Patterns of corrective feedback in EFL Dyadic Classroom Interaction

Mansour Amini[1], Saber Alavi[2*], Ali Zahabi[3], Etienne Vorster[4]

[1] Faculty of Social Science and Liberal Arts, UCSI University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

[2] Dr., Department of International Business English, DRIC International College, Hatyai University, Thailand.

[3] Language Center, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Walailak University.

[4] Lecturer, Department of International Business English, DRIC International College, Hatyai University, Thailand.

[*] Corresponding author, E-mail: Saber_a@hu.ac.th

Abstract

The study inspects the frequency of corrective feedback (CF) utilized by the EFL teachers during the dyadic interaction between teacher and student to correct their erroneous oral production and their relationship to EFL learners' language learning and prompt repair of errors. The data consist of 40 student-teacher interview session to determine the patterns of feedback occurrence in accordance with the category of feedbacks distinguished in Lyster and Ranta's (1997) model. The effects of feedback were measured by means by transcribing the audio files of the teacher student interview and then analysed by measuring the corrective feedback frequencies of occurrence. The outcomes revealed a high level of preference for implicit corrective feedbacks, namely elicitation, and repetition, which created ample opportunity for self-repair. Therefore, the rates of immediate repair and uptake is high in this dataset. These outcomes and the related rationale are elaborated on, in relation to the implicit learning theory that language learners may profit more from indirect presentation of language forms rather than only receiving the target forms in the input.

Keywords: Corrective Feedback, elicitation, EFL context, classroom interaction, comprehensible input, dyadic interaction

Introduction

According to Nassaji (2009, p. 411) "a number of second language acquisition (SLA) researchers have argued that interactional corrective feedback (CF) facilitates SLA". Consequently, corrective feedback has, in the past decade, gained noticeable position among EFL/ESL researchers, as various scholars, in the field, have looked specially into its role in language teaching. A large part of this research is started with the theory claiming that "… a great deal of L2 learning takes place through exposure to comprehensible input" (Panova & Lyster, 2002, p. 573). Considering the issue of the

noticeability of the feedback (Alavi, Voon Foo, Amini, 2015), if it is adequately noticeable to help the learner realize the gap between their interlanguage structures and target language features (Schmidt and Frota, 1986), the resulting language production due to the provision of CF may trigger the reformulation of their interlanguage to make it more native-like utterances (Ellis, 1994). The current investigation is developed to assess the learning resulting from the provision of CF immediately followed by EFL learners' erroneous oral production. That is to measure the learners' uptake generated by CF to develop the participants' interlanguage and make it more target-like before interaction and analyse the error treatment process in an EFL setting where the participants are in a communicative context of language teaching.

Background

During the past two decades, researchers paid attention to interactional feedback in a great number of studies. SLA researchers have also disputed that such CF strategies have facilitative role in developing L2 (e.g., Gass, 2003; Long, 1996) but little has been done within the context of EFL language learning. In evaluating EFL classroom studies, it was tried to search for common patterns of corrective feedback that are used for error treatment in various EFL classroom settings whereby it could be correlated that how particular types of treated errors account for EFL learners' uptake. Before reviewing a number of related studies, corrective feedback (CF) refers to "any indication to the learners that their use of the target language is incorrect. This includes various responses that the learners receive. When a language learner says, 'He go to school every day', corrective feedback can be explicit, for example, 'no, you should say goes, not go' or implicit 'yes he goes to school every day', and may or may not include metalinguistic information, for example, 'Don't forget to make the verb agree with the subject" Lightbown and Spada (1999, pp. 171-172). During the learning of new language errors are made and these errors are tackled with different strategies to produce the correct parts of the language. Uptake refers to different types of student responses immediately following the feedback, including responses with repair of the non-target items as well as utterances still in need of repair (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). More specifically, according to Swain (1995, 2001, 2005), pushed output will lead language learners to improve their language proficiency since it is assumed that pushed output may help learners notice the gap between their interlanguage and the target language elements, and forces them "to move from semantic processing to syntactic processing" (Swain, 1985, p. 249).

