ESL Teachers' Use of Corrective Feedback and Its Effect on Learners' Uptake

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It has long been assumed within traditional pedagogical practice that error feedback is necessary for learners to progress in their acquisition and use of second language (L2) in more target-like ways. Providing feedback in class is not a simple or clear-cut process as there are many different types of feedback and each type can have a specific effect on learners' errors. This observational study addressed the following issues with regard to corrective feedback and learner errors: (1) the effectiveness of different types of interactional feedback, (2) the types of feedback that lead to learners' successful uptake, and (3) the categories of errors (e.g., phonological, grammatical, lexical) native English teachers prefer to provide feedback on. Two native English teachers and twenty-eight English as a Second Language (ESL) students at two levels of proficiency, beginners and intermediate, were observed during class. Teacher-student and student-student interactions were recorded during the lesson and individual teacher interviews were carried out after the class observations. The analysis of the data revealed the most frequent types of interactional feedback with intermediate learners were explicit correction followed by metalinguistic clues, clarification requests and recasts. With the beginner students, the most frequently used feedback type was explicit correction, followed by clarification requests, and recasts. This study also showed that repetition and metalinguistic feedback always led to successful uptake. Finally,

teachers preferred to correct mostly phonological errors. These results have implications for ESL teachers and teacher educators.

Key words: corrective feedback, second language acquisition, implicit feedback, explicit feedback

INTRODUCTION

In second language acquisition (SLA) errors are considered a natural part of the learning process and a sign of students' efforts to produce the target language. Feedback is defined as an immediate response to learners' errors and in order for feedback to be effective, it needs to inform the learners whether their answers are correct or not, as well as provide them with enough information and guidance to produce the correct target form. Feedback in general is of two types: positive and negative. Negative feedback, also known as corrective feedback (Ammar & Spada, 2006), is broadly defined as information following an error produced by the language learner. According to Schachter (1991) feedback can either be explicit (such as a grammatical explanation or an overt error correction) or implicit (such as confirmation checks, repetitions, recasts, clarification requests, and even facial expressions (see Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001)). Among these types of corrective feedback used by ESL teachers, recasts are the most controversial in terms of their definition and effectiveness in L2 classrooms (see Ellis & Sheen, 2006; Nicholas, Lighbown, & Spada, 2001).

The importance of corrective feedback provided in interactions is central to the interactionist SLA perspective (Gass, 2003; Long, 1996). Cognitive-interactionist SLA researchers see L2 learning as the process of building up and restructuring the knowledge system of the target language so that it can eventually be utilized automatically for speaking and understanding (Lightbown & Spada, 1990). In a revised version of the Interaction Hypothesis (see Gass, 2003), Long outlines how implicit negative feedback operates in SLA: negotiation for meaning elicits negative feedback. Such

feedback draws learners' attention to mismatches between input and output. This may cause them to notice language forms which would otherwise had gone unnoticed had the students relied only on exposure to comprehensible input. In light of the Cognitive Interaction Hypothesis, this study argues for the facilitative role of corrective feedback in SLA interactions.

Background

Studies that have investigated different types of corrective feedback and their effectiveness in SLA report conflicting results. Some classroom studies suggest that recasts are ineffective due to the learners' lower rate of uptake (i.e., successful repair) when compared with other types of feedback (Ellis et al., 2001; Lyster, 1998; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Panova & Lyster, 2002). Lyster and Ranta (1997) conducted a study in French immersion classrooms and found that recasts were used more frequently (55%) than other types of feedback such as explicit correction, metalinguistic feedback, clarification requests, elicitation, and repetition, which were used less frequently. However, despite their high frequency of occurrence, recasts led to the least amount of uptake (31%) while most of the other feedback types resulted in student uptake (i.e., students corrected their output) in over 80% of the times they were used. In a later study Panova and Lyster (2002) investigated feedback types and learner uptake in a non-immersion context and found similar results. Again recasts were found to elicit a lower rate of uptake (i.e., students corrected their output only 40% of the times recasts were used) than other types of feedback such as clarification requests, elicitation, repetition, and metalinguistic clues, which elicited successful uptake over 70% of the times they were used. More positive results were reported by Ellis et al. (2001) who found that recasts elicited a high rate of successful uptake (71.6%) in ESL classrooms, yet the rate of uptake elicited by other types of feedback was even higher, ranging from 80% to 100% (i.e., students corrected their output as a result of corrective feedback 80-100% of the times they received feedback).

