

Corrective Feedback in Speaking in Relation to Error Types in Iranian EFL Classrooms

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between corrective feedback in speaking in relation to different error types in Iranian EFL classrooms. Sixty Iranian learners participated in an Oxford Placement Test (OPT) to have a homogeneous sample. Then forty learners whose scores were 2 SD above the mean were ordered alphabetically and even numbers were classified as corrective feedback (experimental) group and odd numbers were classified as non-corrective feedback (control) group. For pre- and post-tests both groups received the same topic for speaking. During the course, the teachers gave them different speaking topics and tried to correct their phonological, grammatical, and lexical errors using different types of feedback in the experimental group, but the basis for the control group was the same as traditional speaking classes. All interactions were recorded on the teachers' laptops. After transcribing the interactions and analyzing the data, it was revealed that the experimental group had a better performance than the control groups in the posttest. Furthermore, it was concluded that recast type of feedback and grammatical errors were the most frequent types in the posttest. These findings implicate the importance of using implicit types of feedback regarding to different errors.

Keywords: corrective feedback, errors, non-corrective feedback, speaking, language learning

I. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the most important skills in our daily routines, because people want to have a conversation to transfer their ideas. When learning this skill, learners have problems not only in pronunciation and grammar but also in using correct words in a conversation. Thus, the teacher needs to play

an important role. At this time, the teacher has to give some correction regarding the error made by the learner. Error is a sign of learning made by the learners who have been learning another language and have not fully learned language system yet (Fauziati, 2011). When a teacher corrects learners, it may help them improve their ability in their speaking and increase their self-confidence (Mackey & Philip, 1998). So giving feedback is one of the important steps in improving learners' progress in speaking. Ur (1996, p.242) defines feedback as "information that is given to the learner about his/her performance". Lewis (2002) also believes feedback is the information to show the learners' progress and weaknesses. The usefulness of teacher feedback, in writing or speaking, is a subject of heated discussion.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Paying attention to the importance of corrective feedback in language learning, a large number of studies focused on the relationship between corrective feedback and different areas in language learning. In one study, Lalande (1982) compared two groups, one with direct and the other with indirect feedback, during a semester. It was indicated that the group receiving indirect feedback had more accuracy by the end of the semester. In a study by Mackey, Gass, and McDonough (2000), 17 learners received feedback. After recording their interactions, it was revealed that recasts took more time for learners to perceive. They believe that it could be because of the lack of negotiated meaning in recast. In another study, Ferries and Roberts (2001) found that those groups, which received no feedback, had no improvement in their learning.

Panova and Lyster (2002) examined types of feedback used by the teacher. 10 hours of interaction was transcribed and categorized according to Lyster and Ranta's (1997) model of corrective feedback. Recast was the most frequent implicit type of feedback, which provided little opportunities for other types of feedback that encourage learner-negotiated repair. In a study, Chandler (2003) examined two English as a Second Language (ESL) graduate groups receiving direct or indirect feedback in a 14-week semester. The results showed that indirect feedback and students' self-editing activity help accuracy.

Furthermore, Ellis, Loewen, and Erlam (2006) conducted a study to explore the effect of implicit and explicit feedback in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). They regarded metalinguistic feedback as explicit feedback and recast as implicit one; and saw their effect on the acquisition of past tense -ed of low intermediate learners of English in doing communicative tasks. The results of this study demonstrated that explicit feedback had superiority over implicit feedback based on the learners' knowledge.

In addition, regarding to the relationship between error types and corrective feedback in relation to immediate learner repair, Lyster (1998a) conducted a research. The 921 learners' errors of this study were coded as grammatical, phonological, lexical, or unsolicited use of L1 (English). The analysis of the data showed that 61% of learners' errors were followed by teachers' corrective feedback, which 33% of this

amount led to learner repair. The findings revealed that the teachers were systematic in their provision of feedback. Moreover, the interaction between error type and feedback type was significant, confirming the influence of feedback on error types.

In another study, Vaezi, Zand-Vakili, and Fard Kashani (2011) investigated the types of feedback used by Iranian teachers in three error types (grammatical, phonological, and lexical). 18-hour-interaction was transcribed based on Lyster and Ranta's (1997) model. The findings showed that the learners prefer more recast in their grammatical and phonological errors. In addition, lack of Iranian teachers' feedback in relation to lexical errors was significant.

