

An Exploration of the Effect of Time Pressure and Peer Feedback on the Iranian EFL Students' Writing Performance

Nasim Ghanbari

English Department, Persian Gulf University, Bushehr, Iran

Azade Karampourchangi

Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch of Bushehr, Iran

Mohammad Reza Shamsaddini

English Department, Persian Gulf University, Bushehr, Iran

Abstract—Writing is one of the most important skills in second language teaching, learning and assessment. Consequently, it is crucial to enhance writing ability. According to several studies, one beneficial way is using peer feedback. Furthermore, time pressure is one of those non-linguistic factors which may affect the students' writings. This study was an attempt to investigate the effect of time pressure and peer feedback on Iranian EFL students' writing performance. To conduct this study, 69 female and male students received an Oxford Proficiency Test (OPT) and 60 homogeneous participants whose scores ranged from 150 to 169 (advanced level) were selected. They were divided into three groups of twenty and asked to write about the same topic under three different conditions. In the first group the participants had timed exam without peer feedback for 40 minutes, the second group had timed exam with peer feedback for 40 minutes, and the last group had untimed exam with peer feedback. Finally, results of a two-way ANOVA test indicated that the best performance is related to the group who received peer feedback under time pressure; next, the group who received peer feedback without any time pressure, and the last group who wrote without peer feedback under time pressure. To recap, the results illustrated that peer feedback had a significant effect, while time pressure did not have any effect on writing performance. Furthermore, it was revealed that there was no interaction between peer feedback and time pressure.

Index Terms—Jacob's et al, analytic rating scale, peer feedback, time pressure

I. INTRODUCTION

Transferring information is one of the most fundamental issues in this era since we need to share our new knowledge and receive new discoveries from others. To improve our knowledge and be up to date, writing enhancement is crucial. As it can be clearly seen, most publications and website materials use an international language, namely English, as their means of communication. Thus, to keep the connection, other nationalities and countries need to improve their English language especially in written form. In traditional education methodologies, teachers directed the learning process and students were assumed to have a receptive role in their education. Armstrong (2012) claimed that traditional education ignores or prevents the growth of the responsibility of the learner. Theorists like John Dewey, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky are primarily responsible for the move to learner-centered learning. They focused on how students learn. Communicative language learning is based on student-centered features which make the learners responsible, independent, and autonomous (Omaggio-Hadley, 2001).

One of the most fundamental concepts in learner-centered classes is peer feedback. However, an abridged introduction to feedback is necessary to facilitate the comprehension of peer feedback concept. Indeed, according to Richards and Schmidt (2002), feedback is vividly defined in language dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics as follows: "any information on the result of behavior" (p.234). In language teaching field, feedback refers to comments, explanations and helpful data which learners receive either from the teacher or other people (Richards and Schmidt, 2002). Feedback is a crucial issue in the writing process and plays a central role since without any feedback the aim of writing class will not be fulfilled. According to Williams (2003), one goal of feedback is to assist students to become "cognizant of what is expected of them as writers and are able to produce it with minimal errors and maximum clarity" (p. 1). Peer review or feedback is defined as "an activity in the revising stage of writing in which students receive feedback about their writing from other students, their peers" (Richard and Schmidt, 2002, p. 390). Furthermore, Coit (2004) explained that "Based on theories in collaborative learning and social cognitive development, peer review has assumed an important role in both L1 and L2 writing classrooms." (p. 902). Some of the studies (Lee, 2011; Noora, 2006) highlighted the importance of feedback. Furthermore, researchers are interested in scrutinizing the methods for

providing and receiving feedback as well as the effect of feedback on students' writing in language learning scope. However, considerable recent studies have been conducted about the preferences and attitudes of both learners and teachers towards error correction and feedback (Katayama, 2007).

Putting the term peer feedback aside, another important non-linguistic factor and variable in the current study is time pressure which influences the result of exam. It may artificially decrease the candidates' grade. For this reason, candidates have always complained about unfair score and they believed that their scores cannot be adequate to show their real competence! However, they cannot plan and manage their time in order to be successful in their examination. Some researchers criticized the testing method in which students are under the pressure of time and as Kenworthy (2006) (restated the words of Sanders & Littlefield, 1975; Horowitz, 1986; Kroll, 1990), both students and instructors agreed that texts which are produced in such an artificial environment with time limitations cannot be reliable criteria of students' true ability. Moreover, timed-test situations are against process approaches since they follow the product approach in which students produce final draft. Whereas, in contemporary writing instructions which support process approach students write their essays during different processes like planning, drafting, revising and editing to achieve the appropriate final draft (Seow, 2002). As it is clear from some studies concerning time pressure some researchers (Caudery, 1990; Livingston, 1987) discussed that time restriction did not affect participants' writing performance and some others (Crone, Wright, and Baron, 1993; Powers and Fowles, 1996) opposed the previous idea.