In contrast to the naturalistic classroom studies, several experimental studies determined that recasts have a positive effect on the accurate control of certain L2 items (such as vocabulary and grammar), at least for a short period (Braidi, 2002; Ishida, 2004; Iwashita, 2003; Leeman, 2003; Long, Inagaki, & Ortega, 1998; Oliver, 1995).

Oliver (1995) and Braidi (2002) investigated the use and occurrence of recasts relative to learners' uptake. Both studies showed a relatively small uptake by the learners (9%-9.3%) in their immediate production; however, the final findings reported that 34%-35% of recasts were incorporated by the learners into their output. Both these studies provide evidence for the utility of recasts but neither investigated the effectiveness of recasts compared to other types of feedback or input. Long et al. (1998) conducted two experiments to assess the utility of recasts relative to (pre-emptive positive evidence) models and found that reactive implicit negative feedback (recasts) can be more effective than pre-emptive positive input (models) in achieving at least short-term improvements on a previously unknown L2 structure (Long et al., 1998). Similar results were also reported by Iwashita (2003), who conducted an empirical study investigating the contributory role that various interactional moves play on the development of grammatical targets. The results showed that recasts have greater effect than other conversational moves on short term L2 grammatical development.

Generally, the studies that addressed the effectiveness of corrective feedback on L2 learning development reported rather mixed results due to the fact that they used different measures of feedback uptake and they were conducted in different contexts. On the one hand, in naturalistic settings, classroom studies utilised learners' uptake for measuring the developmental changes caused by corrective feedback and generally lent minimal support for the effectiveness of recasts as corrective feedback (Ellis et al., 2001; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Panova & Lyster, 2002). In controlled experimental settings, on the other hand, research studies provided positive evidence for the effectiveness of recasts (Iwashita, 2003; Leeman, 2003; Long et al., 1998). Most of these studies pre-tests and post-tests utilized as measures for the

developmental benefits of corrective feedback, while others provided evidence for the effectiveness of feedback by measuring learners' immediate uptake (Braidi, 2002; Oliver, 1995).

Conflicting findings across classroom-based and experimental studies on the benefits of different types of corrective feedback for L2 acquisition in relation to other factors such as the learners' readiness (e.g., language proficiency), the type of errors that are targeted and the learning context, call for further, more focused research, particularly in naturalistic classroom ESL contexts (Ammar, 2008; Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2006; Russell & Spada, 2006). In response to this gap in the literature, the present study was designed to explore the effectiveness of the different feedback types across two different proficiency levels in an ESL classroom environment, as well as reveal the types of errors that teachers choose to provide corrective feedback for.

THE STUDY

The following research questions were examined in this study:

1. How often do ESL teachers provide different types of interactional feedback to students who are in different levels of English language proficiency?
2. Which types of interactional feedback lead to learner uptake most frequently?
3. Which errors (phonological, lexical, or grammatical) do ESL teachers prefer to correct or what type(s) of feedback do they use with specific error categories?

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at a private English language school in Australia. A total of twenty-eight ESL learners and two native English teachers in two classes (Class A and Class B) participated in the project. Each class comprised fourteen learners from different L1 backgrounds, including Brazil,

Spain, China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Korea, Taiwan, France, Italy, and Colombia. The students' ages ranged from 17 to 39 and they were identified as either intermediate (Class A) or beginner (Class B) in terms of their proficiency level. The teacher of the intermediate group (Teacher A) was 37 years old, held two Bachelor degrees in Law and Arts, and had seven years of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) experience. The teacher of the beginner's group (Teacher B) was 53 years old, held a Master's degree in Education and had 30 years experience in the field of language education. Both teachers had completed the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA).

