They investigated three points, including grammatical accuracy, appropriate use of vocabulary, and language productivity. The results of their study showed that the electronic version of the dialogue journals had a significantly positive effect on the number of words produced by the students. On the other hand, considering vocabulary and grammar, it seems there were no significant differences between the electronic version and paper-and-pen one.

Some experimental studies have been done on the perceptions of L2 learners about using computer technology in L2 classes. Ritter (1993) reported that because of the fun nature of computer technology, 92% of students preferred to use computer technology in their vocabulary learning. He also asserts that using computer technology in vocabulary learning might reduce the anxiety level of students and finally help them to be more active in vocabulary learning. Liu (2003) also pointed out that "positive affective states can provide additional incentive for students to learn" (p. 194). In his study, he found that using e-mail for communication might give students more freedom regarding using 'expressions'.

In a survey study by Jamieson, Chapelle, and Preiss (2005), the perceptions of CALL users, that is, teachers and students and developers were examined. The results of the study showed the overall positive perceptions and attitudes of three stakeholders. Students had positive attitudes toward learning through CALL materials because of their fun

nature. Teachers also had positive attitudes to using CALL materials in their classes because they helped them in the promotion of their students learning.

In like manner, Jamieson, et al. (2005) conducted a survey study to see the challenges and successful experiences of CALL implementation. The results of their study indicated that by updating hardware, projector systems, and internet connectivity students' and teachers' perception and attitudes toward CALL might be improved.

In this respect, the aim of this study is to investigate the effect of using e-mail on providing CF for upper-intermediate EFL students' writings. There is also a quest for the perceptions and attitudes of upper-intermediate EFL students towards the way they should be provided with feedback. To this end, the following research questions will be investigated:

1) To what extent can using e-mail in providing CF on upper-intermediate EFL students' writing improve their overall writing performance and their componential performance regarding content, organization, and language?

2) What are the perceptions and attitudes of upper-intermediate EFL students to CF which is provided for them through e-mail?

3. Methodology
3.1. Participants
A total of 40 Iranian students enrolled in an IELTS writing class at Sharif Language Center participated in the study. The participants included 21 female and 19 male ranging from 23 to 30 years of age, with a mean age of 25. Prior to the start of this writing class, in the registration time, they were asked to fill a questionnaire pertaining to their opinions about their proficiency level in different skills; besides, they were supposed to provide some information about their previously attended language classes, in general, and writing classes, in particular. A section of the questionnaire was devoted to obtaining information about students' background knowledge on technology in classroom and their perceptions. They were attending different English classes in the same institute and obtained the degree of FCE (First Certificate in English).
3.2. Instruments
3.2.1. Rating scale
In this study, a modular writing IELTS test was administrated in the class to obtain the proficiency level of the students. To assess the students' writings regarding different components: content, organization, and language, a scoring procedure was selected. A 6-point analytic scale extracted from He and Shi (2008) was used. This rating scale included

context, organization, and language. The content components involved idea quality, exposition, idea development, and idea wrap-up. The organization component included coherence and cohesion. The Language feature embodied length, accuracy, and academic words. Using this rating scale, the process of scoring was easier. Table 1 illustrates He and Shi (2008) rating scale.

Table 1

Six-Point Analytic Rating Scale (Extracted From He & Shi, 2012)

Components and Scoring	Indicators	Definitions/focuses	Rating* 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Content (Average of the four indicator scores)	Idea quality Exposition Idea development Idea wrap-up	Relevance, originality and depth of Ideas Thesis statement and position Taken Topic sentence and supporting details Summary of main ideas	
Organization		Logical thinking (coherence) and transitions within and between sentences/ paragraphs (cohesion)	
Language (Average of the three indicator scores) prior to the calculation of the component scores. Each raw indicator score was converted to six point scale.	Length Accuracy Academic words	Total number of words Percentage of error-free T-units of the total number of T-unit in each essay Percentage of academic words of the total number of words in each essay.	Calculated by the first Author Errors underlined And T-units identified By the raters. Percentage of error-free T-units calculated by the first author Frequency of the academic words calculated by using an online software program Percentage of the academic words calculated by the first author

3.2.2 Interview

To verify quantitative findings obtained from the pre-test and post-test, an interview was conducted. Ten students were chosen to participate in the interview. Five of them were from the experimental group who obtained their feedback through e-mail and the other five were from the

control group who were provided with feedback in the traditional way i.e. through paper-and-pen version.

3.2.3. Test

A pre-test/post-test design was implemented in this study. The test taken by the students in the pre-test and the post-test was an essay writing in which the students were required to write as much as they could about the given topic. To rate the written essays of the students, with the help of He and Shi (2008) rating scale, each essay was given six scores. In this way, a score was devoted to each scale. For instance, if a student was rated 5 regarding idea quality which was a sub-category of content, he was scored 5.5. Table 2 shows the corresponding score for each rating scale.

