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The Effect of Direct and Indirect Corrective Feedback on Elementary Students' Academic Achievement in Urdu Language

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ABSTRACT
This quasi-experimental study investigated the comparative effectiveness of direct corrective feedback (DCF) and indirect corrective feedback (ICF) on elementary students' Urdu language achievement. Despite Urdu's central role in Pakistan's curriculum, little empirical research has explored feedback mechanisms that improve students' writing performance. A sample of 107 students from a public school was divided into three groups: DCF (n = 32), ICF (n = 35), and a control group (n = 40). Over six weeks, the experimental groups received systematic written corrective feedback, while the control group received general comments without corrections. Pre- and post-tests based on the Single National Curriculum (SNC) assessed achievement using a validated rubric (α = 0.82). Statistical analyses (paired-sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA) revealed significant improvement in all groups ($p < .001$), with DCF yielding the highest mean gain ($M = 24.67$, $d = 2.64$) compared to ICF ($M = 20.93$, $d = 2.31$) and control ($M = 9.80$, $d = 1.14$). The ANOVA confirmed that feedback type significantly influenced learning outcomes ($F(2,87) = 21.13$, $p < .001$). The findings affirm that DCF promotes greater linguistic accuracy and retention, while ICF fosters gradual self-correction. The study recommends incorporating structured feedback strategies into Urdu instruction to enhance learners' accuracy, engagement, and reflective writing practices.

Keywords: Corrective Feedback, Urdu Language, Direct Feedback, Indirect Feedback, Academic Achievement, Elementary Education.

Introduction

Corrective feedback (CF) is a fundamental component of effective teaching and learning, playing a vital role in improving students' academic performance and linguistic competence. In language education, corrective feedback functions not only as a mechanism for error correction but also as a means of fostering motivation, engagement, and deeper understanding. Over recent decades, CF has received increasing attention from scholars and teachers worldwide because of its demonstrated impact on language acquisition and learner development.

In the Pakistani context, where Urdu serves as both a national language and a primary

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medium of communication across diverse linguistic communities, the pedagogical role of CF remains insufficiently explored. Error treatment continues to pose challenges for teachers and learners alike. As Ellis (2010) asserts, the study of CF represents a critical intersection between theory and practice because it directly influences classroom pedagogy and learning outcomes. Chandler (2003) and Sheen (2007) found that well-structured feedback enhances grammatical accuracy and lexical control, contributing to meaningful learning, whereas Truscott (2007) argued that some corrective approaches may be ineffective or even detrimental. Guénette (2007) similarly cautioned that feedback lacking contextual sensitivity can reduce its pedagogical value. These debates highlight that learner-related factors motivation, aptitude, and beliefs mediate the effectiveness of feedback interventions (Ellis, 2010).

In Pakistan, Urdu occupies a unique position as both a symbol of national identity and a compulsory academic subject from primary through higher-secondary education. Despite its linguistic and cultural importance, Urdu teaching often suffers from outdated pedagogical methods, insufficiently trained teachers, and an excessive focus on rote learning. Consequently, students' communicative competence particularly in writing remains underdeveloped. Studies such as Kamran and Samar (2020) and Rahim and Odsar (2023) reveal that Urdu instruction frequently neglects skill based, activity-oriented pedagogy and seldom integrates formative feedback practices. As a result, many students complete basic schooling without acquiring adequate proficiency in reading, writing, or analytical interpretation.

Among the four language skills, writing is typically the least developed. It requires not only linguistic knowledge but also organization, coherence, and critical thinking. Yet Urdu writing instruction is often mechanical and examination-driven. Teachers rely mainly on evaluative methods marking or underlining errors without offering explicit guidance for improvement. Consequently, students repeat similar mistakes and fail to internalize correct forms. This pedagogical gap underscores the need for research-based feedback strategies that foster reflection, self-correction, and sustained progress.