Doughty (1994) in her studies found that recasting was widely used by teachers to respond to learner errors. In a more comprehensive research by Panova and Lyster (2002), the result of the classroom observation revealed that "1. Teachers have at their

disposal a wide variety of corrective strategies to focus on learner errors. 2. Choice of feedback type can be dependent on type of error...." (p. 577). Correcting the ill-formed outputs through interactional feedback has been proven to have facilitative effect on interlanguage development (e.g., Williams, 2005; McDonough, 2005, Gass, 2003).

In much of the studies focusing on interactional feedback, (e.g., Ellis et al., 2001a; Loewen, 2004; Mackey, Oliver, & Leeman, 2003; Panova & Lyster, 2002; Oliver, 2000), the efficacy of CF types has been measured through uptake as a sign of language acquisition. Research focusing on uptake has, in general, revealed the facilitative role of CF that help learners to generate uptake, however, it has also shown that the number of uptake moves, successful, partially successful, and unsuccessful varies, to a great extent, depending on the type of CF strategies used during the interactive course of communication, what the focus of the provided CF was, and the instructional contexts in which these CF may take place.

Although there is a general consensus over the usefulness of corrective feedback, there is an on-going debate over which one of these CF types tend to lead to a better form of language development. For instance, a number of researchers have disputed over the issue that recasts are, according to a majority of the research, more effective because learners are provided with both negative and positive samples of language related to their own production, while on the other hand, elicitations can provide negative evidence merely (e.g., Long, 2007; Doughty, 2001). As a result, the essential goal of the current study, subsequently, is to assess the error treatment patterns, including the relationship between CF strategies and to what degree target-like chunks of language are produced by the learners in an EFL classroom setting. Along with the primary goal, this study aims to find out if Lyster and Ranta's (1997) model of corrective feedback could be implemented in another instructional setting. Lyster and Ranta's study was directed with young learners in French immersion classrooms conversely, the present study collected the data from among the young adult EFL learners of English where English language in learnt within the domain of communicative language teaching (CLT). The current study tries to find out the answer for the following question and hypothesis:

RQ1: which types of corrective feedback has the highest rate of occurrence?

RQ2: Having EFL setting in mind, which corrective feedback types will result in higher rate of language uptake?

H1: Recast tend to be the feedback type followed by a high rate of uptake.

Method

Participants

The data come from interview session. The interview took place between 40 young adult Thai EFL learners from a major English subject in a university context in Hatyai, Thailand. The learners were from the same language backgrounds, that is Thai language. There were 30 females and 10 males and their ages ranged from 20-24. The participants of the study have been studying the English subject, as the requirement of the university, for 15 sessions to the date of data collection. Students during their English course received different types of corrective feedback to get familiar with these CR types. The teaching context was held in CLT approach and where necessary a combination of both form-focused and meaning-focused instruction were provided. Based on the results of the participants' previous English course, they, are considered to be at intermediate level, are homogeneous enough to be in the same class at the same level.

Procedure

The data was gathered during the 15 sessions of classroom interaction during September-October. The data in the interview session was audio recorded and later, COLT form part A was used to record the feedback types and the number of uptakes by listening again to the teacher-student interview. Each interview lasted as long as 7-10 minutes over the general topics of their course book. The data collection did not focus on any lessons addressing grammar per se; rather, the teacher's focus was on formal aspects of the English language usage that was incorporated into the structure of their course book during the interview session. The form that was used to codify the data obtained through teacher-student interview in the present study was adapted from Lyster and Ranta's (1997) model. The error treatment sequence as well and codifying the CF strategy types were the key elements of analysis units in the COLT form, which contains teacher and student turns in the following order: learner error, teacher feedback, learner uptake, with either repair of the error or needs-repair and CF types and the number of their occurrences. The order which was used in this study reflected what usually happens in a dyadic teacher-student interaction whereby the teacher provided feedback to an utterance containing an error which was in turn followed by the students attempt to react to the teacher's feedback provision, namely uptake.