Table 2
Rating and Corresponding Score

Rating	Score
0	0
1	1.5
2	2.5
3	3.5
4	4.5
5	5.5
6	6

For the pre-test, the scores obtained by the students in the modular writing IELTS test were analyzed. A post-test was run in the last session of the program. In that session, the students were required to write about a topic. It should be stated that for the matter of inter-reliability of the scores on students' pre-test and post-test, a Pearson Correlation Coefficient test was conducted to see whether both raters rated the students' writing the same. Pearson Correlation Coefficient of the two teachers were higher than .79 (r=.80). By this obtained reliability, conducting descriptive statistics on the scores would be more reliable.

3.3. Procedures

Sharif Language Center provided language learners with some one-skill-course programs when they reached the upper-intermediate level. The participants of this study were divided into two groups. The experimental group (N=20) and the control group (N=20). The teacher of both groups was the same, and the same materials were taught. By reviewing the relevant literature on the CF types, it seemed that among different types of providing feedback in writing skill, direct CF is more profitable for EFL contexts. Knowing that, the researchers chose this type of correction on students' writing to examine its effect on the overall and componential

performance. To do that, the students in the experimental group received direct type of CF on their sent electronic file.

On the other hand, the students in the control group received their direct type of CF on their papers given to the teacher. Two samples of both versions can be seen in the appendices A and B. A writing pamphlet was provided for the students. Along with the teacher's instructions, the pamphlet was quite comprehensive and covered different components of writing involving content, organization, and language. In both groups, the materials were taught through Power-Point slides and at the end of each session, the PPT file of the material was given to the students. Yet, there was a difference between the experimental group and the control group. The students of the experimental group were given the electronic version of the Power-Point Presentation files to be used in their personal computer. For the control group, however, the printed paper of Power-Point Presentation file was provided. Each session, the same principle of writing was taught in the two groups and the students did the same exercises. Each session, a topic was given to the students to write about. It should be mentioned that the topic was the same for both groups. Students in the control group were asked to bring their writings next session to discuss it in the class. Each session, one of the essays was shown on the projector and the students gave their comments and suggestions on different components of that essay. On the other hand, CF on the essays of the experimental group students was provided by the teacher at least within ten hours after the students sent their essays to him. An interesting procedure in the experimental group was that the students of the experimental group were divided into five groups each with two members. Each group member had to e-mail their paper to their group member to have their partner's feedback on their essay. By so doing, class suggestions and comments were to be more effective and the students participated in class discussions that finally showed their understanding of what had been taught.

In the final session, another test as a post-test sample was used. For this purpose, several topics were chosen and given to both groups. They were asked to write at least a 300-word essay about one of the topics. For encouraging students to write effectively, no time limits were set. At last, 10 students (5 from the experimental group, and 5 from the control group) attended an interview about their experiences pertaining to the writing program and the way they were provided with feedback.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Questionnaire Results

In the registration session, the participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire (open-ended) that was about their opinion on their current proficiency in different L2 skills; some questions were about the previous classes they had attended, and some about their perceptions of using technology to learn language, in general and writing, in particular. The obtained data of this questionnaire showed that 50% of the students believed that their speaking is better than their reading and listening. 80% of them also believed that their writing skill is the least proficient skill among the four skills. About 85% of students were of the belief that in their previous classes, writing was the skill to which was paid the least attention. They believed that they were proficient in technology and 75% of them were of the idea that technology should be included in their classrooms, and particularly their writing classes. The descriptive statistics conducted to obtain information about the overall mean scores in both groups during the pre-test procedure are illustrated in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Overall and Componental Performance of Both Groups (Pre-Test)

	Max. Score	Experimental Group Pre-test		Min. Score	Max. Score	Control Group Pre-test		Min. Score	Max. Score
		M	SD			M	SD		
Total	60	30	2.11	27	33	28.40	3.83	24	34
Content	24	11.10	1.37	9	14	11	2.94	6	15
Organization	18	10.10	1.66	8	13	8.80	1.64	6	12
Language	18	9.10	.73	8	11	11.10	2.72	6	11

As shown in Table 3, the experimental and the control groups were to a great extent homogeneous with regard to overall and the componental performance in the pre-test time. Yet, another descriptive statistics was conducted to see the mean score changes, if any, in the post-test time. Table 4 illustrates these data.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Overall and Componental Performance of Both Groups (Post-Test)

	Max. Score	Experimental Group Pre-test		Min. Score	Max. Score	Control Group Pre-test		Min. Score	Max. Score
		M	SD			M	SD		
Total	60	43	5.36	34	52	35	4.68	25	40
Content	24	16.90	2.28	13	19	11.20	2.69	7	15
Organization	18	14.60	2.45	10	18	10	2.82	4	15
Language	18	13.60	2.50	11	18	9.70	1.70	7	11