Rationale of the Study

Although extensive research worldwide has investigated CF in second-language contexts especially English as a Second or Foreign Language (Bitchener, 2008; Ferris, 2003; Lee, 2008) less focus has been placed on empirical studies examining CF in Urdu language classrooms. Urdu, as both a first and national language, warrants context-specific inquiry into how different CF types influence learners' academic achievement and motivation. Most Pakistani studies focus on English or general pedagogy, leaving a significant empirical gap concerning Urdu instruction.

Furthermore, the cognitive and affective impacts of direct corrective feedback (DCF) and indirect corrective feedback (ICF) have not been systematically compared in Urdu settings. DCF provides the correct form explicitly, while ICF encourages self-correction through learner reflection. Determining which approach better supports Urdu learners at the elementary level can yield valuable insights for teachers and curriculum designers. Linking CF with student motivation also represents an innovative dimension, given that motivation strongly predicts long-term academic engagement (Dörnyei, 2001).

This study therefore aims to fill this gap by empirically examining the effects of DCF and ICF on elementary students' achievement and motivation in Urdu. Employing a quasi-experimental mixed-method design, it seeks to generate both quantitative evidence and qualitative understanding of learner perceptions. The findings will extend CF theory to a new linguistic and cultural context and provide actionable recommendations for

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enhancing Urdu language pedagogy in Pakistan.

Statement of the Problem

Despite Urdu's central role in Pakistan's education system, instruction at the elementary level remains predominantly teacher-centred, with minimal emphasis on formative feedback and learner engagement. Teachers often correct errors without explaining underlying rules or providing opportunities for revision, resulting in repetitive mistakes and shallow learning. Although international research demonstrates the effectiveness of CF, its application in Urdu classrooms has not been systematically investigated. The relative efficacy of direct and indirect feedback in improving learners' academic achievement and motivation likewise remains unknown.

This study addresses these gaps by evaluating how different CF techniques influence elementary-level students' achievement in Urdu. It explores whether feedback can function not only as an error-correction tool but also as a catalyst for deeper understanding and enthusiasm for learning. The results are expected to inform teacher training, assessment practices, and curriculum development, contributing to a more reflective and responsive Urdu language pedagogy in Pakistan.

The objective of this study is to examine the effectiveness of different types of corrective feedback specifically direct corrective feedback (DCF) and indirect corrective feedback (ICF) on elementary students' academic achievement in Urdu. The study aims to determine how these feedback techniques influence students' ability to recognize, understand, and correct linguistic errors in writing and comprehension tasks.

Hypotheses of the Study

H_{01}: There is no significant effect of direct corrective feedback on the academic achievement of elementary-level Urdu students.

H_{02}: There is no significant effect of indirect corrective feedback on the academic achievement of elementary-level Urdu students.

H_{03}: There is no significant difference in academic achievement among students receiving direct corrective feedback, indirect corrective feedback, and no feedback (control group).

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of corrective feedback techniques direct and indirect in enhancing Urdu language achievement among elementary students. It fills a major research gap, as most corrective feedback studies focus on English rather than Urdu. The findings will help teachers adopt evidence-based feedback strategies, improve instructional practices, and align teaching with curriculum-based learning outcomes. Additionally, the study will guide policymakers and teacher trainers in developing professional development programs to strengthen Urdu teaching quality and student performance at the foundational level.

Literature Review

Corrective feedback (CF) refers to teacher responses that indicate errors in students' language production and guide them toward correct usage (Ellis, 2010). In second language acquisition and writing instruction, CF serves as a crucial instructional tool that connects assessment with learning by allowing students to notice linguistic gaps and refine their output. Among the commonly used CF types, Direct Corrective Feedback (DCF) where the teacher provides the correct form and Indirect Corrective Feedback

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(ICF) where the teacher only signals the error have been widely explored. Both techniques aim to enhance accuracy, though they differ in cognitive demand: DCF offers explicit correction, whereas ICF encourages learner reflection and self-correction.