As the current study concerns, applying whole potential competence and achieving the best satisfying scores in writing exam are of utmost importance for Iranian EFL students. However, students do not seem to be able to get use of their whole potential competence during their writing exam. Transferring genuine knowledge is one of the students' dreams. Hence, all the time, they complain about their scores. They excuse for stress and lack of time. They believe that if they had more time and less stress, they would surely perform better! Moreover, they presume that peer feedback has beneficial effect and by the use of that candidates will achieve better scores. The reason is that they feel stress-free and they can use their peers' ideas to activate their schemata and be more creative by receiving different hints.

According to the mentioned problems, an exploration of the simultaneous effect of time pressure and peer feedback on Iranian EFL learners' writing quality in their exams seems to be imperative to discover ways to help them prevailing in their endeavors. Consequently, as poor evidences is available on demonstrating the influence of those factors in the exam setting, the current study seems to be appropriate to shed light on the topic especially in the Iranian context. Not only in Iran but also in other countries, researchers have not highlighted the significant role of time pressure especially during timed exams. Most of them have illustrated the importance of time pressure just in classroom activities or during a long period of time in which the students have to manage their time for their examination period (e.g. one month for several tests). Analogously, peer feedback has been studied in teaching and learning scopes. Since there are negligible proofs of this matter in testing scope under time pressure, it seems that it is necessary to focus on this issue in this field.

Moreover, there is no evidence to show the interaction between two factors, i.e. time pressure and peer feedback, especially in Iran; and even it seems that there are really poor witnesses to demonstrate this interaction around the world. Although they have been probed separately, there is no study investigating the simultaneous effects of peer feedback and time pressure. Thus, there is a vital need to make a thorough investigation. Hereupon, the current study strives to fill this gap and the researcher hopes for the novelty of the present study.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ahangari (2014) explored the effect of self, peer and teacher correction on the pronunciation improvement of Iranian EFL learners. To do this, she decided to select 45 participants from among 60 English language learning students by assigning a PET test. Then, they were divided into three groups. One of the instrumentations of the study was some picture series. The participants received those series to make and then tell a story based on the scripts. In the self-correction group every participant had to correct her pronunciation errors individually, in the peer correction group the participants in pairs corrected each other's pronunciation errors and for the third group their errors were corrected by the teacher. This process period continued for 15 sessions. A pre-test and post-test were administered. The results showed that the pronunciation of the self-correction group improved more than the other two groups and peer correction group outperformed the teacher correction group.

Baleghizade and Rahimi (2012) discussed the importance of cooperation in their article and they explored the effectiveness of cooperative on the learning strategies. They aimed to investigate the effect of cooperative learning strategies on the composition writing performance. To achieve their goal, they decided to examine 60 upper intermediate Iranian EFL students. There were divided into experimental and control group. Data were collected using compositions written by students. The subjects in the experimental group wrote their compositions cooperatively, while the participants in the control group were asked to write individually on their final product. The results of posttest score demonstrated the significant superiority of experimental group over the control group ($p < 0.05$). Consequently, they concluded that teaching writing through team work, i.e. cooperative learning, improved students' writing performance. Furthermore, they could evaluate their own and peers' writing and this fact affected the atmosphere and made it friendlier. One reason was that many students felt more comfortable with their friends than with their teachers.

In another study Jafari and Ansari (2012) considered the effect of group work and gender difference on the writing accuracy of Iranian EFL learners. Their treatment lasted over a month and their participants were sixty Iranian EFL

learners. As same as previous study, they were divided into two groups. The experimental group wrote collaboratively while the control group was required to write individually. Four essay writing sessions were designed in order to fulfill the aim of their study and both groups participated in that program. Both males and females wrote on the same topic and genre. The results showed that the participants in collaborative writing group outperformed the students in the control group. On the other hand, it was concluded that gender difference played a significant role in Iranian EFL collaborative writing context since females outperformed males in the same group.

Another study which emphasized the complementary halo of different kinds of feedback was conducted by Birjandi and Hadidi Tamjid (2012). They investigated the effect of self-, peer and teacher assessment on the writing performance and promotion of Iranian EFL learners. To conduct this study, 157 intermediate TEFL (Teaching English as Foreign Language) students were selected. They were divided into five groups with five different treatments: four experimental groups and one control group. The treatments were as following: the researchers decided to ask experimental group to write journal writing and then self-assessed their own papers. Similarly, the second group self-assessed their own writings. On the other hand, the third group applied peer assessment, and finally the fourth group had both self- and peer assessment (simultaneously). Moreover, the important point in this study was that teacher assessed the performance of all experimental groups, except the fourth one. In the control group, there was only teacher assessment. It should be noted that they used quasi-experimental as the design of their study. Eventually, the results reported the greatest progress in the second and third groups' writing performance, i.e. the group in which the students employed self-assessment and peer assessment, respectively.