Table 4 illustrates an increase in the mean score of the experimental group over the control group that can be considered as the effect of the treatment, that is, providing CF through e-mail, on students' writing. The control group displayed an increase in their mean score of their overall performance from 28.40 in pre-test to 35 in the post-test. On the other hand, the experimental group experienced an increase in the mean score from 30 in the pre-test to 43 in the post-test. With regard to the different components of writing, students of the control group illustrated an increase in their mean score of content (M=11), organization (M=8.80), and language (M=11.10) in the pre-test to content (M=11.20), organization (M=10), and language (M=9.70) in the post-test. However, the experimental group increased their pre-test mean score from content (M=11.10), organization (M=10.10), language (M=9.10) to content (M=16.90), organization (M=14.60), and language (M=13.60) in the post-test. The obtained data shows that the experimental group increased their mean score (overall and componential) more than the control group. Yet, an independent samples t-test conducted to let the researchers be able to claim on the obtained descriptive statistics of the tables 3 and 4 to be aware of any differences between the two groups. Table 5 illustrates the results.

Table 5
Independent Samples T-Test (Overall and Componential Performance)

	F	t	df	Sig.
Overall Performance	.122	3.24	38	.005
Content	.001	3.26	38	.005
Organization	.602	1.72	38	.02
Language	.034	2.13	38	.04

The results of Table 5 show the significant difference between the experimental and the control groups' mean scores. The index p=.005 is for the experimental group that is less than the probability level of .05; so it rejects the null hypothesis and supports the effectiveness of the treatment in the experimental group. Moreover, with regard to different writing components (content p=.005; organization p=.02; and language p=.04), the results also show that there are significant differences among the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups. Subsequently, a paired samples t-test was run to assure the researcher about the effectiveness of the treatment in the experimental group. Table 6 indicates the results.

The results of Table 6 show the significant difference in mean scores of overall and componential performances of the experimental

group in the pre-test and post-test (p=001 in overall and componential performance).

Table 6
Paired Samples T-Test (Overall and Componential Performance)

	t	*df*	*Sig.*
Overall Performance	-6.77	19	001
Content	-11.83	19	001
Organization	-7.73	19	.001
Language	-5.58	19	.001

A series of descriptive studies were conducted to display the effect of the treatment with regard to different sub-components including idea quality, idea development, exposition, idea wrap up, academic format, coherence, cohesion, length, academic words, and accuracy. Table 7 shows the mean scores of the afore-mentioned sub-components in the pre-test.

Table 7
Descriptive Statistics of Sub-Components (Pre-Test)

	Sub-component	Experimental Group Pre-test		Min. Score	Max. Score	Control Group Pre-test		Min. Score	Max. Score
		M	SD			M	SD		
Content	Idea quality	2.90	.87	2	4	3.40	1.64	1	6
	Idea development	2.80	.63	2	4	2.80	1.03	1	5
	Exposition	2.50	.52	2	3	2.40	1.07	1	4
	Idea wrap up	2.90	.99	2	5	2.40	.51	2	3
Organization	Academic format	3.40	.69	3	5	3.40	.69	3	5
	Coherence	3.40	.84	2	5	2.50	.70	1	3
	Cohesion	3.30	.82	2	5	2.90	1.19	1	5
Language	Length	2.60	.51	2	3	2.90	.87	2	5
	Academic words	3.0	.47	2	4	2.70	1.05	1	5
	Accuracy	3.50	.70	2	4	3.0	.94	2	5

The results indicate the homogeneity of both groups in the pre-test. The mean scores of most sub-components are close to each other. Also, the maximum and minimum scores obtained by the two groups are so close. Using these data, it can be stated that both groups were at the same level of proficiency at the very beginning of the program. To obtain the mean scores for both groups in the post-test, another descriptive statistics was performed. Table 8 shows the mean scores of their post-test.

Table 8 indicates that the mean score of the both groups increased in the post-test, yet the mean score of the experimental group increased more than the mean score of the control group. Nonetheless, in the two

sub-components, exposition and length, the mean scores of the control group increased more than the experimental group. To see whether the mean scores of both group have significant differences or not, an independent samples t-test was run. Table 9 shows the results.

