The Efficiency of Different Types of Corrective Feedback on Vocabulary Development of Iranian English Learners: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

The positive role of corrective feedback is always emphasized in the second/foreign language learning. The purposes of the present study are therefore to recognize learners' lexical errors (the use of inappropriate or incorrect words, phrases or compound words), identify lexical-structural errors (different forms of words (base, noun/verb, adjective/adverb), and word order in a sentence, study and compare the effect of teachers' immediate and oral corrective feedback towards learners' lexical errors on the basis of Lyster and Ranta's corrective discourse model (1997), determine more and less effective types of feedback on the base of learners' response to each type. For this purpose, some intermediate English learners were selected and then were randomly divided into seven groups. Then, all these learners participated in vocabulary pretest. Then, they received different types of corrective feedback provided on the basis of Lyster and Ranta's patterns. The first group was the control and did not receive any types of feedback; the second group received explicit correction, the third group recast, the forth group clarification request, the fifth one metalinguistic feedback, the six one elicitation and the last group received repetition feedback. At the end of the study, all groups were compared with each other by conducting a posttest. The results of variance analysis which has been done by using SPSS software, showed that there was a significant difference between the groups which received negotiation technique (clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition) and the control. As far as the vocabulary proficiency of the learners was concerned, there was a significant difference (p≤0.05) between the pre and post-tests of each groups that received negotiation technique. However, there was no significant difference between the group which received explicit correction and the one which received recast. Also, regarding the vocabulary proficiency, no significant difference was observed between the two groups which received corrective feedback and recast. Correcting the learners' lexical errors by negotiation, especially elicitation, is more easier than other types of feedback.

Keywords: negotiation, lexical errors, response to a feedback.


**Introduction**

Historically speaking, the word feedback has a long usage. Until now, there has been given various definitions and explanations to feedback. Between 1995-2006, in a meta analytic and survey study around the given definitions to feedback, Ridder pointed to the three main concepts and in redefining the feedback, he reached to the concepts of "information", "reaction" (which contains the concept of information), and "cycle" (which contains both information and reaction). As the "information," feedback focuses on the content of message; in the form of "reaction," it means interaction and shows the process of giving and receiving of information; and feedback in the form of "cycle" contains both concepts of information and reaction and also shows the outcome and result of the message (Tayebi et al., 2011).

According to Brown, corrective feedback is an immediate response to an incorrect inappropriate word or phrase; and through corrective feedback the learners will understand their errors and will correct them (Brown, 2007). Lightbown and Spada (1999) know corrective feedback as any clue to learners to correct their errors. In this definition, corrective feedback contains all the teacher's responses to the learners' errors. Regarding the meaning of corrective feedback, Chaudron (1977) also claims that corrective feedback refers to any reaction of the teacher that clearly changes the learners' speaking proficiency; does not confirm learners' response, or asks for its improvement.

Generally, there are three opinions about corrective feedback and its necessity: The first view belongs to a group that believes in applying corrective feedback and argues that error correction in an appropriate condition can help learning a second language (Hendrickson, 1978; Lyster et al., 1999; Smith 2010) and can be helpful in learner's success more than other factors (Harmer, 2007). The second group opposes the first one and has a different view (Ellis, 2009). Some of them believe that error correction never facilitate the learning of second language rather may delay its process (Truthcut, 1999 & Smith, 2010). The third group argues that corrective feedback is a natural part of the learning process of a second language (Smith, 2010). The result of some of these studies focuses on the identifying and classifying of errors, feedbacks, and learners' response to these feedbacks (Lyster and Ranta, 1997).

It can be said that many studies confirm the positive role of corrective feedback in various dimensions of second/foreign language learning (Ohta, 2000; Polio et. al., 1998; Chandler, 2000; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris et. al., 2000; Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Lexical proficiency is an important element of language proficiency and knowing the role of corrective feedback in improving the learners' lexical proficiency is one of the questions of the researchers. In many previous researches, the positive role of corrective feedback is emphasized (Herney, 1998).