In order to represent the important and complementary role in enhancing the acquisition of writing among ESL students, Maarof, Yamat and Li Li (2011) conducted a research. They investigated the ESL students' perception of the effect of teacher feedback, peer feedback and their combination, namely teacher-peer feedback, in their writing. The participants of their study were 150 students from five secondary schools in Malaysia. They were asked to respond to a questionnaire. The mentioned questionnaire made up of 32 items on a 4-point Likert scale, two multiple-choice items and three open-ended items. The Results indicated that most of the participants agreed that the combination of teacher and peer feedback is more beneficial for their ESL writing. On the contrary, just a small number of them (10 students) preferred teacher feedback. However, most of the students welcomed the combined use of teacher and peer feedback since teacher feedback helped learners to learn a target structure, and peer feedback could also reconfirm what teacher commented and provided additional input via the learners' input. Therefore, they believed that the complementary role of teacher and peer feedback is essential to enhance their ESL writing.

Grami (2010) conducted a full-fledged research as his thesis. The project was implemented in one of the universities in Saudi Arabia. It is significant to point that teacher-centered method was predominant in that context. He investigated the effects of instructing peer feedback to a group of university-level students. The data for this study was collected via various data collection methods and lasted for three months. First, students' initial perceptions of peer feedback were explored. Then, after the long treatment, those perceptions were compared to their perceptions after the experiment using semi-structured questionnaires and individual interviews. The study included three different phases. The results of the first stage showed that students preferred teacher-written feedback, but were anxious about peer feedback at the same time. The reason was that the linguistic level of the fellow students was lower than that of the teachers and they felt more secure after receiving teacher-written feedback. In the second phase of the project ESL students were divided into two groups; the experimental group, which jointly used teacher-written and peer feedback as a multiple source; and the control group, which received only teacher-written feedback. The last part of the study was devoted to a comparison between pre- and post-tests scores to measure the progress of students' writing. Texts were evaluated applying a holistic assessment approach. As a whole, concerning all three phases, the results showed that (a) in the first stage teacher feedback was welcomed. (b) In the second phase the results suggest that peer feedback helped students gained new skills and improved existing ones. (c) Finally, students in both groups had improvement. Although all of the students had better performance, members of the peer feedback group outperformed the other group in every aspect of writing after feedback instruction and application. The study concludes that despite linguistic concerns, the overall perception of peer feedback positively changed and students accepted this technique as part of their ESL writing curriculum. Grami (2010) proposed that if students were properly trained and learned how to use peer feedback, the benefits could be very significant.

Kenworthy (2006) probed the effects of different media and additional time on the quality of English written assessment exams of sixteen intermediate-level students. They enrolled at a satellite campus and their first language was Cantonese. They took part in a 45-minute timed placement manual test. Several weeks later they were asked to complete a computer-generated essay in a period of one week. Statistical analyses (t-tests) demonstrated insignificant differences between the frequencies of selected lexical traits found within both categories of writings. By contrast, unlike those studies that offered the ineffectiveness of extra time, additional time played an important role in grammatical enhancement of participants and they produced fewer grammatical errors within higher quality writings. Finally, meticulously compared with the timed writings, the untimed home-written essays had fewer grammatical errors and greater holistic scores which supported the idea that additional time affects overall writing quality.

III. CURRENT STUDY

The focal objective of the present study is to ascertain the simultaneous effect of peer feedback and time pressure on Iranian EFL students' writing performance in exam. This study strives to prove whether peer feedback affects Iranian EFL learners' performance in their writing test or not. Another important issue is the effect of time pressure to illustrate that in which condition, namely timed or untimed examination, students perform better. Consequently, both positive and negative effects of those two non-linguistic factors will be probed separately and together.

Finally, the researcher decides to inquire the probable interaction between peer feedback and time pressure in this current study.

The researcher aims to examine students' writings based on the five criteria (Content; Organization; Vocabulary; Language use; Mechanics) adapted from Jacob's et al. (1981).

To fulfill the aim of this study, the following questions were put forward:

1. Does peer feedback have any effect on students' writing performance?
2. Does time pressure have any effect on students' writing performance?
3. Is there any interaction between peer feedback and time pressure?

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

In order to conduct this research project, the researcher selected sixty nine adult students (21 males and 48 females). These students were all Persian speakers who were studying English as a foreign language (EFL).

The participants were selected randomly, and in order to have homogeneous groups, Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered. After OPT administration, from among 69 participants, 60 adult advanced students (15 males and 45 females) whose scores were between one standard deviation above and below the mean of the test had been qualified to take the examination. Hence, in order to homogenize the participants, nine students were disqualified and they were reported as the research dropouts.

The distribution and grouping of gender are summarized in Table 4.1.

TABLE 4.1.
DISTRIBUTION AND GROUPINGS OF PARTICIPANTS

Gender	Number	Percent
Female	45	75 %
Male	15	25 %
Total	60	100 %

The participants were randomly divided into three groups of 20, since the project entailed a same writing test in three different exam settings.

