Elicitation to Writing Mistakes: An Application of Implicit Corrective Feedback in Teaching L2 Writing

Andisheh Saniei, Islamic Azad University, Roudehen Branch, Roudehen, Iran

Abstract
This study is an attempt to investigate the effect of elicitation, one particular type of implicit corrective feedback (prompt), given to students’ mistakes in a writing class on their English writing performance. Twenty five Iranian EFL students at IAU participated in this study. They were selected based on their performance on a researcher-made writing test (with the reliability of 0.76). Within 10 sessions the learners were given opportunities to self-repair or reformulate their own productions in order to be corrected. In 11th session, they were given the same researcher-made writing test as the posttest. The purpose was to compare the results of the pre- and post-test to determine the effectiveness of the implicit error-treatment process. Data analysis was run and the results (mean differences) revealed that the application of elicitation as a means of implicit corrective feedback had significant effect on the learners' writing performance.

Keywords: Elicitation, implicit corrective feedback, writing performance

Introduction
Based on descriptive studies of teacher-student interaction (Lyster, 2002), feedback moves can be classified as explicit correction, recasts, and prompts. In the case of explicit correction, the teacher supplies the correct form and clearly indicates that what the student said was incorrect. Recasts also supply learners with target reformulations of their nontarget output. Prompts, on the other hand, include a variety of signals (other than alternative reformulations) that push learners to self-repair. These moves have been referred to as form-focused negotiation by Lyster (2002).

Research in EFL/ESL classrooms has commonly shown that prompts are the next most frequent type of feedback after recasts, whereas explicit correction occurs with relative infrequency (Lyster and Ranta, 1997). Recasts and prompts, together, are referred to by Lyster and Mori (2006) as interactional feedback rather than corrective feedback since they are used by teachers to maintain classroom interaction and its coherence, without consistently fulfilling a corrective function. Similarly, the main concern of this study is to investigate the influence of prompt-implicit corrective feedback-on learners' ability to write various English sentences. To achieve the purpose of this study, the following research question was proposed:

Does prompt(implicit corrective feedback) have any significant effect on the Iranian EFL learners' writing performance?

And the following null hypothesis was formulated:

Prompt(implicit corrective feedback) has no significant effect on the Iranian EFL learners' writing performance.

Literature Review
Teachers present feedback to see their students advance in their written production. But they may not be fully aware of how much feedback they should present and on what type. Studies on different types of correction like recast, repetition, confirmations, reformulations,
elicitations, request for clarification, and self-correction abound. Among different kinds of correction, prompt seems to be the second frequently used one after recast (Lyster and Ranta, 1997).

To Lyster (1998c), prompts represent a range of feedback types that include the following moves: (a) elicitation, in which the teacher directly elicits a reformulation from the student by asking questions such as ‘How do we say that in English?’ or by pausing to allow the student to complete the teacher’s utterance, or by asking the student to reformulate his or her utterance; (b) metalinguistic clues, in which the teacher provides comments or questions related to the well-formedness of the student’s utterance such as ‘We don’t say it like that in English’; (c) clarification requests, in which the teacher uses phrases such as ‘Pardon me?’ and ‘I don’t understand’ after learner errors to indicate to students that their utterance is ill-formed in some way and that a reformulation is required; and (d) repetition, in which the teacher repeats the student’s ill-formed utterance, adjusting intonation to highlight the error.

Although these four prompting moves—used separately or in combination—represent a wide range of feedback types, they have one crucial feature in common: They withhold correct forms as well as other signs of approval (Lyster, 1998c) and, instead, offer learners an opportunity to self-repair by generating their own modified response. By prompting, a teacher provides cues for learners to draw on their own resources to self-repair, whereas by providing explicit correction or recasting, a teacher both initiates and completes a repair within a single move.

**Self correction**

Self correction is an indirect feedback where the teacher provides students with the choices so that they themselves discern the correct form (Bitcher et al., 2005). Self correction or self repair, in either form of self or peer, as Lyster (1998) suggests, happens when the teacher makes the erroneous point salient through repetition (in speaking), underlining the erroneous sentence (in writing) or writing both the correct and erroneous form on the board so that students can choose from.

To Schmidt (2001), what is unique in self correction is the learner’s conscious attention to his or her erroneous sentence. It seems that self correction is more effective than recast since it makes the learner notice the gap (Schmidt, 2001). Self correction has been found to be effective in several studies. As a case in point, Kubota (2001) worked on lower intermediate university students learning Japanese as a foreign language. She found out that the number of errors of different categories in students’ writing diminished when they use self correction through self-help resources. Elsewhere, Makino (1993, as cited in Lee and Ridley [15]) states student correction in either form of self correction and peer correction is more effective than teacher correction in the sense that “it allows learners to be the ‘architects’ of their own learning” (p. 26).

