

The Impact of Explicit Error Correction on Field Dependent and Field Independent Learners' Speaking

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Abstract – This study was an attempt to investigate the comparative impact of explicit error correction on field dependent and field independent learners' speaking. To fulfill the purpose of the study 60 female elementary EFL learners were selected from among a total number 103 through their performance on a sample piloted KET. Based on the results, the participants were given the personality trait Group Embedded Figure Test to distinguish groups of field dependent including 33 and field independent including 27 learners. To make sure that the two groups are homogenous in terms of their speaking ability, the scores of speaking section of KET rated by two raters were compared and the results indicated that the two experimental groups were homogeneous before the treatment. Fifteen sessions were held; each session lasted 2 hours dedicating 15 minutes to speaking at the beginning of the class and 15 minutes at the final part of the class while the participants received explicit error correction. Administrating an independent t- test based on the results of the speaking posttest indicated that FD learners benefitted significantly more than FI ones from being exposed to explicit error correction and outperformed them in their speaking ability.

Keywords: explicit error correction, field dependent, field independent, speaking

1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking as one of the most important parts of communication has a crucial role in humans' conversation. (Lindblad, 2011). According to Chastain (1988) speaking is not limited to just learning grammatical rules or vocabulary memorization. "Speaking is a process of message and information that leads to produce utterances orally to meet special purposes" (Munurung, 2015, p. 45). It is a vehicle that let the students to take part in class activities giving a chance of expressing themselves and their ideas, so it promotes learning. Having opportunities to speak the language motivates students to learn during listening and reading activities (Chastain, 1988). Accordingly, she defines speaking as the performance of the speakers' competence which requires language learners to activate their knowledge to produce a message.

As Rivers (1981) argues, speaking is used twice as much as reading and writing in our communication. Hence, developing speaking skills is of great importance in EFL programs. Therefore, success in learning a language is estimated in terms of ability to carry out a conversation in target language. So, it is considered as the prior skill for most of the English learners (Florez, 1999). Its importance comes from the point that it helps students acquire EFL speaking skills, thus they can communicate naturally with native speakers. Furthermore, if the students are provided with the right speaking activities, it can raise their motivation and make

English classroom a fun and active place to be (Celce-Murcia, 2001). On the other hand, teachers must have enough knowledge to choose the best techniques for correcting learners' errors to promote their oral proficiency (Swain, 1985).

When speaking occurs in a nonnative environment, making errors are inevitable (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). Firstly, it is important to know what an error is. An error according to Longman dictionary is defined as "the use of a linguistic item in a way that a fluent or native speaker of the language regards as showing faulty or incomplete learning (Richards & Platt, 1988). It is declared that many errors occur because of the difference between L1 and L2 structures (Martin, 1996). So, the error correction is a crucial issue which is supported by many researchers such as (Long, 1977; Swain, 1985; Lightbown & Spada, 1999), who claimed that error correction is a necessary technique for each teacher to have. However, the explicit one which was the concern of this study was theoretically supported by some schools of thought such as behaviorism claiming that it is useful in order to prevent incorrect habit formation. Moreover, as Long (1977) maintains, correction will become less effective if the time between the performance of the skill and the correction increases. This kind of error correction is preferred by the learners who want to have immediate correction of their errors (Lightbown, 1990).

According to Rahimi and Dastjerdi (2012), while learners communicate and their errors are corrected and eliminated the process of learning will be reinforced. However, as teachers, we must evaluate the result of using different strategies in our classroom and make our decision on when to do error correction. It is also necessary to consider the learners' different personality and study abilities. Teachers should treat different students in different ways (Jing, Xiadong, & Yu, 2016). This may happen through considering the importance of the matter of learning attitudes toward correction (Sorayaei Azar & Molavi, 2012). Hence, to have an ideal situation of learning, the personality aspects or cognitive styles of the learners should be taken in to account (Messick, 1976).

1.1. The Importance of Speaking Skill

Among all the four macro English skills, speaking seems to be the most important skill required for communication (Zaremba, 2006). According to Shabani (2013), speaking is defined as a constitutional and challenging part of language in EFL context. An efficient speaker of a foreign language needs to know beyond the linguistic components of language, which can enable him/her to remember and retrieve lots of meaningful words in a grammatical and correct way in a relatively short time. In this way, it would be possible for the learners to evaluate their level of success according to their accomplishment of acquiring speaking skill (Febrianti, 2002).

Thus, for most of the people knowing a language equals to speaking it (Richards & Reynanda, 2002). The importance of this skill lays behind the fact that it is accompanied by other skills and sub skills such as pronunciation, collocations and vocabularies which can create an effective English speaking performance altogether (Ur, 1996).

Since most of the students have limited exposure to English speakers or members of community, therefore the teachers' duty is to provide more situations and activities for students to strengthen their speaking competence (Zhang, 2009).