Data Collection and Analysis

Over a period of two days each class was observed. The observation of Class A took 2 hours (from 8:30 am to 10:30 am). The lesson was divided into six parts, each of which was approximately twenty minutes. The first part was about the previous grammar-exam; the teacher gave the students feedback about their grammar exam and carried out a warm up activity. The second part focused on the present perfect tense and the students were asked to change the tenses of the verbs listed on the posters around the room. The third part concentrated on listening, in this instance, to a Shakespearian sonnet. The fourth part was about sub-tropical climate and focused on speaking; the students were asked to discuss in small groups the properties of that climate. The fifth part of the lesson addressed reading skills and the students were given copies of the Oxford Dictionary to find out the meaning of some words and read aloud what they found. The sixth and final part of the lesson was a revision of what had been discussed in the class as well as a preview of the next lesson. Table 1 summarizes the different parts of the lesson for Class A.

TABLE 1
Lesson Content for Class A

Time	Objectives	Activity
8:30-8:50 am	Feedback and warm-up	Free questions
8:50-9:10 am	Present Perfect Tense	Changing the tense of the verbs listed on the wall posters
9:10-9:30 am	Listening	Shakespearian Sonnet
9:30-9:55 am	Speaking (small group discussion)	Sub-tropical climate
9:55-10:15 am	Study skills (reading)	Oxford Dictionary
10:15-10:30 am	Revision	Free questions

The observation of Class B also took two hours (from 12:30 pm to 2:30 pm) and the lesson was divided into four parts, each of which took approximately thirty minutes. The first part was a vocabulary and pronunciation game where the teacher gave the students the first two letters of a word and the students were asked to complete the word. The second part focused on grammar; the students were asked to complete some sentences using the infinitive form of verbs to express purpose. The third part concentrated on speaking and the students were asked to talk about their birthdays and how they celebrated them. The fourth part was about an Australian city and was both a revision of class discussion as well as a preview of the next lesson. Table 2 summarizes the different parts of the lesson for Class B.

TABLE 2
Lesson Content for Class B

Time	Objectives	Activity
12:30-1:00 pm	Vocabulary and Pronunciation	Game: Complete the Word
1:00-1:30 pm	Grammar	Infinitive of Purpose
1:30-2:00 pm	Speaking	Birthday Celebrations
2:00- 2:30 pm	Revision	Australian City

All the interactions that took place between the teachers and the learners in the two ESL classes were observed and audio-recorded. For the observations, a rubric was used that included the feedback, error and uptake taxonomy

developed by Lyster and Ranta (1997). Following the classroom observations, the two teachers were interviewed individually for about 30 minutes each. The interviews were semi-structured and elicited information about the teachers' knowledge and explicit use of different feedback types in their teaching. Both interviews were audio-recorded.

The audio recordings of the observed classes were transcribed and the frequencies of the error types, the feedback types and the student uptake were calculated. The coding and frequencies were checked by another rater to ensure consistency. Following Lyster and Ranta (1997) and Fanselow (1977), the student errors were coded as follows:

- L1 use: when a student does not know the target utterance and suddenly uses non-target language;
- Grammatical: incorrect use of grammatical categories one or more times;
- Lexical: incorrect or inappropriate use of words; and
- Phonological: non-target like pronunciation.

The types of interactional feedback were categorized according to Lyster and Ranta's (1997) taxonomy. *Modelling* was added to the taxonomy as the seventh type of corrective feedback. The following types of feedback were recorded:

- Explicit correction: the teacher provides students with the correct form and clearly states that what the student has said was incorrect;
- Recasts: the teacher implicitly reformulates all or part of students' utterances;
- Elicitation: the teacher strategically elicits a reformulation from students by asking questions or by pausing to allow students to complete the teacher's utterances;
- Metalinguistic clues: the teacher indicates to the student that there is an error in language output or provides questions related to the correctness of the student's utterance;
- Clarification requests: the teacher uses phrases such as "Pardon?" and "I don't

understand" in order to provide students with an opportunity for self-repair;

- Repetition: The teacher repeats the student's utterance to inform the student of the error occurrence, adjusting intonation to highlight the error; and
- Modelling: the teacher not only provides the student with the correct utterance (as in explicit correction) but also asks the student to repeat it after him/her.