Due to necessity of improving lexical proficiency and facilitate the process of second/foreign language learning, doing practical research around the positive or negative role of various feedbacks in Iranian context seems necessary. The purpose of the present study is therefore to investigate and compare the positive or negative effects of different types of corrective feedback on lexical improvement (vocabulary development, Definition plus Collocation in Vocabulary Learning) of Iranian English learners on the basis of Lyster and Ranta's views (1997). For this purpose, the below questions seems important:

1. Is there any significant difference between the control and the groups which received different kinds of Lyster and Ranta's feedbacks?
2. Is there any significant difference among the six groups which received different kinds of Lyster and Ranta's feedbacks?
3. Which type of feedback is more effective and more helpful than others in improving learners' lexical proficiency?

**Theoretical background and practical research**

According to many researchers, oral corrective feedbacks have an important role in facilitating the process of second/foreign language learning (Ohta, 2000; Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Giving an appropriate feedback improves teaching/learning process. Feedback improves learners' self-confidence and motivates them to have constant learning (Moadab et al, 2014).

About the occurrence of errors, there are three different approaches i.e. behaviorism, innatist perspective, and interactionist perspective. Behaviorists believe that the process of error occurrence is inevitable in learning a language. But they try to overcome it by providing an immediate sample of correct answers (Russell, 2009). According to innatist approach, the innate knowledge of universal grammar lead human children to learn the language of their environment at their critical period of growth (Spada and Lightbown, 2006). According to Chomsky's lack of negative evidence, children eliminate their grammatical errors solely on the basis of internal mechanisms and they don't need external feedback from their parents. Therefore, according to this approach and due to the similarity of learning a second language and first language acquisition, the learners' errors should not be correct during learning process. As a follower of interactionist approach, Long (1996) emphasizes on the importance of corrective feedback during negotiated interaction. He believes that when communication is difficult, communicators should interact meaning, and this interaction is considered as an opportunity for language development.

The results of various studies show that in order to achieve a desired result in the process of learning a second/foreign language, learners' errors should be responded, properly (Nicholas, 2013). The effect of corrective feedback on improving verbal and nonverbal proficiency of the learners is evaluated positive by Bitchener (2008). Nassaji (2009) studied the effect of two types of corrective feedback, i.e. explicit correction and elicitation, on grammatical mistakes of a group of second language learners. The result of this investigation shows that explicit correction was more effective than elicitation in a short period of time. Ferris and Roberts (2001) studied those learners who learned English as a second language. The learners were divided into two groups. The first group received corrective feedback and the second one didn't received any types of corrective feedback. They concluded that there was not any significant difference between these two groups and both groups were almost the same in learning English as their second language. Ellis et al (2006) compared the effect of explicit correction and metalinguistic clues on learning English regular past-tense morpheme (-ed). They found that metalinguistic clues was more effective than explicit correction. Bichner et al, (2012) compared the effect of oral and non-oral feedbacks on the writing proficiency of the second language learners. The result of this study shows that both oral and non-oral feedbacks are effective in proper use of definite and indefinite articles, and simple past tense; but these feedbacks had not such an effect on applying appropriate preposition in the writing test of the learners.
As aforementioned, various studies emphasize on the positive effect of the corrective feedback on the different aspects of the second/foreign language learning. The effect of corrective feedback on the "vocabulary learning skill-" as one of the most important aspects of a language learning- is studied, and its positive role on it is proved by these investigations (Bahnz, 1993; Herney, 1998).

Theoretical Framework

1. Strategies for giving feedback and correcting the errors

Between 2006 and 2010, four meta-analytical studies have been done regarding corrective feedback: Russell and Spada (2006), Lee (2010). All these studies definitely confirm the effectiveness of corrective feedback (Lyster et al, 2013). Giving an effective feedback is a multifactorial process in which suitable person and proper pattern initially determine its effectiveness (Richardson BK. 2004). For conducting a successful session of feedback, we should consider some key points such as structure, content, and format of the feedback. The structure of feedback means that feedback sessions should be conducted through mutual agreement between the teachers and learners. It should be conducted at an appropriate time and place. Its content means that the feedback sessions should be short and logical. The language of the feedback sessions should be descriptive and non-evaluative. The learners should consider these sessions as an opportunity to improve their language proficiency. The format and framework of the sessions should be such that the learners have enough time for self-evaluation; and also they should have enough time to evaluate the teacher (Tayebi et al., 2011). We should know that we cannot apply a single strategy for all feedback contexts (Hamer, 1983:44). In other words each situation needs its own specific feedback.

