



THE (MIS)MATCH BETWEEN STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' PREFERENCES OF CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

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Abstract

The current study examined the preferences of different corrective feedback types in adult EFL classes by teachers and students and figured out the possible reasons of their preferences. Teacher and student questionnaires and the open-ended questions were the instruments used in this study to collect data. The analysis of the questionnaires showed that the most preferred type of feedback was recast “which is a technique used in language teaching to correct learners' errors in such a way that communication is not obstructed” (Recast, 2019). Students also stated that they liked to be corrected immediately and explicitly during their conversations while the teachers strongly disagreed with it. Finally, open-ended questions also revealed the reasons of the students' preferences of the type of the feedback in EFL classes.

Keywords: corrective feedback; corrective feedback preferences; EFL classes

1. Introduction

Corrective feedback (CF) is described as “a frequent practice in the field of education and in learning generally. It involves a student receiving either formal or informal feedback on his or her performance on various tasks by a teacher or peer(s) (Corrective feedback, 2019). As Long (1996) proposes, CF may lead to improvement in students' language performance since it enables the learners to understand the difference between the output and the expected correct utterance.

It is proposed that by interaction in L2, students are given chances to notice the gap between their speech which include errors and the expected target structure and are expected to correct their erroneous utterances (Gass & Lewis, 2007). Even though the effectiveness of different types of corrective feedback have been examined, the reason why certain types of CF are more preferred by the students is unknown. Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore student and teacher preferences towards error correction, specifically as to whether there are any discrepancies between the two groups. Furthermore, the present study aims to explore the rationale behind their preference of the corrective feedback used in EFL classes.

1.1. Literature Review

Corrective feedback has been the focus of research across cultures and disciplines. With a more specific explanation for foreign language teaching, corrective feedback is explained as any kind of sign to the learners that their utterance is erroneous (Lightbown & Spada, 2001).

1.1.1. Corrective feedback types

The corrective feedback on students' speech production have been identified into six categories by Lyster and Ranta (1997) as "explicit correction, recast, clarification request, metalinguistic cues, elicitation, and repetition".

In the present study, Lyster and Ranta's definitions of corrective feedback types presented in Ellis (2009) is presented in Table 1. The table also involves Ellis's (2009) 6 definitions for each CF type.

Table 1: *Corrective feedback types.*

CF types	Definition	Example (Teacher-Student Interaction)
1. Explicit correction	Indicates an error has been committed, identifies the error, and provides the correction.	S: On May. T: Not on May, In May. We say, "It will start in May."
2. Recast	Reformulates all or part of the incorrect word or phrase, to show the correct form without explicitly identifying the error.	S: I have to find the answer on the book? T: In the book
3. Clarification request	Indicates that the student's utterance was not understood and asks that the student to reformulate it.	S: What do you spend with your wife? T: What? (Or, Sorry?)
4. Meta-linguistic feedback	Gives technical linguistic information about the error without explicitly providing the correct answer.	S: There are influence person who. T: Influence is a noun.
5. Elicitation	Prompts the student to self-correct by pausing so the student can fill in the correct word or phrase.	S: This tea is very warm. T: It's very.? S: Hot.
6. Repetition	Repeats the student's error while highlighting the error or mistake by means of emphatic stress.	S: I will showed you. T: I will SHOWED you? S: I'll show you.

Figure 1. Corrective feedback types (Ellis, 2009)

Explicit correction refers to corrections where the teacher directly expresses that the utterance of the student was not correct and provides the correction, such as "No, you are wrong, the correct expression is 'went'". Recast are the type of feedback when the teacher does not explicitly express that the student made a mistake, but implicitly reformulates the error, providing the correct form, as in "Good, you went to the store yesterday?" Clarification requests consist of CF where the teacher says that the delivery is unclear, thus requesting the student to repeat or reformulate the utterance, as in "I don't understand." Fourth type of CF, metalinguistic cues refer to questions or comments that shows that the student has made a mistake, but shows it indirectly. For example, "Is that how Americans say that?" In elicitation, the teacher asks the students to reformulate the utterance by providing a blank for the incorrect part ("e.g., So, you...to the store yesterday"), or requesting "How do Americans say that?" Unlike metalinguistic cues, elicitation generally requires more than a yes or no response from the student. For repetition, the teacher suggests that the students make an error by changing the intonation so that it may be reformulated.