Student uptake was simply divided into two categories: "successful" and "unsuccessful". Instances of uptake were coded as "successful" when either a student repeated the correct feedback or incorporated the corrected form in a longer utterance. In contrast, uptake was coded as "unsuccessful" when the student did not repeat the correct utterances or respond positively to the teachers' feedback (see Lyster & Ranta, 1997).

The teacher interviews were also transcribed and the teachers' responses to the interview questions were coded according to the following four themes: awareness of different types of errors; awareness of different types of feedback; preference for specific types of feedback; and, reasons for the provision of specific types of feedback. In this paper the interview data are used as supplementary evidence to facilitate the discussion of the classroom observation data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Regarding the use of different types of interactional feedback among groups of students who belong to different proficiency levels, this study found that in Class A, the intermediate group, explicit correction was the most frequently used type of feedback followed by metalinguistic clues, clarification requests and recasts (see Table 3).

TABLE 3
Frequency of Occurrence of Feedback in Class A and Class B

Feedback Type	Class A		Class B		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Explicit Correction	9	33%	9	26%	18	29%
Clarification Request	4	15%	9	26%	13	21%
Metalinguistic Clues	8	30%	5	14%	13	21%
Recast	3	11%	7	20%	10	16%
Elicitation	2	7%	1	2.5%	3	5%
Modelling	0	0%	3	9%	3	5%
Repetition	1	4%	1	2.5%	2	3%
Total	**27**	**100%**	**35**	**100%**	**62**	**100%**

Note: (F) Frequency

The infrequent use of recasts with intermediate students was unexpected as it is not consistent with the findings in Lyster and Ranta (1997) and Sheen (2004) where recasts comprised 55%-60% of the corrective feedback. The results of the present study, while unexpected, are not overly surprising. Given the fact that Class A was an intermediate group of students preparing for their International English Language Testing System (IELTS) examination, explicit feedback would seem to be "the preferable form of feedback they [students] would want" (Teacher A, Interview, lines 44-36). This finding is similar to that of Ellis et al. (2006), who found that other types of explicit feedback like metalinguistic clues were more frequent as students preferred to receive overtly corrective types of feedback than implicit ones, like recasts. In Class A, too, explicit corrections were more frequent (33%) than other types of feedback, showing the teacher's focus on the accurate use of forms rather than on enhancing students' ability to detect their errors through the use of implicit feedback types which are usually more time consuming.

The results for Class B (see Table 3) were similar to Class A in that the most frequently used type of feedback was explicit correction (26%). Unlike Class A, the teacher in Class B used clarification requests mostly on instances of L1 use by the students quite frequently (see Table 4). Being beginners the students in this class made a number of L1 use errors while

participating in communicative activities. These errors were directly questioned by the teacher using clarification requests as Teacher B could not understand the students' L1. Errors in L1 use did not occur in Class A where students were at an intermediate level of English proficiency (see Table 4).

Interestingly, recasts were the third most frequently used type of feedback (20%) in Class B, and they were used almost twice as frequently as in Class A (see Table 3). The teacher's frequent use of recasts in Class B shows a focus on fluency as implicit feedback types, like recasts, are less likely to disturb the flow of a lesson (Seedhouse, 1997). Metalinguistic clues as feedback were used half as much as in Class A (14%) probably due to the low proficiency level of the students in Class B, which would imply less familiarity with linguistic terms as well as a limited ability to detect errors in their output and correct them using metalinguistic clues. Unlike Class A, modelling occurred quite frequently (9%) in Class B. Teacher B referred to modelling as his "repeat after me strategy" (Teacher B, Interview, line 56) in an effort to provide his beginner students with the correct target form.