Table 8
Descriptive Statistics of Sub-Components (Post-Test)

	Sub-component	Experimental Group Pre-test		Min. Score	Max. Score	Control Group Pre-test		Min. Score	Max. Score
		M	SD			M	SD		
Content	Idea quality	5.0	.81	4	6	3.30	1.25	3	5
	Idea development	3.90	.87	3	5	3.0	.81	2	4
	Exposition	3.60	1.71	2	6	3.80	1.22	2	6
	Idea wrap up	4.40	2.06	2	6	3.0	1.15	2	5
Organization	Academic format	5.20	.78	4	6	4.20	1.31	1	6
	Coherence	5.10	.99	4	6	3.50	1.58	1	5
	Cohesion	4.30	1.33	2	6	3.30	1.64	1	5
Language	Length	4.20	1.22	2	6	4.40	1.64	1	5
	Academic words	4.70	1.25	2	6	3.20	1.13	1	4
	Accuracy	4.90	1.19	3	6	3.50	1.08	2	5

Table 9
Independent Samples T-Test (Different Subcategory)

Sub-component	F	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Idea quality	2.60	3.59	38	.002
Idea development	.31	2.37	38	.02
Exposition	2.45	-.30	38	.76
Idea wrap up	21.54	.58	38	.02
Academic format	.358	2.06	38	.05
Coherence	3.25	2.70	38	.01
Cohesion	3.50	2.60	38	.01
Length	1.22	1.19	38	.24
Academic words	.001	2.80	38	.01
Accuracy	.022	2.74	38	.01

Table 9 indicates that with regard to different sub-components of writing components, students in the experimental group performed better except for the exposition and length for which p=.76 and p=.24 respectively.

4.2. Students' Perception

In order to verify the obtained descriptive data, a structured interview was conducted. This interview was run in order to elicit students' perceptions and attitudes to the CF provided through paper-and-pen and e-mail versions. To this end, five students from each group were chosen either randomly or through convenience sampling technique and took part in a ten-minute interview. Students were asked about their experiences in this writing program, their attitudes toward the feedback, and the usability and difficulty of the feedback provided.

4.3. Students Who Were Provided with CF through E-Mail

Five students from the experimental group whose feedback was provided through e-mail were interviewed. All the students claimed that participating in the class was a pleasant experience. To start with, two of the students told the interviewer that the way the teacher presented the course with the help of the PowerPoint slides was amazing and it was time saving for them to take note. It is interesting to mention that one of the students said that the use of PowerPoint slides was useful in the way that it was not necessary to tolerate the teacher's bad hand writing. One of the students mentioned "colors were quite comprehensive in that the slides main points were highlighted in a way that let you know what the main point was".

The second question, the students were asked, pertained to how their experience with the provided feedback on their essays through e-mail was. As a whole, all five students were very convenient about it. They asserted, in different ways, that being provided with feedback through e-mail was the most effective part of the course. Two of them said that "we sent the teacher our essays and in no more than ten hours we received our feedback on our essays and we were able to use them as soon as possible. One of the students asserted that "I am an internet-oriented person". By that, he meant he is always surfing the net. "It was very useful that I could use the feedback provided by the teacher on my writing and make use of it". Two other students said that the fact that we had our CF and we could discuss it every other session with our teacher was very useful. One of students, the one who was an internet-oriented person, asserted that this kind of CF let them prepare a journal for themselves and record all those CF for future uses. In the rest of her interview, one of the girls said, "the teacher corrected our essays with different colors, for instance red for grammatical errors, that helped me a lot to get the gist of correction in the shortest time, and then we were ready to impose those corrections in our writings". All in all, the interviewees had positive attitudes toward being provided with CF on their writings.

4.4. Students Who Were Provided with CF through Paper-and-Pen

The control group perceptions about their experience in the writing program were quite different from the experimental group. Five students including two boys and three girls participated in a structured interview to raise their perceptions and attitudes regarding this writing program. Unlike the experimental group's opinions, just three out of five students remarked that the program was pleasant for them and the other students believed that the program was boring. These two students told the interviewers that their writing class was not technology-oriented. Of

course, by that he meant not what had been taking place in the experiment group, because they were supposed not to be aware of the procedure of that group, but what had been generally happening around the world in L2 learning. "All we see in the class was paper and some notes on our papers". One of them continued that "I always had problem with finding time to write notes which were taught in the classroom." Three of students said that sometimes it was hard for them to both listen to the teachers' instructions and take notes, so a kind of anxiety was always present in the class. The most important point was about the CF provided on their paper by the instructor every two sessions. All five students believed that "to some extent it was useless". They said so, because it was a little late to discuss their previously written materials since the subject of the session was something else. "I went to the class with this idea that at the beginning of the class the teacher and other students had discussion with regard to what they wrote, also this process was don but it was very short and we could not make a lot from it". One of the students also mentioned that he was very eager to have others' opinions on what he wrote but due to the time constraint, "it was impossible". "The CF on my essays was quite comprehensive, but it was too late to be productive". This was asserted by two of the students who thought that feedback was very important in writing classes. "Wasn't it better if we had discussions on different parts of our essays so we could make use of both our teacher and our classmates' opinions". This was asserted by one of the girls in the control group. All in all, the five students from the control group agreed on the importance of the CF but felt inconvenient about the way they were provided with that.

5. Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

The first research question of this investigation was "to what extent can using e-mail in providing CF on upper-intermediate EFL students' writing improve their overall and componential performance regarding content, organization and language?" To answer this question, several descriptive statistics were computed. The first descriptive statistics (Table 3) showed the overall students' performance in the pre-test. The mean score of the experimental group, in which the instructor provided feedback on students' writing through e-mail, was 30 in the pre-test while it changed to 43 in the post-test (Table 4). This may show the effectiveness of using e-mail version in providing CF when compared with the control group in which paper-and-pen version of feedback was given on students' writing with mean score of 28.40 in the pre-test changing to 35 in the post-test. An independent samples t-test revealed that for the experimental group $F_{(18, 17.8)} = .122$, $p < .05$, i.e. the p-value

is less than the alpha value of .05. This shows that the e-mail version of providing CF is statistically more significant and effective than the paper-and-pen version. This is in line with the previous findings (AbuSeileek & Abualsha'r, 2014; Campbell, 2003; Dippold, 2009; Recep & Aysel, 2010). Also, by conducting a paired samples t-test for the experimental group (Table 6), the effectiveness of the treatment was supported (p=.001). The second part of the first research question was about different components of writing including content, organization, and language. Each of these components is subdivided into some sub-components. To see the effect of the treatment on different components and sub-components of writing, the descriptive statistics for each part was introduced.

As it was indicated in the tables 7, 8, and 9, not only in the language, content, and organization but also in the subcategories of those components, the mean score of the experimental group was higher than the control group. Table 9 also indicated that with regard to all sub-components of writing, the effect of CF provided through e-mail was statistically significant except for the exposition and length, in which p=.76 and p=.24 respectively. The reason for these obtained data may be the difficulty students have when they wish to type a piece of writing, for exposition, yet we can consider again the feature of writing something by typing and writing by pen. While students write by pen, they may be able to think more deeply on the topic of their essay. To put it differently, providing CF through e-mail on students' essays can help them more in improving their writing proficiency than providing them with feedback through the traditional paper-and-pen version. In this regard, the study supports the research carried out by AbuSeileek and Abualsha'r (2014). The cogent reasons for these results might be due to some features of writing classes and some features of computer-assisted language learning; first of all, because writing involves a lot of rules; it is also very time-consuming to be taught, especially in EFL contexts due to students' language problems. In writing classes teachers may not find enough time to give CF on students' writing. However, using e-mail might help both students and instructors to use their spare time. Teachers may use class time for giving instruction and then by checking e-mails sent by students, provide them with feedback. As Campbell (2003) states, the feature of CALL is being ubiquitous, and teachers may have access to their students' writings anywhere, so there will be no stress about the "correction phase" and time limitation to help students with their writings.

Another feature of CALL is that it is synchronous. As Warschauer (2007) puts it asynchronous quality makes the CALL material available

not only at the time of accessing internet but at any other time. With the help of this feature, students may make use of this facility anywhere and anytime. So, in this regard, there is no need for students to just deliver their writings in the class sessions and it is possible for them to send them to the teacher sooner and benefit from teacher's sooner feedback. One more feature of CALL is that through e-mail exchange, L2 learners participate in a mutual communication. As Liu (2003) states, students might improve their communication ability through the e-mail exchange during which students and teachers may discuss different aspects of writing materials helping the students to learn some points. This feature of CALL is not useless for teachers since by analyzing these discussions, teachers may implicitly find out about some problematic parts of students' writing and modify them.

Another point is that using a computer to write involves the use of word processer, which can help students in different ways. For instance, by mentioning the wrong word spelling, word processor helps the students to notice different word spellings. Besides, it can help the students to find out about fragment sentences and the way to correct them. The afore-mentioned features may comprise the reasons for the improvement in the quality of sub-components of writing of the experimental group, and the results of this study verify that. Table 8 indicated that the experimental group who benefited from computers in composing their writings had a higher mean score with regard to accuracy, and academic words. This was verified when Table 9 showed the significant differences of mean scores in these sub-components.

Another point to consider is the fun nature of CALL material which is to great extent in compromise with the new generations' expectations. They can be called a technology-oriented generation who like to be online and make use of online facilities round the clock. As for the EFL learners who have already had the experience of digital environments in their L1 classes, this can help them to do the same in their L2 environment.