Data Analysis

As stated in the previous section, this research used the frequency of occurrence measurement to analyse which corrective feedback tend to appear more in student

teacher interaction. Total of seven most common feedback types, recast, elicitation, repetition, clarification request, confirmation check, explicit correction and metalinguistic correction, have been selected to be measured in the dyadic classroom interaction. To categorize the feedback types, the researcher used the COLT form (Ranta & Lyster, 1997). The researcher audio recorded the teacher-student interview and then listened to the interviews one-by-one and filled the COLT form. Then the form was keyed in to the SPSS software and the frequency of these seven selected feedback types were analysed. To answer the second research question as well as the hypothesis, the audio data is first keyed into the COLT, in order to make the obtained data interpretable so that through the analysis the researcher would be able to quantify the feedback types and their occurrences.
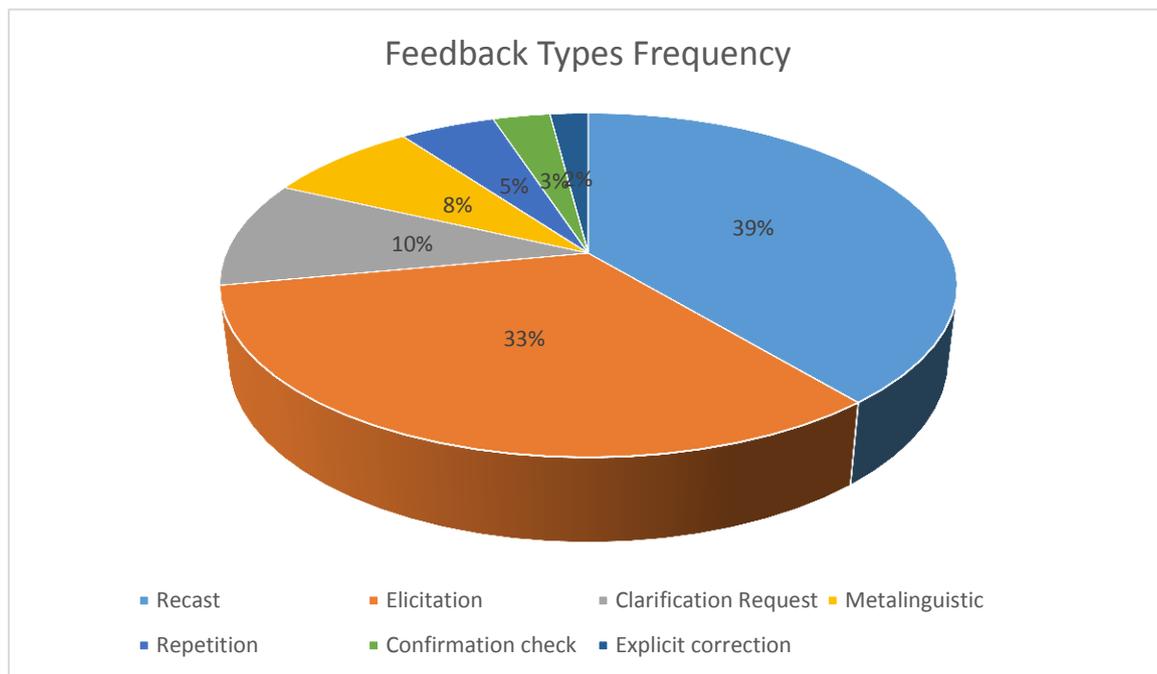
Results