Considering all of the mentioned studies, one of the purposes in learning a language is developing the ability to speak. Unfortunately, because of lack of knowledge of some teachers in using the correct feedback, some learners lose their self-confidence in speaking or even learning a language. Thus, paying much attention to the type of error made by learners and choosing the correct feedback is essential in a language classroom. Accordingly, this study aims at assessing different types of errors and finding the most applicable feedback in the classroom by answering to the following three research questions:

1. Is there any difference between Corrective Feedback (CF) and Non-Corrective Feedback (NCF) groups regarding different types of error and feedback?
2. Is there any significant difference between different types of corrective feedback given by the teacher in the speaking classroom?
3. Is there any significant difference between different types of error made by the learners in the speaking classroom?

Based on these three research questions, there are three null hypotheses:

H₀1. There is no difference between CF and NCF groups regarding different types of error and feedback.

H₀2. There is no difference between different feedbacks given by the teacher in the speaking classroom.

H₀3. There is no difference between different errors made by the learners in the speaking class.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

This study was conducted in a period of 4 weeks in an adult English institute, Isfahan, Iran. The classes were held twice a week and every session was for 2 hours. 60 male and female learners whose ages ranged from 19 to 35 participated in this study randomly. All of them had bachelor degrees in different

majors and Persian was their first language. The two teachers were female with 5 years of experience in teaching English to adult foreign language learners. They were chosen because of their interest to participate in this study.

B. Instruments

OPT was one of the instruments of this study, which is among the most reliable and valid tests. It consisted of 60 multiple-choice questions in vocabulary and grammar, which the learners have to answer in 30 minutes. The other instruments of this study were some speaking topics from a book named “101 IELTS Speaking Topics” for the learners from which the teachers chose some popular topics based on their own ideas. The next instruments were a short written summary of different corrective feedback types (appendix A) and also different error types (appendix B), which were both based on Lyster and Ranta’s (1997) model, for the teacher in experimental group to be familiar with different types of feedback and error. The last instrument was an audio recording software installed on the teachers’ laptops to get both the teachers’ and learners’ utterances. Recording software on teachers’ laptops was chosen to prevent the distraction of learners.

C. Procedure

To have a homogenous sample, OPT was administered. To have an advanced and homogeneous sample of learners, only those whose scores were 2 SD above the mean were included in the study. Then, the learners were ordered alphabetically, even numbers were classified as CF group, and odd numbers were classified as NCF group. For pretest, one speaking topic from a book named “101 IELTS Speaking Topics” was chosen, which was administered as the posttest, too. All the learners spoke about it and the teacher gave feedback to CF group but not to NCF group. During the 16-hour interaction of each class, the teachers gave different topics for speaking and produced audio recordings by a recording software on their laptops for later analysis. Every session the teacher chose a topic in the class, the learners discussed it, and the teacher gave feedback to CF group, if needed. Interactions in NCF group were based on the traditional type of speaking classes. The recordings for both classes were transcribed and those related parts to feedback and errors were examined based on Lyster and Ranta’s (1997) model.

D. Data Analysis

In order to see the differences between the two groups in the use of corrective feedback, the quantitative analyses of data were conducted. To analyze the data, statistical software IBM SPSS version 22 (SPSS Inc., 2014) was used. In order to answer the research questions, descriptive statistics and t-tests for

each group were calculated. Moreover, the researchers used Lyster and Ranta's (1997) model while checking the transcriptions to decide for every type of feedback and error.

IV. RESULTS

A. The Results of OPT

The participants of this study were 60 male and female Iranian learners. At the beginning, they participated in an OPT which ~~was~~ consisted of 60 multiple-choice questions. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics obtained from the first instrument. It indicated that the mean of learners' scores in OPT was 62.48 (SD=23.63).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of OPT

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
OPT	60	12.00	94.00	62.48	23.63

B. The Difference between CF and NCF Groups

The first goal of this research was answering the first research question, which sought to investigate the difference between CF and NCF groups. To answer this question, it is necessary to compare the groups in pre- and post-tests. As Table 2 shows, there is no difference between the groups at the beginning of the study.

Table 2: One-Sample Test for Pretest of Both Groups

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Pretest CF Group	25.00	19	.00	14.45	13.24	15.65
Pretest NCF Group	25.88	19	.00	14.45	13.28	15.61

Comparing both groups in the posttest shows that the CF group outperformed NCF group significantly. The T-test results of the post-test indicated that the mean difference for CF group is 16.77 while for NCF group is 14.97 (Table 3).

Table 3: One-Sample Test for Posttest of Both Groups

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Posttest CF Group	39.58	19	.00	16.77	15.88	17.66
Posttest NCF Group	30.64	19	.00	14.97	13.95	15.99

C. The Different Types of Feedback

The second research question of this study was about the difference between different types of feedback given by the teacher in the speaking classroom. Table 4 shows the different feedback types in the pre- and post-tests for both groups.