The second research question was "what are the perceptions and attitudes of the upper-intermediate EFL students toward using the e-mail to provide CF?" By conducting an interview, it turned out that the students had positive attitudes and perceptions regarding CF through e-mail. They mentioned that soon after they sent their essays to their teacher, at least after ten hours, they received CF on their essays. This fact let them discuss the problematic parts in the following session when the topic was still fresh and discussable. In addition, some of students talked about preparing a journal for themselves. According to Brown (2007), journal is a log of one's thoughts, feelings, reactions,

assessments, ideas, or progress toward goals. It is the importance of self-reflection in the process of students taking control of their own destiny. Most journals in language classroom are dialogue journals in which there is an interaction between teacher and students. By using dialogue journal in writing classroom, both teachers and students might take advantage of its benefits. Students can use the feedback provided by their teacher and use them in their revision version of their paper. By so doing, they will have a bunch of precious notes at the end of the program.

Teachers, on the other side of the coin, can take advantage of dialogue journals in some ways. For the first thing, it is not necessary for the teachers to assess their learners by one test at the final exam. They can easily track their students' learning development and assess those tracks. Dialogue journal is doing this in the best way. Another useful point for teachers is that little by little they can see different phases of learning, and by doing need analysis and preparing materials for each phase, they provide their students with a more prosperous writing program. By so doing, there is no need for a priori syllabuses but they can prepare a posteriori syllabi for their writing classroom.

The results of this study support the hypothesis that using e-mail to provide CF on students' writing has a significant effect on their writing performance, hence supporting the previous studies that claim using CALL can help students with their writing performance (AbuSeileek & Abualsha'r, 2014; Hui-Fang, 2007; Jamieson, et al., 2005; Li, 2000; Sotillo, 1997; Warshauer, 1995).

The results of this investigation show that the improvement in writing performance tends to increase with the use of e-mail to provide CF on students' writing. As turned out, the participants in the experimental group, who received CF through e-mail, demonstrated larger improvement in second language components including content, organization and language. The results indicate that using e-mail for providing feedback on writing of the upper-intermediate EFL students has a greater influence on improving writing performance in comparison with other traditional methods such as providing feedback on students' writings through paper-and-pen version. In this regard, the results are consistent with those of Recep and Aysel (2010) and also AbuSeileek and Abualsha'r (2014), who found that using e-mail for providing feedback improved overall writing performance.

This study investigated providing CF on different writing components of Iranian upper-intermediate EFL students, so further research on other proficiency levels will be a useful follow-up to this study. It should also be mentioned that due to the limited class facilities,

the researchers had to employ a limited number of participants, so further research may be conducted with a larger number of participants.

One pedagogical implication for this investigation is that using e-mail has an influence on students' writing performance, because by using e-mail some of the problems that exist in writing classrooms will be eliminated. So it would be a good idea for writing teachers to use e-mail to correct students' writing in order to help them with using different conducive aspects thereof.

References

AbuSeileek, A., & Abualsha'r, A. (2014). Using peer computer-mediated corrective feedback to support EFL learners' writing. *Language Learning and Technology, 18*(1), 76-95.

Barrett, H. C. (2000). Create Your Own Electronic Portfolio. Retrieved from http://www.electronicportfolios.com/portfolios/iste2k.html

Barrett, H. C. (2007). Researching electronic portfolios and learner engagement: The reflect initiative. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, *50*(6), 436-449.

Beauvois, M. H. (1994). E-talk: Attitudes and motivation in computer-assisted classroom discussion. *Computers and the Humanities*, *28*, 177-190.

Bitchener, J., Young, S., & Cameron, D. (2005). The effect of different types of corrective feedback on ESL student writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *14*(3), 227-258.

Brown, H. D. (2007). *Teaching by principles*. New York: Pearson.

Campbell, A.P. (2003). Weblogs for use with ESL classes. *The Internet TESL Journal*, *9*(2). Retrieved from http://iteslj.org/Techniques/ Campbell-Blogs.

Chaffee-Sorace, D. (1999). Computer pen pals: Writing activities for subjects of foreign languages. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 56*(2), 351-354.

Chapelle, C. A. (1998). Multimedia CALL: Lessons to be learned from research on instructed SLA. *Language Learning and Technology, 2*(1), 22–34. Retrieved from http://llt.msu.edu/ vol2 num1/article1/index.html.

Chapelle, C. A. (2001). Innovative language learning: Achieving the vision. *ReCALL, 23*(10), 3-14.

Cononelos, T., & Oliva, M. (1993). Using computer networks to enhance foreign language/culture education. *Foreign Language Annals, 26*(4), 527- 534.

Coryell, J. D., & Chlup, D. T. (2007). Implementing e-learning components with adult English language learners: Vital factors and lessons learned. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 20*(3), 263-278.

Dippold, D. (2009). Peer feedback through blogs: Student and teacher perceptions in an advanced German class. *ReCALL, 21*(1), 18-36.

Ellis, R., Loewen, S., & Erlam, R. (2006). Implicit and explicit corrective feedback and the acquisition of L2 grammar. *Studies in Second Language, 28*(2), 339-368.