Therefore, providing students with the variety of situations and frequent speaking tasks plays a significant role in the improvement of students' fluency when speaking (Tam, 1997).

1.2. Different Aspects of Error Correction

Making errors is a necessary and natural part of learning (Katayama, 2007). It is an essential part in teaching, especially when the goal is accuracy, as producing and repeating the erroneous forms are hazards to learning (Doff, 1995), which may lead to fossilization (Martinez, 2006).

According to Truscott (1999), in order to provide effective correction for a student's error the teacher should firstly determine what that error is. Secondly, presenting the correct form of the learners' errors shouldn't be neglected. For, not letting the learners knowing the correct form may produce the wrong suppository to change even the correct parts of their speech. However, there is an illusion by the learners that not being aware of their errors by the teacher can clarify the teachers' in efficacy or lack of knowledge (Moss, 2000).

1.3. Cognitive Style

The cognitive style of a person has a great impact on his achievements. As Fontana (1995) cites "while children grow, interact with the environment, with cognitive factors and with other maturational variables, such as physique and physical appearance, all these play their part in determining personalities and giving them their rich complexity" (p.191). Accordingly, the point to take in to account is the importance and impact of personality aspects or cognitive styles of the learners to create a better learning situation (Messick, 1976). These attitudes are not only limited to learning process, but also can stretch to a broader scope in peoples' psychological and social domain.

Therefore, any strategy that learners select to receive, perceive, process, restore or transmit the information is related to their cognitive style of learning (Summerville, 1999). In this regard, learning style and personality play important roles in both quality and quantity of the teaching content (Martinez, 2006). However, having a good process of learning and teaching necessitates applying a humanistic attitude rather than depending on traditional approaches (Ndudi & Mkpa, 2003).

There are various types of cognitive styles, which affect learning (Pitters, 2002). Field dependent learning style is a holistic view with a perception of the total parts by its components. Conversely, field independent learning style can be defined as the tendency of an individual to distinguish and separate all the parts of the field, one by one and not as a whole (Witkin, Raskin, Oltman & Karp, 1971).

Considering the matter of learning attitude toward correction is of most importance (Sorayaei Azar & Molavi, 2012). According to Lee (2005), and Wang (2010), there are considerable differences among teachers and learners toward choosing the way and time of correction. Therefore, a teacher should be able to control the context and behavior of the students prior to applying a specified way of correction.

As a teacher teaching in EFL context, it was a matter of interest for the researchers to consider speaking as an important aspect of learning a foreign language. Moreover, an efficient teaching can occur when the learners speak and make errors and those errors are pointed out in

a safe and non-threatening way. As Shabani (2011) states, speaking has received much less attention in acquisition, research, teaching and assessment, so it cannot be denied that this will make speaking to a demanding accomplishment for the learners to achieve (Lindblad, 2011). Many researches have been done to investigate how error correction can enhance the speaking ability and help the learners to speak more effectively. However, it should be kept in mind that teachers should not ignore their students' perception and preferences of language learning and error correction (Horwitz, 1988). On the other hand, there are many other aspects which affect learning such as personality traits. According to William & Burden (2000), learners' traits regarding the subjects which are presented during teaching will affect the way they acquire different points. Some researchers believe that learning process will be more effective through recognizing and identifying learners' traits. There are lots of researches on the effect of different kinds of error correction on different skills but there are few researches in EFL contexts, particularly in Iran, that consider the personality traits as well. So, in this research, the researchers investigated the effect of explicit error correction on field dependent/independent EFL learners' speaking.

The study therefore addressed the following research question:

Q: Does explicit error correction have a significantly different effect on field dependent and field independent EFL learners' speaking?

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

In order to get access to a rather homogeneous sample in terms of general English language proficiency, the researchers piloted a sample of KET among 30 participants with rather similar characteristics of the main participants. Then, the piloted KET was administered on 103 elementary participants studying at Time Language institute in Tehran, Iran. Due to the performance of the students on KET, 60 participants whose scores were one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected. They were then divided in to two experimental groups -field dependents and field independents - according to their performance in personality trait Group Embedded Figure Test. Moreover, one of the researcher's colleagues who had been teaching at elementary level at Time language school cooperated with the researchers in rating the speaking tests. Their inter rater reliability had been established a priori.

2.2. Instrumentation and Materials

2.2.1 Key English Test (KET)

KET was used as an instrument to check the homogeneity of the participants in terms of their English language proficiency. The reliability index of the piloted KET including 65 items was computed using KR-21 and turned out to be .89.