Regarding this point that who should correct the learners' errors, there are various opinions: Sewian (1985) believes in the self-correction feedback. In this type of feedback, the teacher provides some necessary guidelines and information and encourages the learner to correct himself. Paulston and Bruder (1976) emphasize on the peer-correction feedback. Such a feedback happens when the learner's incorrect word or phrase cannot be understood by his classmates and they try to produce correct form of the word or phrase. Leiter (2010) asserts that in a listening/speaking class, all corrections should be done by the teacher; in other words, he believes in teacher-correction feedback. Ur (2012) has a survey study regarding this point that who should correct the learners' errors. In this study, he asks about the learners' opinion. The results of his study show that many learners prefer to be corrected by the teacher and never like peer-correction feedback. According to Ur, being embarrassed in front of other learners, feeling uncomfortable when they are corrected by other students, distrusting each other's knowledge, and looking for a reliable source of correction (the teacher) are some reasons that this group of learners opposes peer-correction feedback. Many researchers believe that as the time of the language courses is often short, especially in the short intensive courses, the learners have not enough time to be familiar with each other; thus they mainly feel uncomfortable when they are corrected by their classmates. Peer-correction in such classes may be considered as rudeness and interference in the teacher's task. Harmer (2007) asserts that the teacher can encourage the learners to give feedback to each other. He also believes that peer-correction can positively lead to cooperation of the learners in a group, because they encourage each other to control their
errors; consequently, peer-correction can help the learners to have self-control of their errors and can lead to the language improvement.

Regarding the error types produced by the learners, (Ellis, 2009) asks two questions: 1) which type of errors should be corrected? and; 2) Should the corrective feedback be unfocused (correcting all or most of the errors) or focused (correcting just one or two kinds of errors)? About the first question, a group of researchers believe that those errors should be corrected that make obstacle in the way of understanding (Hendrickson, 1978; Leiter, 2010); and to answer the second question, some researchers say that frequent errors and those which are related to the subject of the class should be corrected (Leiter, 2010). But Varnosfadrani (2006) opposes with such an opinion and believes that "frequency cannot be the main reason to correct an error;" because many errors occurs frequently, but they are not necessarily harmful for communication and correcting these errors may interrupt learning process (Leiter, 2010). However, prevailing view is that error correction should be focused, i.e. correction of just one or two types of errors. Ellis (2009) asserts that may researches have been done about the oral correction of the errors in the second language learning classes and the results of these studies strongly confirm the effectiveness of the "focused correction." (Lyster, 2004).

2. Types of immediate response of the learners to the teacher's feedback

Feedback given by the teacher is classified as explicit correction, recast, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, repetition. In addition to this classification, Lyster and Ranta (1997) classify feedback as explicit, implicit, and motivational feedback. The learner who made a mistake may or may not respond to the teacher's feedback; if he cannot respond to the feedback, the connection will be continued. If the learner responds to the teacher, his answer may be correct (this time without error) or may need to be corrected again (Lyster and Ranta, 1997). If the learner's response need re-correction, there will be four options (four types of feedback), i.e. repetition, incorporation, self-correction, and peer-correction. Lyster and Ranta make a distiction between these four types of feedback and other six types, i.e. acknowledgment, same error, different error, off target, hesitation, and partial repair.