The relevant literature in the field of error correction has evolved to become quite extensive. Student and teacher preferences for corrective feedback, rate of repair according to student proficiency, patterns of corrective feedback used, role of corrective feedback, and teacher intention and student interpretation are some of the issues that have been examined. For instance, Panova and Lyster (2002) examined CF and its subsequent student repair to examine both the use and effect on repair. Participants were 25 speakers of French in an EFL classroom whose English proficiency was assessed in the beginning. Interactions between teacher and student were classified with Lyster and Ranta's (1997) model and then transcribed and analyzed for implications. The results explained that the recast was highly preferred kind of CF.

However, it was also found that recasts left little opportunity for learner-centered repair. On the contrary, corrective feedback, other than recast, was more successful in eliciting student-generated repairs. In a later study, Lyster (1998) focused on the effects of recast and suggested that "recasts are mostly followed by topic continuation moves, and that only a minimal number of recasts are followed by students' uptake". In this study, Lyster identified the ambiguous nature of recasts being potentially responsible for students' difficulty to recognize and repair.

Based on previous literature, it is predicted that a relatively high rate of recasts will be used over other types of corrective feedback to students' errors. Additionally, it is anticipated that both upper and lower groups will show a higher rate of repair to explicit corrective feedback including "clarification request, elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, and repetition". Students from upper levels are expected to show a higher rate of repair. It is also expected that students will prefer explicit error correction, and that teachers will be more cautious of giving corrective feedback to students developed.

Consequently, this study examined the answers of two research questions:

- 1) What types of corrective feedback do students and teachers in Turkish EFL classes prefer?
- 2) Why do students prefer corrective feedback?

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants & Setting

The study was carried out at the Department of Basic English at Bartın University, Turkey. The students who volunteer to study English for general purposes study English during a complete academic year before they start their university education at their departments. 60 A2 level students of English participated in the study. The students were all four-year undergraduate students. At the beginning of the academic year, students took a Placement Examination and the students were divided into three levels (A1, A2, B1) according to the result of the placement test and started English Preparatory Education in groups of 15 to 20 students. The participants were generally from engineering, management and philosophy departments.

2.2. Data Collection Instruments

This study includes qualitative as well as quantitative data. Qualitative data were gathered by open ended questions, while quantitative data were gathered via questionnaires. In this study, multiple data collection instruments were used so as to increase the validity of the research findings. As mentioned earlier, just as Patton (1990) maintains, using such multiple data sources as interviewing allow researchers to validate the findings by cross-checking with supplementary instruments as in the current study.

2.2.1. Student Questionnaires

The student questionnaires aimed to delve into students' preferences for CF in three parts. The first part examined their backgrounds in learning English. The second section of the questionnaire examined students' preferences for CF with ten statements in a 5-point Likert-type scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Finally, in the third part of the questionnaire students ranked their choices for CF. Open-ended questions questioned the reason why students selected the type of the feedback that they ranked highest.

In terms of reliability, the internal consistency of the CF questionnaire instrument was also estimated through running Cronbach's alpha. The results indicated that the Cronbach's alpha value for the instrument was .85 which showed that the CF questionnaire presented a very good internal consistency and proved to be reliable. The language of the questionnaire was in English so, to ensure students' understanding of the questions, the items were translated into Turkish by using back translation method by a Turkish native speaker who is expert in English.

2.2.2. Teacher Questionnaires

Teacher questionnaires explored their CF preferences on ten declarative statements by using a 5-point Likert-type scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". In the second part of the questionnaire, teachers were asked to rank their CF preferences from the most to the least preferred type.

2.3. Data Analysis

To explore the CF preferences of the students, items in Section 2 of the students' questionnaires were analyzed. The internal reliability of the questionnaire was 0.855. The most preferred CF type was found by using the frequencies. Finally, open-ended questions were utilized.

3. Results

3.1. What types of corrective feedback do students and teachers in Turkish EFL classes prefer?

The results of the questionnaire demonstrated that students displayed similar patterns in preference of corrective feedback. In Table 2, overall, students wanted to be corrected by their teachers as much as possible (item 1 and 2). They also answered that they did not feel embarrassed by teachers' corrective feedback in front of other students (item 3) and preferred free speaking without being corrected (item 5). Students further reported that they remember

the correction that teachers give for a long time (item 10). In addition, the results of the questionnaire displayed that students preferred to be corrected by their teachers (item 4). For preferred types of error correction, students reported that they wanted to be corrected explicitly (item 6), that they also preferred implicit corrective feedback (item 7), but did not prefer non-verbal corrective feedback (item 8). Moreover, they preferred immediate corrective feedback (item 9). The frequency is calculated by taking the 3 answers (strongly agree, agree, partially agree) into consideration.