In both Class A and Class B, elicitation and repetition were the least frequently used types of feedback. Both elicitation and repetition are implicit forms of feedback and they require a considerable amount of time as students are strategically guided towards the identification of their errors and they need to come up with the correct forms themselves. Given the limited amount of class time, it is not surprising that teachers in both classes did not use these types of feedback as much as the more explicit types of feedback.

Both Classes A and B were similar in that the teachers used a variety of feedback strategies, rather than concentrating on the extensive use of only certain types of feedback, like recasts, as in the study by Lyster and Ranta (1997), or recasts and elicitations, as in the study by Nassaji (2007). The teachers used a combination of different feedback types in relation to the different types of activities that took place in both classes. For example, the teachers in both classes used recasts when their students were engaged in oral communication tasks. In order not to disrupt the oral task and yet to help students clarify what they meant to say, teachers used implicit reformulations,

that is, recasts, of their students' output. Teacher A remarked "I like the conversation to carry on. I don't like to stop the students just for grammatical correction [as they] may become less motivated" (Teacher A, Interview, lines 68-70). This is in agreement with Long's (2007) claim that recasts often exist when the focus is on meaning and an interruption of flow is undesirable. By and large, in this study, the data showed that recasts were not favoured as a type of feedback in either of the two classes observed; this is in line with other classroom studies that lent minimal support for the use of recasts compared to other types of interactional feedback (Ellis et al., 2001; Panova & Lyster, 2002).

With regards to uptake, the study showed that the types of interactional feedback that most frequently led to successful uptake were repetition and metalinguistic clues; whenever these two types of feedback were used in either Class A or Class B, they always led to successful uptake by the students (see Table 4).

Metalinguistic clues as a feedback strategy were also reported as correlating with successful uptake in Lowen and Philp (2006). Both these types of feedback, metalinguistic clues and repetition, are implicit in that they do not provide the correct form to the learner, but allow the learner to correct their output themselves. In the interview, Teacher A described his strategy of providing implicit feedback in detail:

> I will correct students' errors implicitly by indicating that there is an error with no effort to correct it... When a student says, "*I will helped John to write his assignment*," I am saying, "*You will helped?*" with rising intonation. Then he will know that he has committed an error. Then he will correct himself immediately. Otherwise, "Tim Tam." (Teacher A, Interview, lines 27-31)

Here, Teacher A is also explaining another strategy for implicit feedback, which is the use of the phrase "Tim Tam" to indicate to the students that they have committed an error. The student who committed the error but did not correct their output was required to bring a packet of Tim Tams (a popular

brand of Australian cookies) for the next lesson. According to Teacher A, this strategy increased the students' motivation to correct their mistakes on their own.

TABLE 4
Frequency of Feedback Types by Error Category and Successful Uptake

Class A	Phonological	Grammatical	Lexical	L1 Use	Total
Explicit Correction	(F) 4 (S) 4	(F) 3 (S) 3	(F) 2 (S) 2	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 9 (S) 9
Metalinguistic Clues	(F) 2 (S) 2	(F) 3 (S) 3	(F) 3 (S) 3	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 8 (S) 8
Clarification Requests	(F) 3 (S) 2	(F) 1 (S) 1	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 4 (S) 3
Recasts	(F) 2 (S) 1	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 1 (S) 1	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 3 (S) 2
Elicitation	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 1 (S) 1	(F) 1 (S) 0	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 2 (S) 1
Repetition	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 1 (S) 1	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 1 (S) 1
Total Class A	(F) 11 (S) 9	(F) 9 (S) 9	(F) 7 (S) 6	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 27(S) 24
Class B	**Phonological**	**Grammatical**	**Lexical**	**L1 Use**	**Total**
Explicit Correction	(F) 5 (S) 3	(F) 2 (S) 2	(F) 2 (S) 1	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 9 (S) 6
Clarification Requests	(F) 3 (S) 2	(F) 1 (S) 1	(F) 1 (S) 0	(F) 4 (S) 1	(F) 9 (S) 4
Recasts	(F) 1 (S) 1	(F) 3 (S) 2	(F) 3 (S) 2	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 7 (S) 5
Metalinguistic Clues	(F) 3 (S) 3	(F) 2 (S) 2	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 5 (S) 5
Modelling	(F) 2 (S) 1	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 1 (S) 0	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 3 (S) 1
Repetition	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 1 (S) 1	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 1 (S) 1
Elicitation	(F) 1 (S) 0	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 0 (S) 0	(F) 1 (S) 0
Total Class B	(F) 15 (S) 10	(F) 9 (S) 8	(F) 7 (S) 3	(F) 4 (S) 1	(F) 35 (S) 22