Empirical studies have consistently shown that CF positively influences students' writing accuracy. Chandler (2003) found that direct written feedback significantly improved grammatical precision and fluency. Similarly, Sheen (2007) reported that focused DCF produced lasting gains in learners' written accuracy, while Bitchener (2008) observed that targeted feedback enhances learners' control over specific grammatical structures. However, Truscott (2007) argued that some forms of written error correction may not lead to long-term improvement and could even be counterproductive. In contrast, Guénette (2007) emphasized that ineffective design or failure to control external variables often leads to poor outcomes, not the feedback itself. Subsequent reviews, such as Ferris (2003), concluded that when feedback is clear, timely, and followed by opportunities for revision, it yields substantial learning benefits.

Within the South Asian and particularly Pakistani educational context, studies on corrective feedback remain limited, especially in Urdu language teaching. Research indicates that Urdu instruction at the elementary level often relies heavily on rote memorization and traditional assessment practices, with minimal attention to formative feedback or systematic error correction (Kamran & Samar, 2020; Rahim & Odsar, 2023). Teachers typically mark students' errors without offering explanations or guidance, leading to repetitive mistakes and weak writing competence. While the impact of CF has been extensively examined in English as a Second Language (ESL) settings, there is a lack of empirical evidence regarding its role in Urdu classrooms particularly in comparing the relative effects of DCF and ICF.

Therefore, existing literature underscores the proven effectiveness of corrective feedback internationally but reveals a clear gap in Urdu-language pedagogy. Understanding how different CF techniques influence Urdu learners' academic achievement and motivation is essential for enhancing instructional practices. Moreover, aligning corrective feedback approaches with the formative assessment principles promoted in Pakistan's Single National Curriculum (SNC) and Punjab Assessment Policy Framework (APF) can lead to more meaningful learning outcomes. Hence, this study seeks to address this gap by experimentally examining the impact of direct, indirect, and no corrective feedback on elementary students' Urdu language performance.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with a *pre-test–post-test* control group structure to examine the effects of different types of corrective feedback direct, indirect, and no feedback on students' academic achievement in Urdu language learning. The quasi-experimental approach was adopted because the participants were drawn from intact classes rather than randomly assigned to groups, ensuring ecological validity within the school setting. The independent variable was the type of corrective feedback (direct, indirect, and control), while the dependent variable was students' academic achievement in Urdu.

Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised elementary-level students enrolled in public schools of Lahore District, where Urdu is taught as a compulsory subject. From this population, one public high school was selected based on accessibility, administrative

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consent, representation of typical government schooling conditions, and consideration of financial and logistical constraints. From the selected school, three intact Grade VIII classes, comprising a total of 107 students, were chosen through purposive sampling. These intact classes were then randomly assigned to one of three groups:

Group A (Direct Corrective Feedback Group) 32 students
Group B (Indirect Corrective Feedback Group) 35 students
Group C (Control Group) 40 students

Each group was taught by the same Urdu teacher to ensure consistency in instructional approach and classroom environment during the intervention period. The groups were comparable in terms of age, prior Urdu performance, and classroom environment, as confirmed through the pre-test results.

Instruments

An Urdu Proficiency Test was developed to measure students' academic achievement in alignment with the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) specified in the Single National Curriculum (SNC) for Urdu. The test was constructed using the principles of Item Response Theory (IRT) to ensure reliability, validity, and appropriate item difficulty levels. It comprised short composition tasks and grammar-based items designed according to Punjab Examination Commission (PEC) standards, ensuring consistency with standardized assessment practices and national curricular benchmarks. A pilot test was conducted to refine the items, and necessary revisions were made based on item analysis results to enhance the reliability and overall quality of the instrument. The final version of the test will be validated by assessment experts to ensure its accuracy, content validity, and contextual relevance to the Urdu language learning objectives.