Research methodology

The population of the present study was undergraduate students of three different classes of Maragheh university. English was not their main subject. Their mother tongue was Turkish, Kurdish, and Persian; and their connection to English was just limited to the school and university classes. All the students started to learn English at their adulthood, and till the time of study, they learned English minimum 6 years and maximum 12 years. The data are collected from the learners' lexical errors (the use of inappropriate or incorrect words, phrases or compound words), lexical-structural errors (different forms of words (base, noun/verb, adjective/adverb), words order, types of given feedback, and the learners' responses to various feedback. At first, 77 learners were asked to attend in a homogenization test (level-determining test), and the questions were prepared from 504 Absolutely Essential Words. The test contained 100 multiple-choice questions that evaluated learners' vocabulary proficiency. Among all students, 63 learners were selected; those were selected that their score were between positive and negative one of standard deviation of the mean. Then, the selected learners attended in a vocabulary pretest. Finally, the number of students that their score in vocabulary pretest were
between ±1 of standard deviation of the mean, was 56; then they were randomly divided into seven groups. To evaluate the selected students' motivation, Takahashi test (2005) was used with a little changes in it. The scores were validated, and valediction rate of the questionnaire was evaluated as 0.83. The reason of using questionnaires was estimating motivation level of the learners, because as Cohen and Dornyei (2002) mention, motivation is the main factor that facilitates learning and without it learning is not possible. Then for ten sessions (ever week one session), the learners of each group received different types of oral corrective feedback for their lexical errors. The first group, known as the control, contained 8 learners and did not received any type of Lyster and Ranta's corrective feedback. The second group, with 8 students, received explicit correction. In this type of feedback, the teacher correct the learners' errors explicitly. The third group also contained 8 learners and received recast. In this type, all or part of the learners' utterance can be corrected except the error itself. The forth group, with 8 learners, received clarification request. In this type of corrective feedback, after recognizing the learner's error, the teacher asks him to reproduce the word or phrase by using request sentences such as [Pardon me!]. The learner recognize his error and tries to produce its correct form. The fifth group, with 8 learners, received metalinguistic clues. Without providing the correct form, the teacher poses questions or provides information related to the formation of the student's utterance. The sixth group consists of 8 students and received elicitation by following three methods:

a) The teacher directly elicits the correct form from the student by asking questions.
b) The teacher pauses to allow the student to complete his utterance.
c) The teacher asks the student to reformulate the utterance.

The seventh group, with 8 students, received repetition. The teacher repeats the student's error and adjusts intonation to draw the student's attention to it.

The participants of this study were both male and female, and their ages were between 18 and 21 years. The number of errors produced by each group, corrective feedback given by the teacher, and students' response to the feedback were collected and separately analyzed by the computer programs, SPSS and Excel. Then, their total results compared with each other and their total frequency was calculated; and finally the results were measured by Lyster and Ranta's (1997) corrective discourse model. The purpose of the present study is determining the reduction of learners' lexical errors in each group after receiving specific type of corrective feedback.

Findings

Fig. 1. Shows the percentage of lexical errors of the learners in each group after receiving specific types of corrective feedback, and the control did not receive any type of feedback. Total lexical errors of the all groups were 1092 errors after receiving feedback. As it is shown in the figure, the control with 320 lexical errors (29.30%) had the highest error percentage, and the group which received elicitation with 20 lexical errors (1.83%) had the lowest error percentage. It can be understood from the figure that giving motivational feedback (clarification request, metalinguistic clues, elicitation and repetition) were more effective than explicit correction and recast in correcting and reducing the learners' lexical errors.
**Fig. 1.** The percentage of all groups’ lexical errors after receiving various types of feedback.

**Fig. 2.** Shows the role of various types of corrective feedback in correcting learners’ lexical errors (word usage, the use of inappropriate or incorrect words or phrases, different forms of word, and word-order in a sentence). As it can be seen in the figure, elicitation had the highest effect on correcting lexical errors of the learners.

**Fig. 2.** The effect of six various types of feedback on the correction of learners' lexical errors (word usage, the use of inappropriate or incorrect words or phrases, different forms of word, and word-order).

**Fig. 3.** Shows the frequency and the percentage of the learners' response to the different types of feedback. In sum 762 feedback were given to the learners in the six groups and they responded...
500 feedback. It means that 65.61% of feedback received feedback. In addition, the learners almost always responded to the elicitation feedback (98.42). Recast received the lowest response of the students. As shown in the figure, motivational feedback (clarification request, metalinguistic clues, elicitation and repetition) received the highest response of the learners as compared to explicit correction and recast.

Fig. 3. Frequency and the percentage of the learners' immediate response to various types of feedback.

Fig. 4. Shows the frequency of the learners' immediate responses to the given feedback that led to error correction. The learners in the six groups corrected their errors after receiving different types of feedback. In 81 errors (24.69%), other students in the class corrected their classmate's error (peer-correction). 247 errors out of total errors (77.18%) were corrected through self-correction. It can be understood from the figure that self-correction has the highest frequency among other feedback given by the teacher.
197 errors out of total errors produced by the learners of the six groups needed to be corrected again. Different errors had the highest frequency, i.e. 62.
Fig. 6 shows that each type of feedback led to what kind of responses by the learners.