Table 4: Feedback Types for Both Groups in Pre- and Post-test

Feedback Types	CF Group				NCF Group			
	Pretest		Posttest		Pretest		Posttest	
	F*	P**	F	P	F	P	F	P
Explicit Correction	80	40.2	13	8.17	71	35.85	64	37.2
Clarification Request	9	4.52	39	24.52	12	6.06	9	5.23
Metalinguistic Feedback	32	16.08	26	16.35	37	18.68	33	19.18
Elicitation	16	8.04	20	12.57	21	10.6	18	10.46
Repetition	58	29.14	0	0	50	25.25	46	26.74
Recast	4	2.01	61	38.36	7	3.53	5	2.9
TOTAL	199		159		198		172	

* F (Frequency), **P (Percentage)

As presented in Table 4, CF group received explicit correction as the most and recast as the least frequent types of feedback in the pretest. In the posttest, the total number of feedbacks decreased, but recast was the most frequent one. Long (1996, p.434) defines recasts as “utterances which rephrase a child’s utterance by changing one or more sentence components (subject, verb, or object) while still referring to its central meanings”. The interesting point was the frequency of repetition, which was 0. Figure 1 shows the different types of feedbacks in the pre- and post-tests for CF group.

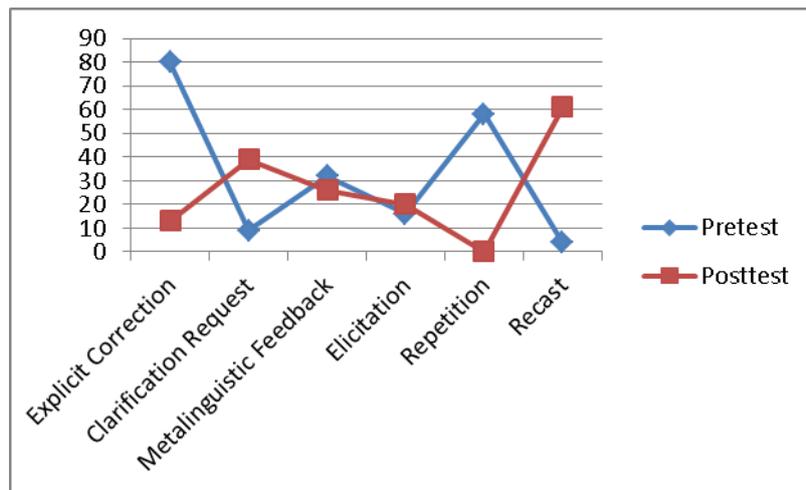


Figure 1: Feedback Types of CF Group in Pre- and Post-Test

NCF group received explicit correction in the pretest, as the most frequent feedback, same as CF group, which was the most one in the posttest, too. While recast is the least frequent feedback in the pretest, clarification request is the least one in the posttest (Table 4). The comparison between different feedback types for NCF group is shown in Figure 2.

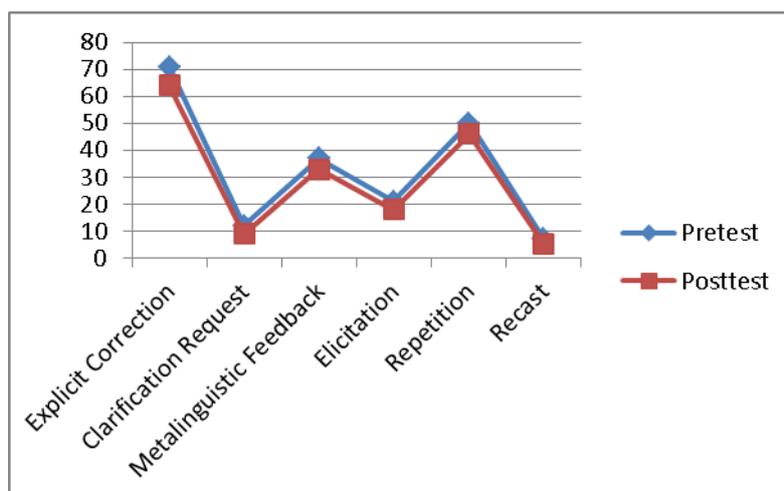


Figure 2: Feedback Types of NCF Group in Pre- and Post-Test

B. The Different Types of Errors

The third research question of this study was about the different types of errors made by the learners in the speaking class. As Table 5 shows, at the beginning of the course grammatical errors were a lot, but at the end of the course the total number of errors highly decreased among the learners of both groups but still it was the most frequent type in the posttest.