The same test was administered as both the pre-test and post-test to measure students' achievement over the intervention period.

Pre-test: Assessed baseline proficiency before the treatment.
Post-test: Administered after the treatment to measure improvement.

Scoring Rubric:

A standardized scoring rubric was developed to ensure objectivity in assessing students' academic achievement. The test and rubric were validated by a panel of three language education experts, and a pilot study was conducted to ensure reliability. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.82 indicated acceptable internal consistency.

Treatment Procedure

The experimental phase lasted for six weeks and included structured teaching sessions in Urdu writing.

Group A (Direct Feedback):
Received explicit corrections from the teacher. Errors were underlined, and correct forms were provided directly on students' written work.

Group B (Indirect Feedback):
Received coded or underlined indications of errors without the correct form being provided. Students were guided to identify and self-correct their mistakes.

Group C (Control Group):
Received no written feedback on errors; only general comments such as "good" or "try again" were provided.

All groups covered the same Urdu lessons and writing activities, ensuring that only the feedback type differed among them.

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Data Collection Procedure

Pre-test Administration:

All three groups completed the Urdu achievement pre-test to determine their initial performance levels.

Treatment Phase:

The intervention (feedback types) was implemented during regular Urdu writing lessons over six weeks.

Post-test Administration:

After the treatment, the same achievement test (with equivalent difficulty) was administered to assess progress.

Scoring and Data Recording:

Students' pre- and post-test scripts were evaluated using the rubric. Scores were recorded and tabulated for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (Version 26). Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were computed to summarize pre-test and post-test scores. To determine the significance of differences among the three groups, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. Where significant differences were found, post hoc (Tukey) tests were used to identify which groups differed significantly. A *p*-value of < 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results and Analysis

Academic Achievement

Objective: To analyze the impact of corrective feedback techniques direct corrective feedback (DCF), indirect corrective feedback (ICF), and no feedback (control) on students' academic achievement in Urdu.

Table 1: Paired-sample t-tests for academic achievement.

Group	N	Pre M (SD)	Post M (SD)	*t*-value	*p*-value	Cohen's d
DCF	32	49.93 (9.04)	74.60 (3.94)	14.47	<.001	2.64
ICF	35	49.80 (8.81)	70.73 (4.41)	12.63	<.001	2.31
Control	40	49.37 (8.96)	59.17 (4.29)	6.25	<.001	1.14

All three groups showed significant improvement from pre-test to post-test ($p < .001$), indicating that participation in writing activities contributed positively to learning outcomes. However, the magnitude of improvement differed notably across groups. The DCF group showed the largest gain (mean increase ≈ 24.67 points, d = 2.64), reflecting a very large effect size. The ICF group also demonstrated a substantial improvement (mean increase ≈ 20.93 points, $d = 2.31$), indicating a large effect. The control group improved modestly (mean increase ≈ 9.80 points, $d = 1.14$), which is a medium-to-large effect but notably smaller than those of the feedback groups. These results suggest that both forms of corrective feedback were effective in enhancing Urdu language achievement, with direct feedback yielding the greatest improvement in post-test performance.