Felix U. (2005). Analyzing recent CALL effectiveness research- towards a common agenda. *Computer-Assisted Language Learning, 18*(1-2), 1-32.

Ferris, D. R. (1999). The case for grammar correction in L2 writing classes: A response to Truscott (1996). *Journal of Second Language Writing, 8*, 1-10.

Ferris, D. R. (2002), *Treatment of error in second language student writing*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Ferris, D. R. (2003). *Response to student writing: Implications for second language students*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Gonza´lez-Bueno, M. (1998). The effect of electronic mail on Spanish L2 discourse. Language *Learning and Technology, 1*(2), 55-70.

Gonza´lez-Bueno, M., & Pe´rez, L. C. (2000). Electronic mail in foreign language writing: A study of grammatical and lexical accuracy, and quantity of language. *Foreign Language Annals, 33*(2), 189 – 197.

Hackett, L. (1996). The internet and e-mail: Useful tools for foreign language teaching and learning. *On-Call, 10*(1). Retrieved on February 1, 2002, from http://www.cltr.uq.edu.au/oncall/ hackett 101.html.

He, L., & Shi, L. (2008), ESL students' perceptions and experiences of standardized English writing tests. *Assessing Writing, 13*, 130-149.

Hegelheimer, V. (2004). Using CALL in the classroom: analyzing students' interaction. *System, 32*(2), 185-205.

Hoffman, R. (1994). Powerful, personal: Electronic mail and the L2 writing process. *ReCALL, 6*(2), 53-62.

Hui-Fang, S. (2007). An exploratory study of e-mail application on FL writing performance. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 20*(1), 79-96, DOI: 10.1080/09588220601118479.

Jamieson, J., Chapelle, C., & Preiss, S. (2005). CALL evaluations by developers, a teacher, and students. *CALICO, 22*(1), 93-138.

Kepner, C. (1991). An experiment in the relationship of types of written feedback to the development of second-language writing skills. *Modern Language Journal, 75,* 305-313.

Kern, R. (1995). Restructuring classroom interaction with networked computers: Effects on quantity and characteristics of language production. *The Modern Language Journal, 79*(4), 457-476.

Kupelian, M. (2001). The use of e-mail in the L2 classroom: An overview. *Second Language Learning and Teaching, 1*(1). Retrieved from http://www.usq.edu.au/opacs/cllt/sllt/1-1/ Kupelian01.htm.

Leppanen, S., & Kalaja, P. (1995). Experimenting with computer conferencing in English for academic purposes. *ELT Journal, 49*, 26-36.

Levy, M. (1997). *Computer-assisted language learning: Context and conceptualization*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Li, Y. (2000). Linguistic characteristics of ESL writing in task-based e-mail activities. *System, 28*, 229-245.

Liaw, M. L. (1998). Using electronic mail for English as a foreign language instruction. *System, 26*, 335-351.

Liu, J., & Sadler, R.W. (2003). The effects and affect of peer review in electronic versus traditional modes on L2 writing. *English for Academic Purposes, 2*, 193-227.

Liu, M., Moore, Z., Graham, L., & Lee, S. (2003). A look at the research on computer-based technology use in second language learning: A review of the literature from 1990-2000. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education, 34*(3), 250-273.

Lyster, R. (2004). Differential effects of prompts and recasts in form-focused instruction. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 26,* 399-432.

Lyster, R. (2007). *Learning and teaching languages through content: A counter-balanced approach.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Pica, T. (1994). Research on negotiation: What does it reveal about second-language learning conditions, processes and outcomes? *Language Learning, 44*(3), 493-527.

Recep Ş. A., & Aysel Ş. A. (2010). How can the use of blog software facilitate the writing process of English language learners? *Computer-Assisted Language Learning, 23*(3), 183-197.

Ritter, M. (1993). That's us! A book about ourselves: An EFL project with intermediate learners, incorporating the computer as a tool. *CALICO, 10*(4), 57-69.

Saeedi, Z. (2013). Care with computer-assisted language learning. In D. Tafazoli & S. Chirimbu (Eds.). *Language and Technology*. Khate Sefid Publication, Iran.

Semke, H. (1984). The effects of the red pen. *Foreign Language Annals, 17*, 195-202.

Sheppard, K. (1992). Two feedback types: do they make a difference? *RELC, 23*, 103-110.

Shetzer, H., & Warschauer, M. (2000). An electronic literacy approach to network-based language teaching. In M. Warschauer, & R. Kern (Eds.). *Network-based language teaching: Concepts and practice* (pp. 171-185). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Silvia, P. U., Meagher, M. E., Valenzuela, M., & Crenshaw, S. (1996). E-mail: Real-life classroom experiences with foreign language. *Learning and Leading with Technology, 23*(5), 10-12.