The data analysis revealed a few factors along with covering the research questions. The results showed that the number of 8% of the provided feedbacks were either ill-formed or incomplete and they are excluded from the study after the data analysis, meanwhile for the second part of the study, that is the frequency of feedback types occurrence, they were reanalysed. Since the provision of feedback was the teacher's duty, the total number of 160 (100%) corrective feedbacks were recorded in the COLT from. This means that almost the total number of participants made errors during their interview session or used their L1 which accordingly received CF. Of the seven types of CF, recast and elicitation were among the most frequently used CF types, and recasts occurred in almost all the interview episodes. Table 1 illustrates the frequency of the feedback types. Recasts and elicitation accounted for (72%) of the feedback moves, (39%) and (33%) respectively leaving a small number of occurrence for other 5 corrective feedback types (repetition, 5%, metalinguistic feedback, 8%; clarification request, 10%; confirmation check 3%, explicit correction, 2%).

Table 1 Corrective Feedback Types Frequency of Occurrence

Feedback Strategies	Number of Occurrence	Frequency in %
Recast	62	39
Elicitation	53	33
Clarification Request	16	10
Metalinguistic feedback	13	8
Repetition	8	5
Confirmation check	5	3
Explicit correction	3	2

As it is illustrated in figure 1 below, the percentage of the occurrences are more vivid in the pie chart.

Feedback Types Frequency

- Recast 39%
- Elicitation 33%
- Clarification Request 10%
- Metalinguistic 8%
- Repetition 5%
- Confirmation check 3%
- Explicit correction 1%

Results of Uptake

The second part of data analysis was done to answer the research question 2 and the hypothesis. As it has been stated earlier, total of 8% of uptakes, were either ill-formed or incomplete, which means learners failed to produce the target like language despite the provision of multiple feedback types. To make the results more reliable, the total number of (92%), that is 147 uptake moves, of learner uptake is left to be analysed. Out of the total 147 uptake moves (100%), 107 of them, that is (73%) of the total uptake moves, were learners' immediate self-repair, in 31 cases of uptakes (21%), the change in the feedback type, for a few times, lead to a late learners' self-repair. In 9 cases of uptake move (6%), the teacher provided the correct form and students repeated the correct form following their teacher in the interview session.

Table 2 Total Uptake moves

	Number	Percentage %
Total Uptake Moves	**147**	**100**
Immediate Self-repair	107	73
Late Self-repair	31	21
Following teacher correction	9	6

In table 3, it is tried to compare the occurrence of feedbacks with their effectiveness on generating successful uptake moves. The relationship between CF strategy types and the EFL learners' uptake and repair is presented in the following table. An interesting point to be highlighted here, is that the number of uptake does not directly correlate to the high rate of feedback occurrence. That is, having a higher rate of occurrence does not necessarily guarantee that the specific feedback would be followed by uptake of any kind. Out of 147 total successful uptakes, 62 of them (42%) were generated by elicitation, 57 of the uptakes, that is (39%) of them, were generated by recast. the other five feedback types according to their efficacy on generating uptake are as follows; 9 uptake moves by clarification request (6%), 4 uptakes by metalinguistic feedback (3%), 6 uptake moves by repetition (4%), 3 uptakes by confirmation check (2%), and finally explicit correction is followed by 6 uptake moves that would be (4%) of the total uptake generated by all these seven feedback types.