Table 1: Patterns and Preferences of Corrective Feedback

Questions	Percent	Frequency (40 students)
Item 1	100	40
Item 2	97,5	39
Item 3	45	18
Item 4	75	33
Item 5	70	31
Item 6	95	38
Item 7	75	33
Item 8	42,5	17
Item 9	100	40
Item 10	100	40

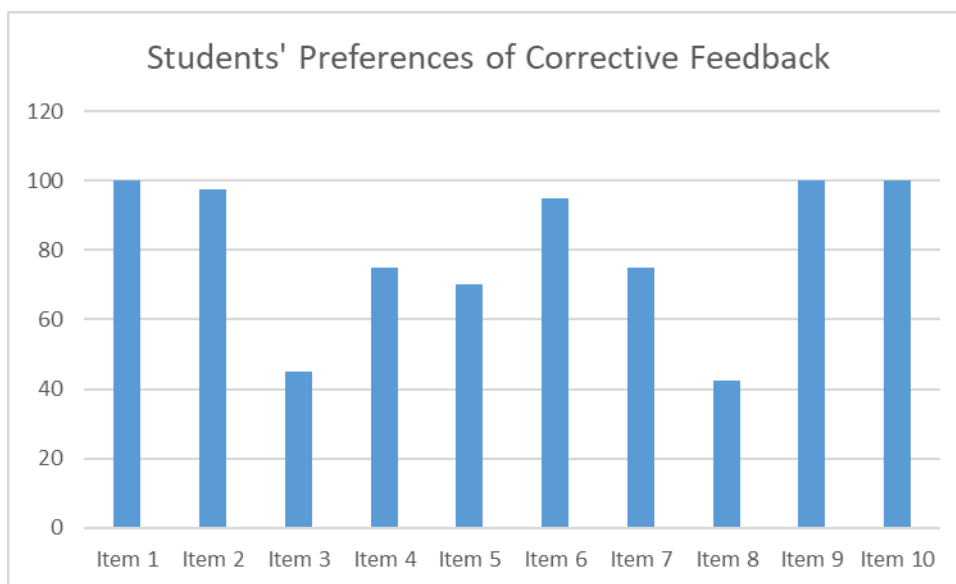


Figure 2. Students' preferences of corrective feedback.

Table 2: Teachers' and Students' Preference of Corrective Feedback

	Type of Feedback							
	Recast	Elicitation	Clarification R.	Meta. F.	Explicit C.	Repetition	Non-verbal	No F.
Teacher	71.5	65	39	45	42,5	71	56	
Student	71,2	63,28	53,76	56,68	54,72	61,24	51,24	33,88

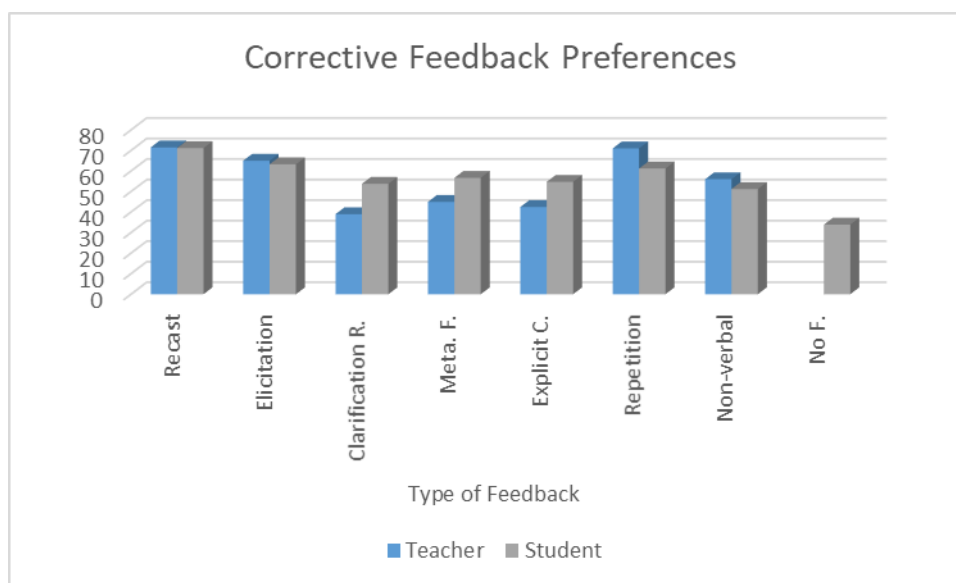


Figure 3. Students' and teachers' preferences of corrective feedback.

Both teachers and students displayed strongly consistent preferences when it came to error correction. The strongest agreements were with regard to their preferences for immediate and explicit correction for all errors. Reported preferences were also consistent in that they did not agree with statements that advocated free speaking without error correction, or implicit error correction such as non-verbal cues. This is in line with Schulz's (2001) study on preferences of corrective feedback.