Table 5: Error Types for Both Groups in Pre- and Post-Test

Error types	CF Group				NCF Group			
	Pretest		Posttest		Pretest		Posttest	
	F*	P**	F	P	F	P	F	P
Phonological	75	37.68	58	36.47	69	34.84	61	35.46
Lexical	33	16.58	29	18.23	34	17.17	29	16.86
Grammatical	91	45.72	72	45.28	95	47.97	82	47.67
TOTAL	199		159		198		172	

* F (Frequency), **P (Percentage)

A comparison between error types in the pre and post-tests of CF group showed that in the pretest, the most frequent error was the grammatical error, and the least frequent error was lexical one. In addition, grammatical error was still the most frequent one in the posttest (Figure 3).

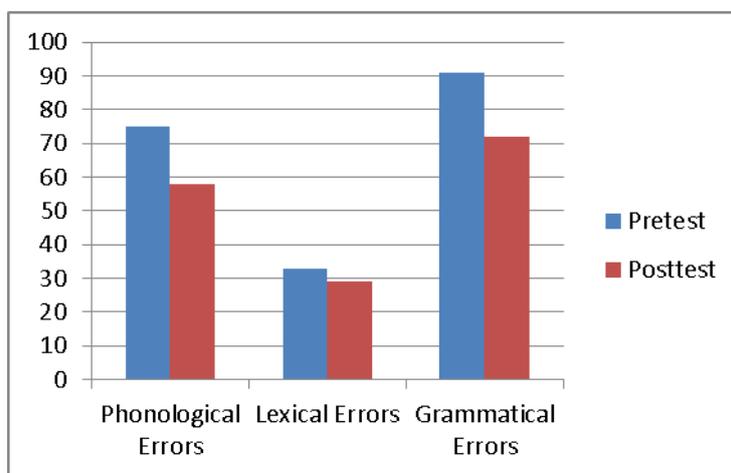


Figure 3: Error Types in Pre- and Post-Test for CF Group

Figure 4 shows that NCF group was similar to CF group. The most frequent error type in both the pre- and post-tests for this group was grammatical one, and the least frequent type of error was lexical error.

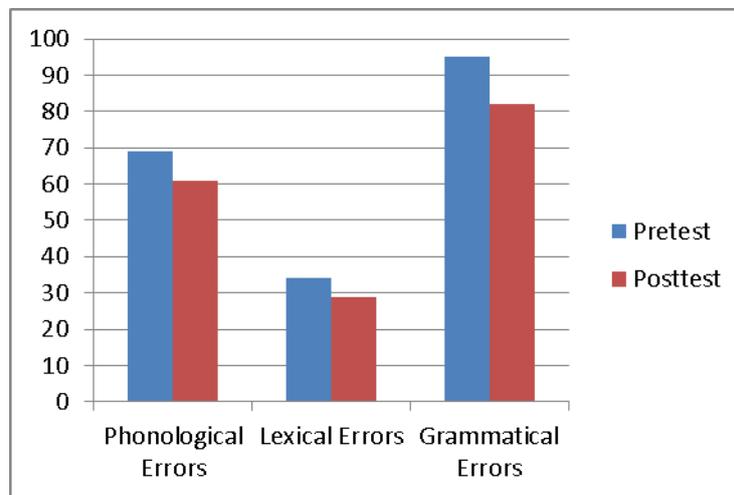


Figure 4: Error Types in Pre- and Post-Test for NCF Group

It was indicated that in both of the groups the learners had problems in using correct grammatical and phonological forms. So it is important to give more feedback to these areas and help learners avoid making an error twice or more.

V. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the difference between CF and NCF groups regarding different feedback and error types among Iranian EFL learners. As the result section of this study showed, the learners in CF group changed their reaction while receiving feedback. At the beginning of the study, they preferred to receive more explicit feedback types; such as explicit correction, repetition, and metalinguistic feedback but moving to the posttest, they understood implicit types of feedback such as recast, clarification request, and elicitation more. It showed that the learners were not aware of their mistakes at the beginning of the study, but gradually, they paid more attention to their sentences.

The present study was designed to find answers to its three research questions. The first one was related to the difference between CF and NCF groups. The results of this study indicated that there was a significant difference between both groups, so the answer to the first question is YES. Moreover, correction had a positive effect on CF group from the pre-test to the post-test. Same as the other studies, the group that received corrections performed better during the course and had a better reaction to the feedbacks provided by the teacher (Lalande, 1982; & Lyster, 1998).