Figure 1: Achievement Gain by Groups

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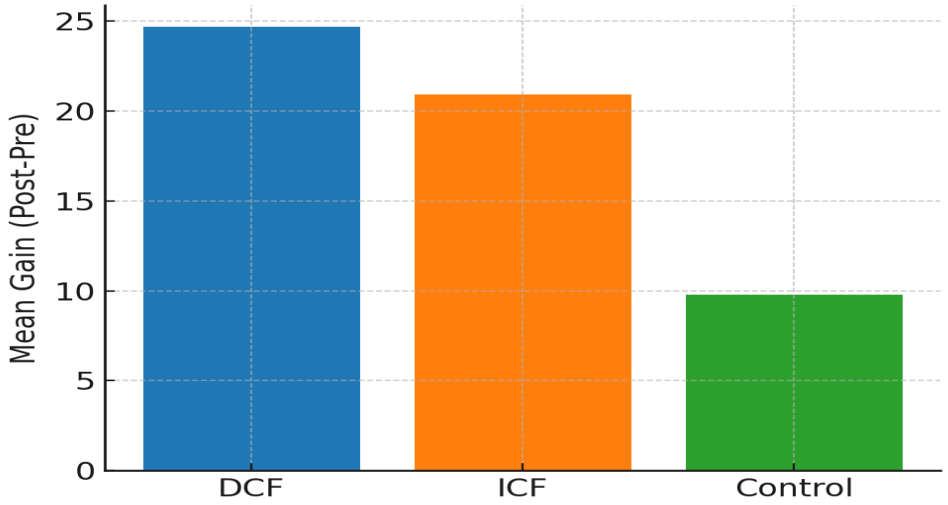

Figure 2: Pre Vs Post Achievement by Group

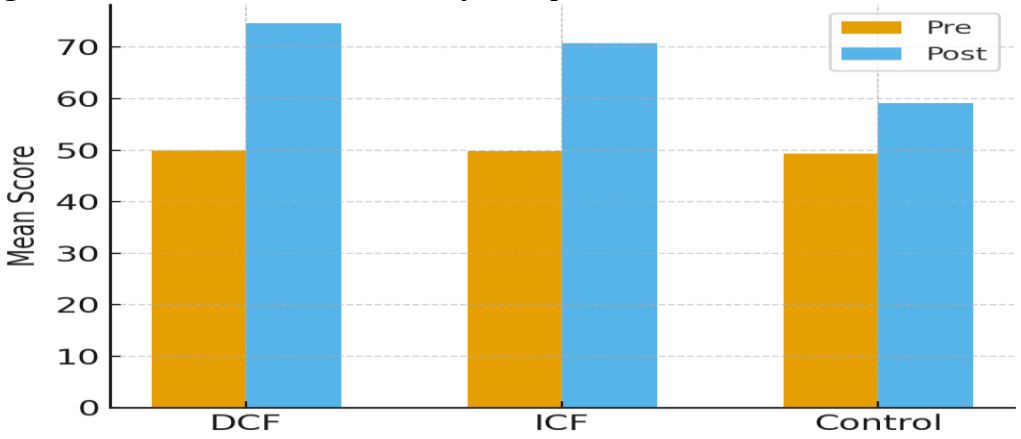

Table 2: One-way ANOVA for achievement gains

Effect	F	p-value
Group	21.13	<.001

A one-way ANOVA conducted on gain scores revealed a significant difference among the three groups ($F(2, 87) = 21.13$, $p < .001$). Post hoc (Tukey) tests indicated that the Direct Corrective Feedback group outperformed both the Indirect Feedback and Control groups, while the Indirect Feedback group also scored significantly higher than the Control group. These results confirm that the type of corrective feedback significantly influenced students' improvement in Urdu achievement.

Findings

All groups improved significantly from pre- to post-test; however, the DCF group achieved the highest gains.
Both DCF and ICF were significantly more effective than no feedback.
Direct feedback resulted in the largest effect size (d = 2.64), confirming its superior efficacy.
One-way ANOVA confirmed that differences in post-test achievement were due to the feedback intervention.

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Discussion

The results align with previous studies (Chandler, 2003; Sheen, 2007; Ellis, 2010) emphasizing the role of direct feedback in promoting grammatical accuracy and written performance. The strong effect size observed for DCF supports the notion that explicit error correction helps learners internalize correct language forms more efficiently. In contrast, the moderate gains in the ICF group suggest that self-correction, while beneficial, may require more time and teacher guidance to yield similar outcomes. These findings provide empirical support for implementing systematic corrective feedback practices in Urdu language classrooms and contribute to the broader understanding of feedback effectiveness in non-English contexts.

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