B. Instrumentation

In order to check the level of English language proficiency and the homogeneity of the three groups, the researcher asked the participants to take the Oxford Placement Test.

The OPT (Allen, 2004) edition entails 200 questions: 100 listening and 100 English grammar questions. Indeed, the first section is a test of reading and listening skills. OPT took one hour and first part was listening which lasted in about 10 minutes. Then, students had approximately 50 minutes for grammar part. In both listening and grammar parts, students should simply choose one correct box out of two boxes. This international test is efficient, reliable and accurate in grading.

After assuring about the homogeneity of students' proficiency level, a writing test was implemented to evaluate the participants' ability in writing. The researcher of this study paid particular attention to the topic selection. It was very essential to choose an authentic topic to let Iranian EFL students of this study develop their writing paragraphs easily. Therefore, this process facilitated their writing performance since the authentic topic activated their schemata and background knowledge. Accordingly, it saved their time in those two situations under time pressure.

The participants of all three groups were required to write about a same topic which was chosen from the book series "Cambridge IELTS: Examination papers from University of Cambridge ESOL examination English for speakers of other languages".

According to the source of topic selection, the students were asked to finish their writing (in timed exams) within a 40 minutes time period.

As mentioned before, there are different ways to score students' writing performance. In this study, the researcher decided to use Jacob's scoring scale which is an analytical rating scale.

Jacob's et al. (1981) scale considers content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Moreover, each component has four rating levels of (a) very poor, (b) poor to fair, (c) average to good, and (d) very good to excellent. Each level and component has been obviously described for that particular level as well as a numerical scale. For example, regarding the first component content, very good to excellent content has a minimum rating of 27 and a maximum of 30. For this range of score students' writing content should be "knowledgeable, substantive, thorough development of thesis, relevant to assigned topic"; on the other hand, very poor content ranges from 13 to 16

illustrating that the content does not show knowledge of subject (Jacobs et al., 1981). The total range for each of the writing skills in this scale which are content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics are 13–30, 7–20, 7–20, 5–25 and 2–5, respectively.

C. Procedure

Under testing conditions, the subjects were asked to take the OPT consisting of 100 listening and 100 English grammar items in the very first session; the evaluation of the OPT was objective because each item had only one correct response; 200 marks were assigned to the 200 items of the test which the participants had to perform on. After data collection procedure, scoring procedure was implemented to obtain the results. Firstly, the researcher of this study evaluated the students' proficiency level scores. It was objective since each question had one correct answer (in both listening part and grammar part).

Then, based on proficiency test results, the researcher limited the participants to 60 (out of 69) and they were divided into three homogeneous groups. All three groups were given a same topic to write. The most significant issue was that their examination settings were completely distinct from each other as follows:

1. Timed condition without peer feedback (40 minutes)
2. Timed condition with peer feedback (40 minutes)
3. Untimed condition with peer feedback (one week)

In this study, the students did not know their work would be analyzed as this information could jeopardize the validity of this study.

Introductory speech on the dos and don'ts of the test were given by the researcher in all three conditions; for instance, the researcher decided to train the participants how to give feedback to the peers during their semester. In all three groups, the students were instructed how to give feedback. Therefore, they knew the meaning of peer feedback and learned how to perform it in the related context.

As they studied three units during one term, each unit had one writing session. The students studied three units each semester. Consequently, they had three writing sessions with peer feedback training concept, theoretically and practically. The researcher of this study believed that this training was necessary to fulfill the aim of the study. Their semester lasted in 16 sessions (forty-five days) and the writing tests were implemented in the fifteenth session.

To score the writings, the following steps, based on a pre-planned procedure, was conducted.

1) Each composition was read and scored by the researcher for five times. In each reading, the examiner focused on one aspect or criterion (out of the five criteria detailed in the Jacob's rating scale).

2) Having finished the first rating, to establish the inter-reliability of the scores, a fellow teacher who was familiar and experienced with grading policy and Jacob's scoring scale was asked to follow the same procedure with the papers.

Consequently, to fulfill the aim of scoring reliability, the researcher decided to estimate inter-reliability of scores.

V. RESULTS

A. Results of the Two-way ANOVA

Firstly, in order to determine the significant difference of two independent variables in this study, namely peer feedback and time pressure on the dependent variable, i.e. writing performance, a two-way ANOVA was run. As it could be obviously seen in the following Table, descriptive statistics related with each of the independent variables was shown (Table 5.1).

TABLE 5.1.
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS
DEPENDENT VARIABLE: WRITING SCORE

Peer feedback	Time pressure	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
with peer feedback	with time pressure	77.00	4.425	20
	no time pressure	76.80	4.432	20
	Total	76.90	4.372	40
no peer feedback	with time pressure	73.75	4.993	20
	Total	73.75	4.993	20
Total	with time pressure	75.37	4.939	40
	no time pressure	76.80	4.432	20
	Total	75.85	4.786	60

As could be inferred from the above Table, some differences in the mean performance of the learners in each group could be identified. In order to significantly test the differences, results of ANOVA test were presented in Table 5.2 below.