Note: (F) Frequency; (S) Successful uptake

The most frequently used feedback type, explicit correction, led to successful uptake whenever it was used with the intermediate group (Class A). In contrast, even though explicit correction was the most frequently used type of feedback in Class B as well, successful uptake only occurred two-thirds of the time it was used (see Table 4). This result shows that the intermediate group was developmentally better equipped to receive explicit corrections than the beginners' group. In some instances, when explicit corrections for phonological errors were provided by the teacher in Class B, the students were unable to correct their pronunciation. For example, in this

excerpt, Teacher B is using explicit correction to help a beginner student correct her pronunciation of the */th/* sound (Class B, Error 3):

> Teacher: How much money does he have?
> Student: *Sirty pipe sousands.*
> Teacher: No, no. *Thirty-five thousands.*
> Student: *Sirty-five sousands.*

Even after Teacher B provided the correct pronunciation, the student failed to show successful uptake, possibly due to the student's low level of English ability.

Problems with pronunciation were also responsible for poor uptake in Class B whenever the teacher used clarification requests. For example, in this excerpt, Teacher B is trying to elicit the correct pronunciation of the word 'nurse', but the student seems unable to correct his pronunciation (Class B, Error 1):

> Teacher: *Nurse.*
> Student: *Noss.*
> Teacher: Say it again?
> Student: *Nose…*

Similarly, phonological errors led to unsuccessful uptake with clarification requests in Class A. Furthermore, the only time the use of recast failed to result in successful uptake in Class A was when it was used to correct a phonological error (Class A, Error 9):

> Student: I *beliefe* it is going to work.
> Teacher: Oh, you *believe* that.
> Student: Yah, I *beliefe* that.

This disputes previous research showing that recasts are more noticeable and therefore more successful with phonological errors than morphosyntactic errors (Mackey, Gass, & McDonough, 2000). In the present study, it could be

that the students were not trained to listen to subtle variations in phonemes, especially if certain phonemes do not exist in their first language or have a different distribution. Thus, despite the teacher's efforts to model the correct pronunciation, students remained unable to correct their errors in pronunciation. In addition, the critical period hypothesis (see Flege, 1999) suggests that the adult subjects in this study would have difficulty altering their L1 accent to suit L2 pronunciation protocols, rendering the treatment of phonological errors through implicit feedback unsuccessful with both beginners and intermediate students.

Elicitation and modelling had the lowest rate of successful uptake in both classes and they were used mainly to treat phonological errors. Elicitation resulted in no uptake in Class B, while it led to successful uptake only half the time it was used in Class A. Modelling was not used in Class A, and led to successful uptake in Class B only once out of the three times it was used. Students' pronunciation is a language skill that requires extensive time and effort to achieve acceptable results, especially in light of the critical period hypothesis which reveals the additional pronunciation challenges presented by age in SLA. The results of the present study suggest that providing feedback, either implicit (such as recasts) or explicit (such as explicit corrections), on pronunciation does not always result in immediate uptake, especially by adult students at a low level of proficiency.