The second question was about the different types of feedback. The findings of this study rejected the second hypothesis, because there was a significant difference between feedback types from the pre-test to the post-test in CF group. As they preferred to use explicit feedback more at the beginning of the study, but in the posttest implicit feedback was used the most. The results of this study were similar to Lyster and Ranta's (1997) study, because the most frequent type of feedback in their study was recast; but they believed recast and explicit correction lead to nothing more than a mere repetition. As stated in all of the studies mentioned previously, recast was the feedback type that the teachers in CF groups preferred to use, moving to the end of the of the course (Mackey, *et al.*, 2000; and Panova & Lyster, 2002). Contrary to the results of this study, Ellis *et al.*, (2006) revealed that explicit correction is the most frequent type of feedback.

The third research question was looking for some evidence related to the different error types. In this study, grammatical error was the most frequent error in the pre-test and post-test for both groups. Therefore, the third research hypothesis is rejected, too. The results of this study were in line with Vaezi, *et al.*, (2011) and Doughty and Varela (1998) in which they concluded the learners prefer to make more grammatical and phonological errors.

The analysis of the results highlighted the advantages of using corrections. The first advantage is to help learners to think and be able to self-edit, not to do a mere repetition. The second advantage is the point that giving time to learners can help them find their errors and try to improve their language using the best type of feedback. Even more study is suggested to find the different types of error and feedback in different proficiency levels among EFL learners. The findings of this study can be useful in all educational areas in foreign or second language, because it has its implications in both learning and teaching.

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APPENDIX A. Different Types of Spoken Corrective Feedback

According to Lyster and Ranta (1997), there are six different types of feedback, which are introduced in this section:

1. Explicit Correction

Ellis, et al., (2006) defined it as an explicit view of the correct form. When the teacher provides the correct form, he/she clearly indicates that what the student had said was incorrect.

Example 1(Tedick and Gortari, 1998):

Student: the coyote, the bison and the cr.... Crane

Teacher: and the crane. We say crane.

2. Clarification requests

It is a feedback type that can refer to problems in comprehensibility or accuracy or both (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Using some phrases such as 'pardon me' and 'I don't know' are the examples of this feedback type.

Example 2(Tedick and Gortari, 1998):

Student: Can, can I made a card on the for my little brother on the computer?

Teacher: Pardon?

3. Metalinguistic feedback

In this feedback, the teacher poses questions or provides information based on the formation of the student's utterance without providing the correct form, by using some sentences such as, 'Do we say it like that?'

Example 3 (Tedick and Gortari, 1998):

Student: "Uhm, a, a elephant. A elephant growls."

Teacher: "Do we say a elephant?"

4. Elicitation

As Lyster and Ranta (1997) state the teacher directly elicits the correct form from the student by asking questions (e.g., "How do we say that in English?"), by pausing to allow the students to complete the teacher's utterance (e.g., "It's a") or by asking students to reformulate the utterance (e.g., "Say that again.>").

Example 4 (Tedick and Gortari, 1998):

Student: "...well, there's a stream of perfume that doesn't smell nice..."

Teacher: "So a stream of perfume, we'll call that a ...?"

5. Repetition

In a repetition, the teacher repeats the ill-formed part of the student's utterance, with a change in intonation (Panova and Lyster, 2002) or on the other hand, it can be repeated usually with rising intonation and stress to highlight the error (Lyster, 2004).

Example 5 (Tedick and Gortari, 1998):

Student: "an ... an giraffe?"

Teacher: "an giraffe?"

6. Recast

According to Lyster and Ranta (1997), in recast the teacher implicitly reformulates the student's error or provides the correction without directly indicating that the student's utterance was incorrect.

Example 6 (Farrar, 1990):

Child: the ball

Mother: Yes, the ball is rolling.

APPENDIX B. Different Types of Errors

Lyster (1998b) divided errors to three categories with some sub-categories, which are mentioned as:

1. Grammatical Errors
 - a. Errors in using closed classes (determiners, prepositions, pronouns)
 - b. Grammatical gender (wrong determiners, non-adjective agreement)
 - c. Pluralization, negation, question formation, and word order
2. Lexical Errors
 - a. Inaccurate and inappropriate choices of lexical items in nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives
 - b. Non-target derivations (incorrect use of prefixes/suffixes)
3. Phonological Errors
 - a. Decoding errors when learners read aloud
 - b. Pronunciation of silent letters
 - c. Addition or omission