TABLE 5.2.
TESTS OF BETWEEN-SUBJECTS EFFECTS
DEPENDENT VARIABLE: WRITING SCORE

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Squared	Eta
Corrected Model	132.700 ^a	2	66.350	3.103	.053	.098	
Intercept	317688.022	1	317688.022	14855.587	.000	.996	
Peer feedback	105.625	1	105.625	4.939	.030	.080	
Time pressure	.400	1	.400	.019	.892	.000	
Peer fdbck * time pressure	.000	0000	
Error	1218.950	57	21.385				
Total	346545.000	60					
Corrected Total	1351.650	59					

a. R Squared = .098 (Adjusted R Squared = .067)

As the result ($p = 0.030$) showed the significant difference, addressing the first research question in this study which explored the effect of peer feedback on writing performance, it was clearly seen that peer feedback had a significant effect on writing. It was revealed that at $p = 0.05$ level of significance, there existed enough evidence to conclude that peer feedback at $p = 0.030$ level of significance was effective.

On the other hand, addressing the second research question focusing on the effect of time pressure on writing performance, the above table and result ($p = 0.892$) demonstrated that time pressure did not have any significant effect on writing performance.

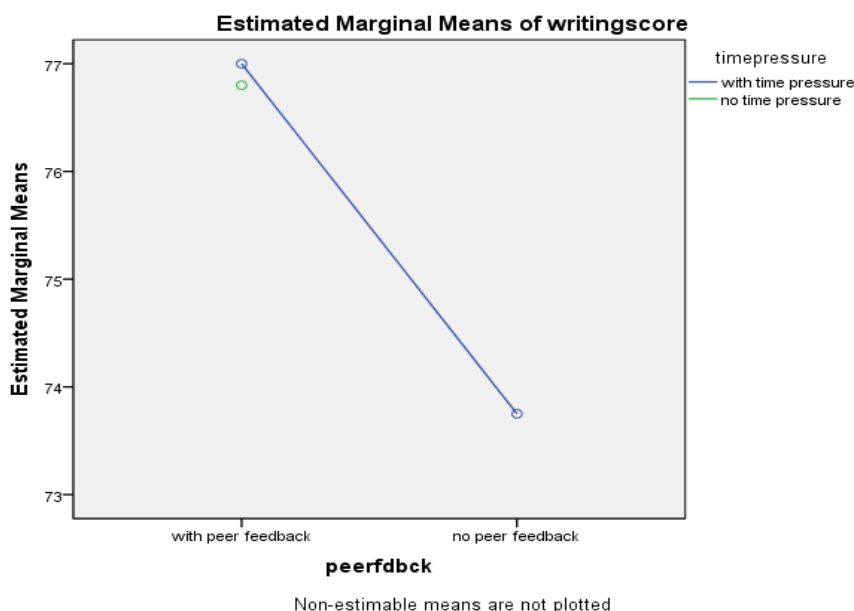


Figure 5.1: Interaction plot regarding peer feedback and time pressure

Furthermore, to address the third research question from the above table, it was deduced that there was no interaction between the two independent variables, i.e. peer feedback and time pressure, in this study. Figure 8.1 above graphically depicted lack of any interaction between peer feedback and time pressure in this study.

As mentioned before, the exam settings entailed three different conditions. The best performance was related to the group who received peer feedback under time pressure by the mean score of 77.00 and it had the highest position in the above plot. Secondly, the group who received peer feedback and wrote their writings without any time pressure achieved the second position by the mean score of 76.80 which was approximately close to that of first group. Finally, the last group who wrote under time pressure and did not receive any peer feedback by the mean score of 73.75 had the lowest position in the above plot.

B. Results on Reliability Analysis

1. Inter-Rater Reliability

Since writing performance was the dependent variable in this study, in order to establish the reliability of the scorings, a colleague of researcher who was an expert in writing assessment double scored the writing tests in each of three experimental groups. In the tables that came below, results of Pearson correlations were presented for each of the groups respectively.

As it could be seen in the following tables, the range of scorings was demonstrated to account inter-rater reliability of scores. Since there were three groups of participants in this study, three separate tables were required to show the results

of correlation analyses. By looking at the tables below, it was easily seen that both examiners, namely the researcher and second examiner, had similar ratings.

TABLE 5.3.
CORRELATIONS OF GROUP 1 CORRELATIONS

		Group1	Group1Coll
Group1	Pearson Correlation	1	.986**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20
Group1Coll	Pearson Correlation	.986**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	20	20

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to Table 5.3., a significant correlation was obtained to show the inter-reliability of the two raters in the first group.