Interestingly, 70% of the recasts used in both classes resulted in successful uptake (see Table 5), a finding which is consistent with other studies such as Ellis et al. (2001) and Sheen (2004). According to Sheen (2004), in EFL and ESL contexts (such as the context of the present study), students are oriented to attending to linguistic form rather than meaning (as in the immersion classes) the uptake of recasts is higher. The successful uptake of recasts could also be due to the repeated exposure to exemplars of the target forms (Lyster & Izquierdo, 2009). The present study also showed that other types of feedback have a higher rate of successful uptake than recasts and these results are consistent with previous findings (see Loewen & Philp, 2006; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Panova & Lyster, 2002).

TABLE 5
Frequency of Feedback and Successful Uptake Per Feedback Type
(Class A and Class B)

Feedback Type	Class A and B		
	Frequency of Feedback	Successful Uptake	Percentage (%) of Uptake
Repetition	2	2	100%
Metalinguistic Clues	13	13	100%
Explicit Correction	18	15	83%
Recast	10	7	70%
Clarification Request	13	7	54%
Elicitation	3	1	33%
Modelling	3	1	33%
Total	62	46	

By and large, corrective feedback resulted in more instances of successful uptake with the intermediate students (24 successful uptakes out of 27 instances of corrective feedback) than with the beginners (only 22 successful uptakes out of 35 instances of corrective feedback), which shows that more proficient students are better equipped to benefit from explicit and implicit corrective feedback than low proficiency students (see Table 4). These results align with the findings reported in previous studies (see Ammar & Spada, 2006; Ammar, Trofimovich, & Gatbonton, 2005; Philp, 2003; Trofimovich, Ammar, & Gatbonton, 2007).

Finally, with regards to the types of errors teachers most frequently correct, in both classes phonological errors appeared to be the main concern (see Table 6). In Class A, 41% of the teacher's feedback was directed at phonological errors. The students in Class A were preparing for the IELTS examination, which includes an oral interview. Teacher A commented that, "Australians find pronunciation mistakes the least happy to put up with . . . [if you] teach IELTS, this is a 1-9 scale [based on] pronunciation [which is] how much pain does it cause the listener? At this level [Intermediate], minimizing the pain and difficulty of the audience is important (Teacher A, Interview, lines 43-48). For Teacher A, clearly the correction of pronunciation errors was a priority as his students as they prepared for the IELTS interview.

TABLE 6
Error Categories: Class A and Class B

Error Category	Class A		Class B		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Phonological	11	41%	15	43%	26	42%
Grammatical	9	33%	9	26%	18	29%
Lexical	7	26%	7	20%	14	23%
Use of L1	0	0%	4	11%	4	6%
Total	**27**	**100%**	**35**	**100%**	**62**	**100%**

Note: (F) Frequency

Similarly, for Teacher B phonological errors (43%) were the main concern for his students (see Table 6). As beginners, students made a lot of pronunciation errors that hindered understanding and threatened the flow of interactional activities with communication breakdowns. In the interest of maintaining fluency and keeping the students' communication going, Teacher B corrected students' pronunciation errors instantly. In both classes, there was a strong correlation between phonological errors and the use of explicit correction as a response to them (see Table 7). Both Teacher A and Teacher B wanted to provide students with immediate correction to enhance their students' awareness of the importance of pronunciation.

Grammatical errors were also frequently corrected in both Class A (33%) and in Class B (26%) (see Table 6). Lexical errors were the third preferred category to be corrected (26% for Class A and 20% for Class B) (see Table 6). Despite these similarities, Teachers A and B demonstrated different attitudes toward the correction of grammatical and lexical errors. Teacher A made selective choices in his correction of grammatical and lexical errors, based on their importance for the lesson or the frequency of their occurrence. Teacher A reported: "I like correcting what I feel [is] essential [or] those errors that occur repeatedly… I have to make them clear to the students. If it is not relevant to what we study now, I will let it go" (Teacher A, Interview, lines 55-58). Unlike Teacher A, Teacher B was more intense in his provision of feedback in response to grammatical and lexical errors: "As I am working with beginners, I have to correct every mistake" (Teacher B, Interview, line

40). Finally the most frequent types of feedback in response to lexical errors were recasts (29%) and explicit corrections (29%) in both Class A and Class B (see Table 7).