![Chart showing four kinds of learner responses](chart.png)

**Six types of feedback given by the teacher**

- repetition
- incorporation
- self correction
- peer correction

6. Discussion and Result

The results of variance analysis (ANOVA), that has been done through SPSS software, showed that there was a significant difference between the groups which received various types of motivational feedback (clarification request, metalinguistic clues, elicitation, repetition) and the control as far as the learners' lexical errors (the use of incorrect words or phrases, incorrect form of a word (base, noun/verb, adjective/adverb), word order) were concerned. Also, there was a significant difference (P ≤ 0.05) between the pre and post test of each group that received motivational feedback regarding their vocabulary proficiency. However, no significant difference was observed between the control and the groups that received explicit correction and recast. Also regarding vocabulary proficiency, there was no significant difference between pre and post test of the groups which received explicit correction and recast. The results of mean comparison, obtained from Duncan test, showed that elicitation were the most effective feedback and recast were the least effective feedback in improving the learners' lexical proficiency (Fig. 7). Thus, elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification request, and repetition were respectively the most effective types of corrective feedback to improve vocabulary ability of the learners.
Fig. 7. The mean comparison of the effectiveness of various types of the corrective feedback in improving lexical proficiency of the learners

The mean comparison of the figure 7 showed that giving feedback can be effective in reducing the learners' lexical errors as compared to the control (lack of feedback). Generally, by giving various types of feedback, the learners improved their vocabulary aspect. The result of the present study is consistent with the previous studies (Lyster and Ranta, 1998; Leiter, 2010) that emphasize on the improvement of the lexical proficiency through giving motivational feedback, and also is consistent with Lyster and Ranta (1997) where they assert that elicitation catches the highest response of the learners, and lowest response of the learners to feedback belongs to recast. Lyster and Ranta (1997) and Lyster (1998) found that recast is the least effective type of corrective feedback that the teachers apply it in their second/foreign language classes. The findings of the Sheen (2004) also confirm the effectiveness of the motivational feedback and frequent responses of the students to these kinds of feedback Leiter: 2010). In the present study, the learners highly respond to the elicitation, and hardly respond to recast. In other words, the learners respond to elicitation feedback more better than other types of corrective feedback. Motivational feedback provide information and clues by the teacher and help the learners to guess the correct form. The main reason of the learners' lexical improvement through elicitation can be due to the various questions that the teacher asks from the learners to elicit the correct form. In fact, this type of feedback encourages students and draws their attention to the subject. Correction of the lexical errors through motivational feedback, especially elicitation, is more easier than other types of feedback. The results of previous studies prove this fact (Leiter, 2010). In addition to classify feedback into six types, Lyster and Ranta (1997) classify it as explicit, implicit, and motivational feedback from other point of view. As the learners mainly produce
repetition and incorporation responses to the teacher's explicit correction and recast, and as self and peer corrections are produced by the learners to respond the teacher's motivational feedback, it can be conclude that self-correction and peer-correction are produced when the learners are motivated and encouraged to find correct form of the utterance; but repetition and incorporation responses come after explicit correction and recast and do not encourage students to produce correct form of the error. The results of present study show that self-correction was the highest number of responses and repetition was the lowest number of responses which produced by the student against their lexical errors. According to Gass (1991), feedback acts as a motivator to draw the learners' attention, and without it, fossilized phenomenon will be occurred (remaining the errors for a long time in the learners' mind). Those types of feedback that don't provide the correct form of the errors may force the learners to rely on their mind to reformulate the utterance (Kaivanpanah & Sharifi, 2013). When there are no feedback in a second/foreign language learning class, the errors will remain without correction in the learners' mind, and consequently will confused and discourage the students. However, poor application of feedback leads to the failure of the learning process, and creates in the learners some bad tendencies such as anger, shame and feelings of inferiority, isolation and demoralization. Poor feedback makes an obstacle in the way of teacher-student connection and damages the teacher's relationship with the students. In such a condition, the students may regard feedback as judgment of their intelligence, while feedback is a process to exchange information, not a judgment (Tayebi et al., 2011). Instead of classifying students into separate groups and comparing them with each other, feedback should concentrate on the learning process and on the function of the learner, not on the learner itself.

suggestion

Familiarizing the teachers with the function of the various types of feedback, and proper application of feedback in the class environment can help the second/foreign language learners to improve their language proficiency, especially their lexical proficiency.
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