Teachers and students displayed almost the same patterns in preference of corrective feedback. As table 3 shows, both teachers and students preferred repetitions, recasts, elicitation, and non-verbal corrective feedback since teachers reported that they preferred giving corrections to students while being cautious of not making students feel embarrassed. They also reported that they wanted their students to speak as freely as possible.

3.2. Why do students prefer corrective feedback?

First of all, the following open-ended question responses propose some themes which give reasons why the students chose these CF types. Most students claimed that when teachers clearly present their utterances, students could easily understand what mistakes they made and it made the response memorable.

Students also reported that corrective feedback enables them to learn the pronunciation better. When the teacher corrects their utterance and gives the correct pronunciation, students learn it

better, they say. They also state that correction helps them understand better. When they are corrected, it hinders learning the erroneous form, thus; fossilization of the wrong form. As a result, they do not make the same mistake again. The list of the students' responses is given below:

Do you think that corrective feedback is useful? Why?

1. It makes the utterance catchier, you cannot forget it easily.
2. To learn the pronunciation better.
3. I understand better when corrected.
4. It enables not to learn the erogenous form, it hinders fossilization.
5. So as not to make the same mistake again.

The answers show the reason why the students prefer explicit correction and why they wanted to be corrected when they made mistakes even if they are in the middle of their speech.

4. Discussion

As students state, noticing the differences between the correct and incorrect utterance is now the most essential situation for the improvement of students' L2 (Kim, 2004, p. 19). This current study has also displayed the reasons of their CF preferences, and suggested several reasons for the inconsistency between the students' and the teachers' answers.

Since it was expected, the most commonly preferred type of corrective feedback by both the teachers and the students was recast (71.5%). Ellis (2007) supported it by claiming that the recasts must be notable and common in oral production of the students in EFL classes.

In addition, % 63 students chose elicitation as their second most preferred type of CF, and % 51 students chose non-verbal cues as their least preferred type of CF. Similarly, 71% of the teachers preferred to use recasts and repetitions, 39 % least preferred to use clarification request.

This seems to be caused by the consideration of the students' proficiency in English. As low proficiency learners are relatively insensitive to realize the gap between their interlanguage and the correct target language structures (Lin & Hedgcock, 1996), the teachers of beginning classes may have adjusted their corrective feedback to be more explicit and noticeable to their beginning students. The most preferred kind of CF by the students was explicit correction (54.7%). This is in line with Yoshida's study in which he supported that students do not understand that they are wrong if the teachers do not correct them explicitly (Yoshida, 2010).

In particular, it seems that teachers recognize the need for frequent error correction, yet also strongly agree with the fact that students may become embarrassed or should be allowed free speech. Thus, these conflicting reports may be indicators of the situational and pedagogical adaptations of providing corrective feedback. In other words, while teachers both strongly believe and recognize the need for error correction, they are considerate of students' feelings for the correction which in turn prevents the teacher from making corrections.

The combination of student and teacher preferences for error correction reveals interesting discrepancies for some items. More specifically, students clearly preferred explicit and frequent error correction, whereas teachers reported being more cautious of error correction in that they believed students should be given opportunities for free speech without interruption and they are aware of the possible negative consequences of error correction such as student embarrassment.

5. Conclusion

The study investigated teachers' and students' preferences of CF and the reasons of their preferences. Based on the analyses of the questionnaires and open-ended questions, the study showed that the most preferred CF in the EFL classroom was recasts. However, they also suggested that they understand and remember better when they are corrected explicitly. However, the teachers disagreed since they want to provide opportunities to students to correct themselves than directly giving the correct structure.

Finally, this study indicated the reasons why the adult EFL students think that CF is useful for them. The students' reasons are: firstly, if the teacher directly shows the mistake, they are able to understand their mistake and try to correct it so they can save time. Furthermore, they say that being corrected hinder fossilization and make their pronunciation better since they can hear the correct target structure. Finally, they state that learning the correct form enables them not to make the same mistake again.

6. Pedagogical Implications

Identifying and providing appropriate CF would give L2 teachers a chance to use the most preferred type of CF in their EFL. Moreover, suitable CF would minimize the potential pressure— whether emotional or mental—on the part of L2 learners in order to enhance their communicative skills and ease the path for interacting and exchanging information with their peers or teachers while they are practicing and interacting in L2 classroom environments in terms of their proficiency levels.

There are possible limitations to this study, primarily in the small size of the data provided from the teachers and the students. It could be argued that the data of the present study is not representative of the typical practices of error correction. However, regardless of the relatively small sample size, the participants reflect diverse cultures and linguistic backgrounds which generate meaningful implications.

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