TABLE 7
Feedback Type Per Error Category in Class A and Class B

Error Categories →	Class	Phonological		Grammatical		Lexical		L1 Use	
Feedback Types ↓		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Explicit Corrections	A+B	9	35%	5	28%	4	29%	0	0%
	A	4		3		2		0	
	B	5		2		2		0	
Recasts	A+B	3	12%	3	17%	4	29%	0	0%
	A	2		0		1		0	
	B	1		3		3		0	
Repetition	A+B	0	0%	2	11%	0	0%	0	0%
	A	0		1		0		0	
	B	0		1		0		0	
Clarification Requests	A+B	6	23%	2	11%	1	7%	4	100%
	A	3		1		0		0	
	B	3		1		1		4	
Metalinguistic Clues	A+B	5	19%	5	28%	3	21%	0	0%
	A	2		3		3		0	
	B	3		2		0		0	
Elicitation	A+B	1	4%	1	6%	1	7%	0	0%
	A	0		1		1		0	
	B	1		0		0		0	
Modelling	A+B	2	8%	0	0%	1	7%	0	0%
	A	0		0		0		0	
	B	2		0		1		0	
Total		26	100%	18	100%	14	100%	4	100%

Note: (F) Frequency of Occurrence

L1 use errors were restricted to Class B, due to the low level of proficiency of the students in this class, and these attracted only clarification requests by the teacher (see Table 7). This finding is in contrast to Lyster and Ranta's (1997) study that found teachers used elicitation most frequently in response to L1 usage errors. This difference could be due to the fact that in Lyster and Ranta's study all students had the same L1 background (i.e., English students in a French immersion class) and the teacher was also familiar with French, while the students in the present study came from a variety of L1 backgrounds and the teacher was unfamiliar with each student's L1.

In summary, the most frequent types of interactional feedback in Class A (intermediate) were explicit corrections followed by metalinguistic clues and clarification requests, while recasts were the fourth most frequent type of feedback, comprising only 11% of the total feedback provided in Class A. Similar to Class A, in Class B (beginners) the most frequently used feedback type was explicit correction, followed by clarification requests, and recasts, which were more frequently used in Class B than in Class A. Combining the frequencies in both classes, recasts comprised only 16% of the total corrective feedback, which did not provide sufficient evidence for the overall utility of recasts in these two ESL classrooms (see Table 3). This study also showed that repetition and metalinguistic clues always led to successful uptake in both Class A and Class B. Explicit corrections were always successful whenever they were used with the intermediate group, while they were successful only two-thirds of the time when used with the beginners' group. Overall, recasts led to successful uptake 70% of the time they were used in class. Finally, with regards to which category of error Teachers A and B preferred to correct, in both classes, phonological errors were the most preferred error category. The second and third preferred error types for correction were grammatical and lexical errors respectively, followed by L1 use errors which only occurred with the beginner group and comprised only 11% of the total errors committed by the students in that class (see Table 6).

CONCLUSION

This study looked at seven types of corrective feedback and examined their effectiveness as measured by the rate of immediate uptake by ESL students in two levels of proficiency, beginners and intermediate. Additionally, this study explored the association between feedback types and error categories in an effort to determine whether there are certain feedback types associated with certain error categories and it found that this is, in fact, the case. The study also found that more proficient students are better equipped to benefit from implicit and explicit feedback than beginner students, while pronunciation errors are the primary focus of corrective feedback in an ESL form-focused context.

Due to time constraints, the data collection involved only a limited amount of classroom observation. A longer classroom observation could have yielded more instances of errors and feedback for a more significant comparative and contrastive analysis. Also, this study measured uptake as successful or not and did not allow for further classification of uptake as self-repair, complete repair or partial repair. Such further classification of uptake could provide a more detailed picture of the effect of corrective feedback on student language development. Finally, a follow up study measuring the long term effect of error correction is needed.

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