**Learner Uptake and Repair**

Uptake was defined by Lyster and Ranta (1997) as a student’s immediate response to the teacher’s feedback that “constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher’s intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student’s initial utterance” (p. 49). The notion of uptake in classroom studies provides an effective tool for identifying patterns in teacher-student interaction that include a wide range of learner responses following teacher feedback. Lyster and Ranta (1997) classified learner uptake as (a) utterances still in need of repair or (b) utterances with repair. Repair includes (a) repetition or incorporation of the correct forms
provided in recasts and explicit correction and (b) self- or peer-repair following prompts. In the context of adult EFL, McDonough (2005) found that self-repair moves that followed prompts in the form of clarification requests were significant predictors of L2 development. Similarly, Havranek and Cesnik (2001) found repair that followed prompts to be the most effective feedback combination in a range of EFL classrooms. In contrast to self-repair that follows prompts, uptake that involves repetition of a recast does not engage learners in a deep level of processing, nor does it necessitate any reanalysis (Lyster and Mori, 2006). Panova and Lyster (2002) suggested that uptake that consists of a repetition might not have much to contribute to L2 development because of its redundancy in an error treatment sequence in which the repair is both initiated and completed by the teacher within a single move. However, Mackey et al. (2000, cited in Lyster and Moris, 2006) found that when learners repeated a recast, they were more likely to have correctly perceived its corrective intention.

There is an equally strong consensus that uptake alone does not constitute an instance of learning. Instead, the effect of interactional feedback and learner repair on longer term L2 development needs to be investigated in carefully designed quasi-experimental studies. Lyster (2004) examined the differential effects of prompts and recasts with a pretest, immediate posttest, and delayed posttest design. The results suggest that recasts were only marginally more effective than no feedback while prompts proved to be especially instrumental in improving students’ performance over time on the written tasks.

Method

Subjects
A sample of 25 subjects participated in this study. They were female students of EFL, studying in IAU, Roudehen branch in Iran. Participants were all freshmen and they had basic writing course. They were selected based on their performance on a researcher made writing test. The test results were analyzed and 25 out of 32 who fell within the range of -2 and +2 standard deviations of the mean were selected. They received writing prompts for 6 sessions while performing on sentence writing tasks and their interaction with their teacher/the researcher was verbally recorded for further analysis.

Instrumentation
A 40-item writing test was developed by the researcher herself. The test battery included some error recognition items, as well as some sentence-writing parts as production-type items. It was used as both pretest (before the instruction) and posttest (at the end of the experiment), and its reliability was calculated as 0.78.

Six writing tasks were also given to subjects to perform on in 6 successive sessions so that their performance on each was audio-recorded.

Procedure
The error treatment sequence began with a learner written statement that contained one or more errors- grammatical, rhetorical, or lexical. The teacher immediately followed learner statements with error and asked her whether it was right (implicit feedback). Feedback moves were followed by learner uptake- a student’s immediate response to the teacher’s feedback. Uptake included repair that could occur in the form of learner generated repair (self-repair) and repetition or incorporation of a teacher’s reformulation. Prompts could be followed by self-repair produced by the student who committed the error. The student was provided with the self correction feedback following the occurrence of the erroneous statements. The self
correction feedback was vocalic; that is, the teacher repeated the student's erroneous sentence, along with the correct form, and asked the student to choose the correct form. The data was recorded on the CD for further analysis.

**Data Analysis**

To see the statistical effect of the error treatment, the subjects were given a 40-item test of sentence writing as the posttest. After obtaining the value of mean and variance for both pretesting and posttesting processes, a one-tailed test at the 0.05 alpha level of significance was applied. Since the calculated t(1.79) exceeded the t-critical (1.74) at the 0.05 alpha level of significance, the difference between the achievements of subjects before and after the instruction was considered significant which led to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to apply a model of error treatment based on one particular form of prompt, known as 'elicitation' or 'implicit feedback', that is believed to be more effective than recasts (Lyster, 1998). The researcher (as the instructor) allowed opportunities for a group of Iranian EFL learners to self-correct their mistakes in sentence writing, or complete their own sentences by making pauses or using questions to elicit correct forms (e.g. Is it a compound or a complex sentence? How do you know that? Do we write enjoy from in English?!). After administering the posttest, the results of data analysis confirmed that elicitation and self-correction seem an effective corrective feedback for Iranian EFL learners and can be adopted by EFL instructors as a means of promoting students' achievement in the act of sentence writing. However, this study focused on sentence writing composition. Another research might focus on more natural mode of writing as paragraph, or composition writing. Moreover, this study didn't consider codification for different types of writing mistakes-grammatical, rhetorical, or lexical-. Another study can differentiate writing mistakes and analyzed them to be more accurate. And finally, this research lacked control group. Another research with the same design might consider this problem and include the control group as well.

**References**