Sotillo, S. M. (1997). E-mail exchanges and corrective feedback between native speakers and non-native speakers of English. Paper presented at the Annual conference of American association for applied linguistics, Orlando, FL.

Stockwell, G. (2007). A review of technology choice for teaching language skills in areas in the CALL literature. *ReCALL, 19*(2), 105-120.

Sun, Y. C. (2010). Developing reflective cyber communities in the Blogosphere: A case study in Taiwan higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education, 15*(4), 369-381.

Truscott, J. (1996). The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes. *Language Learning, 46*, 327-369.

Truscott, J., & Hsu, A.Y.-P. (2008). Error correction, revision, and learning. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 17,* 292-305.

Wang, Y. M. (1998). E-mail dialogue journaling in an English as a second language (ESL) reading and writing classroom. *International Journal of Educational Telecommunications, 4*(2/3), 263-287.

Warschauer, M. (1995). Comparing face-to-face and electronic discussion in the second language classroom. *CALICO, 13*(2/3), 7-26.

Warschauer, M. (2007). Technology and writing. In C. Davison & J. Cummins (Eds.). *The International Handbook of English Language Teaching* (pp. 907-912). Norwell, MA: Springer.

Warschauer, M., Turbee L., & Roberts, B. (1996). Computer learning networks and student empowerment. *System, 24*(1), 1-14.

Wegle, C. S (2007). Consideration for teaching second language writing. In M. C. Murcia, D. M. Brinton, & M. A. Snow (Eds.), *Teaching*

English as Second or Foreign Language (pp. 222-237). Australia: HEINLE.

Xu, C. (2009). Overgeneralization from a narrow focus: A response to Ellis, et al. (2008) and Bitchener (2008). *Journal of Second Language Writing, 18*, 270-275.

Appendix A
Providing corrective feedback on students' writing via e-mail

Nowadays playing game is one of the most enjoyable amusement of our life. Both children and adults, spend a noticeable time playing games. In my idea, playing game is a way to enjoy passing time, but the schemers have special policy for each game. In childhood games are not only an entertainment, but also a way to learn new things. But in adolescence, it only used for passing time.

Playing game goes to old time, when it only belonged to children. It was the time, when games were simple, and we could play it with accessible tools such as, ball, coin, and stone. After a while some special accessories created just for playing games. After creation of these tools adults start to playing games. After arrival of computer and electronic devices, games became complicated. Most of the old game accessories disappeared and new electronically games created. All of these new games are made as multimedia, because of this they can be effective in our characteristic, mind, and life. Nowadays these games are used to teach people indirectly. Government can have intervention in human life by including their policy in games.

Games are mostly used by children. All of children spend noticeable time playing different games. It may has different reasons. Children have too many free time in a day and playing game is a way to pass the time. The another reason is children skills. They can learn lots of adolescent's skills by working with game accessories. We can say skills learning and abilities achievement is an important purpose of children games. It can increase child's knowledge in basic topics. We can use games instead of typical teaching methods.

Although at first games were designed for children, it had a great attraction for adults. Because of this, lots of games specifically designed for this age group. Adults, play game much more day after day, and now we see each person spend lots of his/ her time in a week playing games, in front of pc. Wide distribution of game causes some problems, such as game addiction. Addicted people may suffer from lots of problem, such as poor in eyes, spinal cord deviancy, abdominal obesity, and eating disorders.

To sum up, its obvious that, games play a great role in different people's lives, and its not specified to especial age group. Due to training aspect of game, we have to be aware about the effects. Its noticeable, we have to play game just in free time, and avoid misusage of it. I think, game is a perfect way to enjoy free time for both, children and adults; but we have to control disadvantages.

GREEN: you write right.

YELLOW: it is problematic. Recheck your pamphlet.

Comment [h1]: Nowadays,

Comment [h2]: Entertainments

Comment [h3]: Better to say: in my opinion

Comment [h4]: X, ...

Comment [h5]: Try to develop your first paragraph just with one idea in order to be able to discuss different sides of it in next paragraphs.

Comment [h6]: Playing a game..

Comment [h7]: Goes back..

Comment [h8]: After a while as an introductory phrase should be followed by comma.

Comment [h9]: Start playing/ start to play

Comment [h10]: Were created

Comment [h11]: ??? what's the idea behind that???

Comment [h12]: Played

Comment [h13]: After model verbs use bare infinitive. May have...

Comment [h14]: Too much free time...

Comment [h15]: X and Y are...

Comment [h16]: Firs word should be capitalized.

Comment [h17]: It attracted

Comment [h18]: Do not use abbreviation. Personal computer.

Comment [h19]: eyesight

Comment [h20]: Who says???

Appendix B
Providing corrective feedback on students' writing via paper-and-pen version