TABLE 5.4.
CORRELATIONS OF GROUP 2 CORRELATIONS

		Group2	Group2coll
Group2	Pearson Correlation	1	.975**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20
Group2coll	Pearson Correlation	.975**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	20	20

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Analogously, a significant correlation, as shown in Table 5.4., reported the inter-reliability of second group's scores.

TABLE 5.5.
CORRELATIONS OF GROUP 3 CORRELATIONS

		Group3	Group3coll
Group3	Pearson Correlation	1	.941**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20
Group3coll	Pearson Correlation	.941**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	20	20

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Likewise, to show inter-rater reliability for the third group, the same result was presented in Table 5.5.

To recap, all the Tables concerning the inter-rater reliability results demonstrated significant correlation as shown above. Consequently, it could be interpreted that ratings of both researcher and second examiner had approximately same quality. Thus, having determined the high inter-relations between different ratings in this study, the averaged ratings of the researcher were added to the rating of the second examiner, and they were averaged to obtain the final rating of all the sixty papers in the present study. All the computations and analyses in this study were based on these obtained scores, which were the final reliable scores.

VI. DISCUSSION

This section provides a specific discussion for each of the research hypotheses and makes attempt to relate the findings to the existing literature. Addressing the first research hypothesis it was revealed that peer feedback has a significant effect on writing performance and improved it. As the researcher reviewed the literature, she found some relevant studies. Soleimani and Jamzivar (2014) conducted a quasi-experimental study which was designed to investigate the impact of providing written corrective feedback by peers on writing performance. The researchers homogenized 46 pre-intermediate learners in a private English institute in Tehran, Iran, and assigned them into two groups of 23: the peer feedback group, which were required to provide peer feedback, and the teacher feedback group, which received teacher feedback. In a 20-session course, participants handed in 16 paragraphs, and the feedbacks were given based on a checklist designed by the researchers. The t-test analysis of the post-test results revealed a meaningful statistical difference between the two groups, and the comparison of means reported a higher rate of performance improvement on peer-feedback group.

Wakabayashi (2013) compared the effect of reviewing peer texts and one's own text on writing improvement. To conduct this study, the researcher selected Fifty one students who participated in two writing classes with two different

proficiency levels in a Japanese university. The lower and higher proficiency students reviewed peer texts and their own texts, respectively. There were more materials like multiple task sheets for students of both classes to give accurate feedback on texts. To examine the participants' achievements, their writing samples were collected at the beginning and the end of the semester and were compared to each other. In line with comparative analysis, a questionnaire was also distributed among the participants to inquire their perceptions towards the tasks. The results showed that in comparison with those who reviewed their peers' texts, the students who reviewed their own texts scored better. Moreover, a significant correlation was reported between score increase and perceived effectiveness of the task with the students who focused on reviewing peer texts.

In the same vein, Al-Jamal (2009) investigated the impact of peer response on the Jordanian EFL students' writing skill. The findings showed that the participants preferred training on peer feedback. Moreover, Lin and Chien (2009) conducted a study associated with peer correction. The study lasted eight weeks with writing training and peer feedback activities. The results revealed that most participants believed in the positive impact of the peer feedback on their English writing.

Harmer (2004) was another enthusiastic researcher in this field. He observed that the number of peer-triggered revisions made 90% of the whole revisions, and the number of revisions with enhanced quality increased compared with that before peer review training. He concluded that extra peer review feedback training inside and outside of classroom can enormously affect EFL students. Berg (1999) investigated how trained peer response shapes ESL students' revisions and revision quality and finalized that trained peer response boosted positive impact on ESL students' revision types and quality.

In addition to our study, all above mentioned studies and other studies (Caulk, 1994; Mendonça & Johnson, 1994) have reported the positive effects of peer review on one's writing improvement.

Addressing the second research hypothesis the results revealed that time pressure did not have any effect on writing performance of the participants. Caudery (1990) run a study in which 24 participants were divided into two 12 member groups to show the effect of time restriction on their essay writings. Students wrote two argumentative essays, in each case with a choice of two topics. So there were two different conditions, i.e. one essay was written in class in 40 minutes and another was started in class. In the second situation, students were given one hour of classroom time and their task was commenced in the class but it was continued and finished at home during two days. The essay topics were reversed for the two groups, i.e. the topics on which one group wrote in 40 minutes were the topics on which another group wrote without any time pressure. Finally, the results indicated that there was no evidence to support the hypothesis that students will write better without a time restriction. In other words correlation between the groups' timed and untimed essay scores proposed no reason to prove the relationship between the variation in individual students' scores and time factor.