2.2.2 Group Embedded Figure Test

The Group Embedded Figure Test (GEFT) as a paper based test taking 12 minutes was used by the researchers to identity the participants' field dependence/ field independence cognitive style. GEFT is a validated instrument developed by Oltman , Raskin and Witkin(1971) and contains three sections with 25 complex figures from which participants were asked to identify

eight sample forms (labeled A to H). A high score (15-18) means that the candidates could separate the simple figure from the complex figure as field-independents. On the other hand, the low scorers (0-5) on the test were considered field dependents. Candidates with mid-level scores (6-14) were considered to have mixed tendencies and were consequently discarded from the sample. The test developers reported spearman brown reliability coefficient of 0.8 for their instrument.

2.2.3. Speaking Pre-treatment Test

The researchers conducted the speaking part of the KET test in order to make sure that all the selected participants are at the same level of speaking ability at the outset of the study.

2.2.4. Speaking Posttest

After the treatment the speaking part of the KET was administered as the posttest. This test was administered at the end of the course.

2.2.5. Course book

American English file 1 written by Christina Latham_Koeing, Clive Oxenden and mike Boyle published by Oxford University Press (2013) was used as the course book for all of the participants. It consists of 12 units; six units were covered for this study. The tasks and activities cover all the skills and subskills- listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.

2.3. Procedure

Following the piloting and administration of KET, the speaking test and GEFT as described above the treatment began. Both experimental groups - field dependents / field independents- received the same amount of instruction and content by the same teacher. Fifteen sessions were held. Each session lasted two hours dedicating 15 minutes to speaking at the beginning of the class and 15 minutes at the final part of the class.

In the first session, the teacher/researchers described the importance of speaking and error correction to raise the participants' awareness. The participants in both experimental groups were engaged in a variety of speaking activities such as dialog, role-playing, problem-solving tasks, and question and answers. They were mostly divided in to A-B pairs. The teacher gave them two different pictures and asked them to talk about those pictures and share their opinions. The pictures were slightly different and the participants had to work in pairs in order to state all the points about the related picture. For example, one of the participants was given the picture of a plane and another one a photo of a train. They had to speak about the two transportation systems at least for two minutes. As they were doing pair work, the teacher walked through the class monitoring and providing them with explicit error correction if they had errors in their pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary in use. The routine lesson plan was conducted. However, the researchers mostly selected the topics, which were more related to the content of the taught lesson while asking the participants to speak and work in pairs or groups and they were supposed to share their relevant personal experiences. This let the participants to have an extra time to speak and the researchers to identify the errors and explicitly correct them.

As the final step after the treatment was over, a posttest was administered to both 2, field dependents and field independents.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Piloting the KET

A group of 30 elementary EFL learners who had rather the same features of the main participants of the study took part in the pilot study. Based on the results, fifteen malfunctioning items were excluded. The reliability index of the final version of KET including 65 items was computed using KR-21 and turned out to be .89. Furthermore, the reliability index for KET Speaking Pretest and Posttest were .83 and .84 respectively.

Moreover, the inter-rater reliability of the two sets of scores in the pre- treatment and posttest speaking tests were calculated and checked through Pearson correlation coefficient.

3.2. Participant Selection

The KET consisting of 65 items was administered to 103 participants to select homogeneous elementary participants. The descriptive statistics, as represented in Table 1, exhibits that the mean, median and mode of the KET scores, 46.39, 46, and 47, respectively. The normality of the distribution of scores was also checked.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for KET

N	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Skewness Ratio	Kurtosis Ratio
60	46.39	46	47	8.89	.399	-1.930

Based on the results of KET (Table 4.2 above), from among 103 students, those 60 participants whose scores were one standard deviation (8.89) plus and minus the mean (46.39) were selected as the homogeneous elementary participants for the present study. As the next step, the personality trait test (GEFT) was administered. Accordingly, two experimental groups consisting 33 field dependent participants and 27 field independent participants were identified by discarding those who have mix tendencies

3.3 Independent samples t-test (pre-treatment test). The independent samples t-test was performed to compare the two groups' speaking scores on the pre-treatment test.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Two Groups' Speaking Scores ((Average of Two Raters; Pretest)

Group	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
FD	33	15.348	1.439	.250
FI	27	14.963	1.240	.238

Table 2 above is a display of the mean, standard deviation, and number of students for the FD Group ($\bar{x} = 15.35$, $SD = 1.44$, $n = 33$) and FI Group ($\bar{x} = 14.96$, $SD = 1.24$, $n = 27$) on the pre-treatment test of speaking.

Table 3. Skewness and Kurtosis Test of Normality for Two Groups' Speaking Scores (Pre-treatment test)

Group	N	Skewness	Std. Error	Skewness Ratio	Kurtosis	Std. Error	Kurtosis Ratio
FD	33	-.497	.409	-1.217	-.557	.798	-.698
FI	27	-.187	.448	-.417	-.731	.872	-.838

Table 4 below manifests the result of independent t-test comparing the FD and FI groups' speaking scores on the pre-treatment test.