Table 3 Uptake rate followed by each feedback

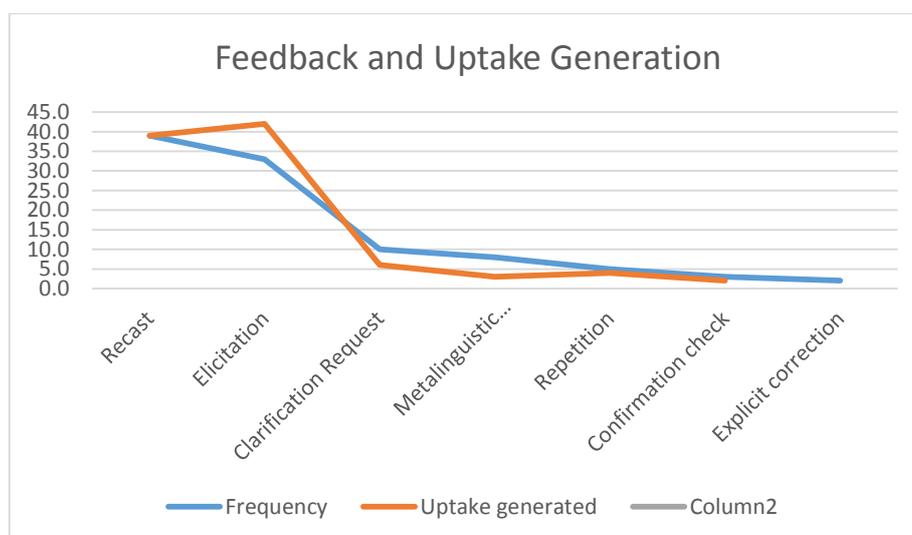| Feedback Types	Frequency	Generated uptake
Recast	39%	39%
Elicitation	33%	42%
Clarification Request	10%	6%
Metalinguistic feedback	8%	3%
Repetition	5%	4%
Confirmation check	3%	2%
Explicit correction	2%	4%

Figure 2 Feedback and Uptake Correlation

Conclusion and Discussion

Quite a large number of investigations in ESL/EFL field have assessed the role that interactional CF strategies play in these settings. On the other hand, interactional CF is not an easy phenomenon to study whose efficacy depends on a wide range of variables (Russell & Spada, 2006). As result, a lot of research are needed to investigate the role of CF in developing the interlanguage and language development and also their impact and effectiveness on language development. The current research investigated the effects of patterns of CF types in EFL context, their frequency of occurrence, and the rate of uptake followed by these feedbacks. Meanwhile this study tried to explore the patterns of error treatment, different feedback types used by the teacher and, the relationship between CF types and the rate of uptake followed by each one.

The data analysis revealed that learners discerned the difference between their language production and target-like feature of the same language part through the provision of feedback and, most of them, successfully corrected, immediately after interaction. All seven corrective feedback types have positive effects on learning the specific forms but the degree of their effectiveness varies from one feedback to another. The findings, related to recasts and elicitation, are in line with the findings of previously done studies in the literature (e.g., Nassaji, 2016, 2011, 2007; Loewen and Philp, 2006; Loewen, 2005). In the present study, learners were evaluated by the number of times they could correct their erroneous forms in their oral productions followed by CF strategies. What surprised the researcher was the high rate of a few feedback types usage or teacher's preferences of one feedback over the other ones. Teacher's choices of feedback might be accounted by the EFL learners' low English language proficiency level that has restricted the teacher's option in using different CF types that require more participation from the language learners' side while negotiating meaning in the course of communication. That is, the EFL students' limited interlanguage proficiency, as has been revealed by quite a number of incomplete or short responses, may have restricted the choices for the teacher to focus on means of providing linguistic input via reformulations. As result, CF strategies other than recasts and elicitation were used only for a few times compared to other CF types, as stated in the result section, in the young adult EFL classroom.

Considering uptake as another variable of the study, the total rate of uptake moves and self-repair in EFL classroom proved to be lower than in ESL settings. These lower rates might be attributed to the low proficiency level of the EFL students. With respect to the relationship between feedback type and learner uptake, the similarity of findings is a supporting factor that the current study is in line with the previously done research in the field. Corrective feedback strategies that encourage the negotiation of

form by providing the students with the opportunity to self-correct, while keeping the flow of meaningful communication, or to correct their peers has led to a high rate of uptake episodes. In fact, elicitation and recast, almost paralleled in generating high levels of uptake which in turn indicate that these feedback moves tend to be noticed by students (Alavi el. al., 2015).

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