Livingston (1987) conducted a study that examined differences in essay scores completed under three separate timing conditions: (a) 20 minutes, (b) 30 minutes, and (c) 30 minutes with separately timed sections of 10 minutes for planning and 20 minutes for writing. Two different essay topics were employed in the study. Results showed that the two essays differed in difficulty — one essay was clearly easier for the majority of students irrespective of ability level, timing, or order of presentation. Several conclusions from that study were made concerning essay timing: a) the effect of an extra 10 minutes (allowing 30 minutes instead of 20 minutes) was "very small in relation to the other sources of variation," and the effect of students' ability on the difference between a 20- and 30-minute essay was far short of significant, b) providing students with 30 minutes, but requiring a 10-minute planning period (condition c above) appeared to lower scores if this essay came first, and appeared to have a slight increase in scores if it was the second essay, c) for students with low ability, neither the extra time nor topic made a difference in their score.

Crone, et al., (1993) also examined the effects of essay length in a study conducted to determine the final essay timing for the SAT II: Writing Test. Approximately 7,100 high school juniors and seniors completed several test sections from the SAT I verbal, SAT II: Writing Test (multiple-choice), the Test of Standard Written English, and two essays of 30 minutes or 15 minutes in length. Results clearly showed that examinees received lower essay scores in the 15-minute condition than in the 30-minute condition although they were able to write reasonable essays in 15 minutes and with lower quality than 30 minutes. Furthermore, the study examined if the time difference had any impact on ethnic/racial minorities or language minorities. The study confirmed that English Second Language (ESL) students scored lower than English First Language (EFL) students irrespective of essay length and that all groups scored lower on the 15-minute essay.

Powers and Fowles (1996) examined the difference in examinee performance on a 40-minute and 60-minute proposed GRE writing test. Three hundred prospective graduate students completed two different essays under each of the time limits. On a questionnaire completed after writing the essays, 75 percent of respondents said a 40-minute time allocation was adequate, and 88 percent felt 60 minutes was adequate. The differences in the perception of time provided were statistically significant, especially for students who said they were slow or average test-takers. Additional time was equally beneficial to test-takers, who judged themselves as faster, average, or slower writers. Mean scores increased slightly with additional time (mean increases were .06 and 1.0 for different prompts on a 1–6 scale with two readers). However, the relative performance of fast, average, and slow test-takers and the meaning of test scores did not change noticeably when more time was allocated.

As it is clear from the mentioned studies some of them (Caudery, 1990; Livingston, 1987) confirmed the result of present study and showed that time restriction did not affect participants' writing performance and some others (Crone, et al., 1993; Powers & Fowles, 1996) opposed our results.

Addressing the third null hypothesis the results of our study indicated that there was no interaction between peer feedback and time pressure. As mentioned in the procedure of the study the researcher has three groups: A) no peer feedback but with time pressure, B) with peer feedback but no time pressure, and C) with peer feedback and with time pressure. As mentioned above the results of the study showed that peer feedback improved writing performance of the participants but time pressure did not have any effect on their writing performance. The results of the second and third groups were compared to each other in order to find out about any possible interaction between time and peer feedback. The marginal means of the writing scores were estimated and they showed that there was no interaction between the two independent variables in this study.

As far as the researcher concerned, although there were many studies concerning the effects of those two components of the interaction separately, there was no strong evidence exploring the effect of time pressure and peer feedback on writing performance in exam setting simultaneously. Thus, she could not find any literature related to any possible interactions between peer feedback and time pressure in writing but she could find some other studies concerning with other independent variables. One of these studies was run by Crone, Wright, and Baron (1993) who examined if the time difference had any impact on ethnic/racial minorities or language minorities. The study confirmed that English Second Language (ESL) students scored lower than English First Language (EFL) students irrespective of essay length and that all groups scored lower on the 15-minute essay. However, to determine whether any group was differentially disadvantaged by shorter essays, their standardized differences were computed. They hypothesized that If ESL students were disadvantaged on the shorter essay, then the standardized differences between the ESL and non-ESL examinees would have been larger for the 15- minute essay than for the 30-minute essay. Interestingly, it was revealed that there were no substantial or significant differences between the 15-minute and 30-minute essays for ESL and EFL students within any ethnic/race subgroup. It was shown that the standardized differences between ESL and EFL students were actually smaller with the 15-minute essay for three of the four groups.

VII. CONCLUSION

In this peer feedback research project, the participants not only created and wrote individually but also gave feedback on their peers' contents. Peers had the opportunity to assist each other by swapping ideas about the same topic. As Topping (2000) believed, constructive nature of elaborations in peer correction (instead of peer-competitions) highlights the role of peer feedback, improves verbal communications, facilitates the process of giving and accepting criticism, authenticates and empowers peers' positions. Furthermore, another side effect of peer correction is to train peers to be objective assessors. (Topping, 2000).

As a conclusion, the current study focused on the null hypotheses which were based on the assumption that peer feedback and time pressure would not affect learners' writing performances, there was no interaction between peer feedback and time pressure as well. As the results showed, peer feedback had a significant effect on learners' writing performance and improved it, time pressure did not have any effect on learners' writing performance, and finally there was no interaction between two independent variables in this study, namely peer feedback and time pressure. Thus, the results of the study rejected the first hypothesis and confirmed the second and third hypotheses.