Table 4. Independent Samples Test for Two Groups' Speaking (Pre-treatment test)

Factor	Levene's Test for Variances		T-test for Means			
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Equal variances assumed	.747	.391	1.098	58	.277	.385
Equal variances not assumed			1.115	57.823	.270	.385

The results of independent samples t-test, as appeared in Table 4, indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in speaking scores ($t(58) = 1.10$, $p = .27$, $p > .05$) between the FD and FI Groups. This result led the researchers to conclude that the participants in the two experimental groups were homogeneous in terms of their speaking ability before the treatment.

3.4 Answering the Research Question

3.4.1 Independent samples t-test (posttest)

The researchers provided the related descriptive statistics before explaining the results of independent samples t-test on the posttest; the results of which are set forth in Table 5. The table exhibits the mean, standard deviation, and number of participants for the FD group ($\bar{x} = 16.38$, $SD = 1.10$, $n = 33$), and FI Group ($\bar{x} = 15.20$, $SD = 1.42$, $n = 27$).

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Two Group's Speaking Scores (Average of Two Raters; Posttest)

Group	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
FD	33	16.379	1.090	.189
FI	27	15.204	1.423	.274

The assumption of normality of the data was checked via the ratios of skewness and kurtosis (Table 6).

Table 6. Skewness and Kurtosis Test of Normality for Two Groups' Speaking Scores (Posttest)

Group	N	Skewness	Std. Error	Skewness Ratio	Kurtosis	Std. Error	Kurtosis Ratio
FD	33	-.016	.409	-.039	-.780	.798	-.976
FI	27	-.675	.448	-1.506	.400	.872	.459

As it can be seen in Table 6, the speaking scores are normally distributed as the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their respective standard errors do not exceed the ranges of +/- 1.96.

The results of independent samples t-test that was carried out comparing the speaking scores of the FD and FI groups on the posttest are laid out in table7.

Table7. Independent Samples Test for Two Groups' Speaking (Posttest)

Levene's Test for Variances			T-test for Means			
Factor	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Equal variances assumed	.815	.370	3.622	58	.001	1.175
Equal variances not assumed			3.527	47.976	.001	1.175

As demonstrated in Table 7 above, the significance level of .37 associated with Levene's value is greater than the selected significance level of the study (.05) revealing that the data met the assumption of equality of variance.

Besides, the independent samples t-test found a statistically significant difference ($t(58) = 3.62, p = .001, p < .02$) in speaking measures between the FD and FI participants. Therefore, it was claimed that explicit error correction has a significantly different effect on field dependent and field independent EFL learners' speaking. In fact, it was more effective for the FD participants than the FI ones.

4. DISCUSSION

According to the result of the present study the field-dependent participants outperformed the field-independent ones in the speaking posttest. In other words, they benefited more effectively from being exposed to explicit error correction as the feedback type used by the researchers in the treatment sessions. This might be because they are more interested in receiving feedback, working in groups and having interactions with others. In contrast, field-independents mostly do not pay attention to any feedback (positive or negative), are reluctant to work in groups and have tendency toward working individually. While Field-dependents are really interested in social aspects and humanized contexts in their learning process, Field-

independent participants are not (Kelleher, 1997; Hansen, 1995; Pithers, 2002; Dornyei, 2005). Salmani Nodoshan (2006) believed that field-dependence is not only an advantage but also it can be an effective factor of learning process, because of the high social morale of the learners in this regard. Moreover, Prior and Artusa (2000) state that FD learners are different from FIs on L2 communicative tasks, which was the concern of this study as well. In addition, as Junxia (2011) argues because of the social tendency of FD learners, they look for much more opportunities to have more relationships with their teachers and classmates. Therefore, they are absorbed in activities, which can give them more chances to make their feelings and thoughts in the form of verbal expressions. The present study is in line with the study of (AbdiDawood, 2015) which represented that explicit error correction had a positive effect on learners' accuracy. Moreover, the results of the present research is compatible with that of Kahtz and Kling (1999) revealing that FD learners usually prefer to receive more direct instruction.

5. CONCLUSION

Since the main purpose of the second language learning is being able to communicate in the target language, there have been a lot of research in the literature regarding improvement in communication and oral production. Being a proficient speaker of a foreign language can be considered as a big and stressful challenge. From a pedagogical viewpoint, providing appropriate corrective feedback can lower the learners' stress while committing errors. Iranian field-dependent EFL participants of the present research improved their level of speaking proficiency because of receiving explicit error correction feedback. It clarifies the importance of providing appropriate error correction feedback in EFL settings, which is compatible with the personality trait of the learners. It seems necessary to raise the English language teachers,' teacher trainers', and syllabus designers' awareness towards individual differences of the learners and consideration of the important role of the learners' learning styles in making pedagogical decision particularly selecting feedback type.

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