Similar to our study, lots of previous studies confirmed the positive effect of peer feedback on the writings of the learners. Similarly, some of the studies confirmed that time pressure did not affect the writing performance of the learners and some others rejected this result and proved the positive effects of no time restriction on the writing performance of their participants. According to the reviewed literature, it is obvious that the novelty of the present study was related to the second and third hypotheses which were concerned with the effect of time pressure on learners' writing performance, and the interaction between peer feedback and time pressure. It can be claimed that the current study is one of the very few studies which involved time pressure and peer feedback simultaneously.

It was observed that the participants enjoyed the process and their writing skill changed positively. It was also observed that the process of peer review involved the participants in frequent reading and writing, sharpened their reflection, writing knowledge and skills, expanded their motivation and joy of writing, and even improved their vocabulary and punctuation knowledge. Furthermore, their social interaction and involvement were boosted. Moreover, the results indicated that the participants tried to write more accurately. It can be concluded that peer feedback on writing encouraged the participants to expand their knowledge through facing situations which provide them with opportunities to rely on themselves to think critically and improve their autonomy. Furthermore, it was concluded that time pressure did not affect learners' writing performance. In summary, limited previous studies on different writing tests under different timing conditions inferred that giving participants extra time to complete their task did not have any remarkable effect on the nature of their results, scores or even their rank ordering. There is no strong evidence suggesting that there are advantages or disadvantages in giving the participants less or more time to complete their writings. Interestingly, the interaction between peer feedback and time pressure was rejected perhaps because they are two different and separate phenomena.

Based on the results of the current study, there are several theoretical, pedagogical and practical implications. Peer feedback can be recommended based on the concepts of Vygotsky (2000) who emphasized that learning should be accompanied with social interaction processes. Moreover, Krashen (1985) argued that teacher's feedback and correction can cause affective filter which would annihilate students' confidence. Peer feedback can be integrated into all EFL/ESL writing classes from as early stage as possible since it can influence EFL learners' writing ability and accuracy. The nature of feedback and peer feedback should be taught to EFL learners in order to prepare them to use their knowledge appropriately and accurately in their writing production and comprehension skills. Generally, peer feedback- as a worthwhile endeavor to undertake in educational settings- is recommended in designing curriculum. Spending time on reviewing peer texts can be beneficial for the peers' knowledge and time saving for the instructors. Moreover, this idea can increase the interaction among peers and even reduce the affective filter effects. Writing quality can be increased among Iranian EFL learners through receiving peer feedback. Participants are suffering more from lack of knowledge than time restriction. Possibly, by solving Iranian EFL learners' linguistic difficulties and increasing their self-confidence, writing quality can be maximized. Writing quality can gradually improve by using peer feedback. Thus it is recommended that peer feedback should be considered as a task, not only a type of feedback.

Inevitably, there are some limitations in this study that need to be mentioned. Almost every research project is influenced by time limitation and this one also is not an exception. Moreover, the limited number of participants made it difficult to globalize the findings for the wider context.

Eventually, there are some extra suggestions which are supposed to be novel and interesting for further research:

- ❖ Further investigation is appropriate to confirm the effectiveness of standard peer feedback as an effective means of improving L2 writing.
- ❖ Time, anxiety, social and cognitive interactions with peer feedback are worth considering more.
- ❖ Gender differentiation can be studied in other research.
- ❖ Finally, it seems suitable to explore the effect of peer feedback concerning intercultural dimension and students' age simultaneously.

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Nasim Ghanbari holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics. She is an assistant professor at English Department of Persian Gulf University in Bushehr, Iran. Her areas of interest include language assessment, academic writing and writing assessment. Currently, she teaches courses in language testing & assessment, essay writing and research methodology.



Azade Karampourchangi holds an M.A. in TEFL. Her teaching career has begun since 2010. She defended her thesis in February, 2015 in Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch of Bushehr, Iran. The present paper was written based on her thesis. She found herself intrigued by the novel strategies to facilitate language learning. Her areas of interest are "writing assessment" and "teaching methodology".



Mohammad Reza Shamsaddini was born in Kazeroun, Fars province in 1961. He got his B.A. degree in English Literature from Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran in 1989. Then he pursued his studies for M.A degree in TEFL from Tarbiat Modarres University, Tehran, Iran in 1994. He got his PhD degree in TEFL from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India in 2002.

He has been working as an ASSISTANT PROFESSOR in the Department of English in Persian Gulf University, Bushehr, Iran. He has been teaching different courses to B.A and M.A. students in different universities. He has published many articles among which the following can be named:

Indian Journal of Fundamental and Applied Life Sciences, Jaipur, India. Vol.4 (2), April-June 2014 pp. 106-113

International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World, Vol. 7 (3), Nov. 2014, pp. 277- 288.

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His main research interests are: Teaching English as a Foreign/Second Language (EFL/ESL), discourse analysis, syllabus design, English for Specific Purposes (ESP).