The Effect of Explicit Corrective Feedback on EFL Learners' Retention of Grammar: Does the Medium of Feedback Matter?

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Abstract. Although various forms of corrective feedback (CF) have extensively been studied, the impact of explicit CF on grammar retention has received little attention. The current study sought to ascertain how Iranian EFL students responded to explicit oral and written CF classified as "metalinguistic feedback". In the present study, the effectiveness of two types of CF Explicit Written Feedback (EWF) and Explicit Oral Feedback (EOF) on EFL learners' retention of grammatical points was examined. Sixty Iranian high school girls were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions: oral or written. Following this procedure, a pretest, posttest, delayed-posttest design with two experimental groups was employed to examine the impact of the

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two types of CF. Four paired samples t-tests, an independent samples t-test, and a mixed between-within subjects analysis of variance were used to assess the effect of explicit written and oral CF on the retention of grammatical structures. The results of the mixed between-subjects analysis of variance and different t-tests indicated that both types of EOF and EWF significantly affected language learners' retention of grammatical structures. In addition, results suggested that both groups performed equally well in retaining grammatical structures. Discussion is held regarding the study's implications and potential directions for future research.

1. Introduction

Corrective Feedback (CF) is one of the accepted techniques to promote the development of L2 by giving the learners negative and positive signals about what they have done (Long, 1996). Positive feedback gives learners acceptable structure in L2, whereas negative feedback makes them aware of the structures which are not possible in the second language. According to Sheen (2007), CF is the teacher's reaction that asks the learner to pay attention to "the grammatical accuracy of the utterance produced by the learner" (p. 255).

CF has generally been classified into explicit and implicit categories. Explicit CF signifies an obvious linguistic sign for error modification, whereas implicit CF refers to giving prompts or eliciting information with no clear linguistic signals (Mndez & Cruz, 2012). Lyster and Ranta (1997) suggest five kinds of CF, among which "recast, clarification request, repetition, and elicitation" are categorized as implicit feedback, and metalinguistic feedback is categorized as explicit feedback (p. 67).

As explicit feedback, metalinguistic feedback provides a linguistic hint for the errors. According to Ellis (2009), this explanation may be provided as a code or may take the form of a longer and more detailed one. L2 investigators have gathered solid evidence that metalinguistic explanation increases the enhancement of explicit knowledge (see Ferris & Robert, 2001; Rassaei et al., 2012; Shintani & Ellis, 2013). Metalinguistic feedback is essential and noticeable to L2 learners since it explicitly

supplies them with a chance to recognize and find their ungrammatical utterances. Indeed, metalinguistic feedback may aid L2 learners to recognize the disparity between their knowledge and the received metalinguistic feedback.

Besides, both explicit and implicit types of CF can take different forms of response (oral and written) to the learners' ungrammatical utterances. Accordingly, Lyster et al. (2013) stated that oral CF is generally considered as CF that emphasizes the instructor's instant response to the errors of the learner. Oral CF may be input or output-providing (Li & Vuono, 2019). In the input-providing mode, the accurate structure is given to the student, and in the output-providing method, the correct structure is elicited from the learner. Written CF nearly always includes offline corrections of the errors committed by the students. However, Similar to oral CF, the mode of providing feedback to learners in written CF can include both input-providing (often assigned as "direct correction") and output-prompting ("indirect correction") feedback (Li & Vuono, 2019).

Metalinguistic information may or may not accompany direct and indirect written CF (Sheen & Ellis, 2011, p. 602). On the other hand, written CF is provided by teachers or peers in a written form in the classroom. Both oral CF (OCF) and written CF (WCF) have been shown to help students in developing language learning (Ellis, 2009; Li & Vuono, 2019). Nevertheless, oral and written CF "have unique features and have been studied separately in the primary research" (Li & Vuono, 2019, p. 94).

Some researchers are concerned with how to provide learners with those modes of CF that best lead to the retention of language features including grammar over time (Li & Vuono, 2019; Lyster & Saito, 2010; Mao & Lee, 2020; Sheen, 2010a; Zheng & Yu, 2018). Bahrick (1984) pointed out the deeper something is processed in the mind, the more profoundly it is remembered and recalled. As evident in the field of L2 grammar most learners have difficulty recalling the grammatical structures.

In the past three decades, there has been controversy on the effectiveness of written and oral CF on language learning)Bitchener & Knoch,

2008; Ellis, 2009; Ellis, Lowen & Erlam, 2006; Lochman, 2002; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Lyster et al., 2013). For instance, Bitchener and Knoch (2008) made a comparison between written and oral metalinguistic clarifications and direct CF. Their findings demonstrated that the learners who were given written CF managed to maintain the level of accuracy for many weeks. In another study, Sheen (2010a) examined learners' proper use of second language articles under the effect of oral and written CF. The findings showed that whereas implicit oral feedback did not improve learning, the other types of CF were beneficial in improving students' use of articles in the English language. On the whole, the results showed that explicitness in both written and oral CF played a great role in the efficiency of CF (Sheen, 2010b).

Teachers and investigators considered providing CF an essential part of EFL classes until Truscott (1996) emphasized the insufficiency of any strong evidence suggesting the indisputable idea that CF is influential in second language acquisition. Since Truscott (1996) claimed in different debates that CF does not improve second language acquisition, several studies have attempted either to justify it or argue against its efficacy (Bitchener & Knoch, 2009; Bruton, 2010; Chandler, 2009; Nassaji & Fotos, 2004; Truscott, 1999; Xu, 2009). In this regard, different CF types including elicitation, clarification requests, repetition, and metalinguistic feedback (Long, 1996; Nabei & Swain, 2002) have been investigated to explore whether they lead to the acquisition of the second language or not (Loewen, 2005; Panova & Lyster, 2002; Tsang, 2004).

In Iran, as an EFL context, CF has not been applied efficiently in teaching foreign languages (Zhang & Rahimi, 2014). While different forms of CF can contribute to language learning, the impact of written and oral CF on grammar retention of Iranian EFL high school students has been under-researched. The current research, therefore, attempted to bridge this gap by means of examining the effectiveness of teachers' explicit metalinguistic written and oral CF under metalinguistic explanations on the retention of grammatical structures over time.

2. Literature Review

Studying various facets of CF has attracted many researchers' attention

in the last two decades (e.g., Alajmi, 2014; Alharbi, 2016; Ferris, 2004; Karim & Nassaji, 2013; Sheen, 2007). Research has shown that certain types of CF can lead to substantial retention of grammatical structures (Rahimi, 2015; Lyster & Saito, 2010; Sadat et al., 2015; Tayebipour, 2019). As an example, in a meta-analysis, Yu (2022) examined implicit and explicit CF and their effectiveness on the students' disposition to communicate, L2 grammatical awareness and accuracy, and L2 speaking development. According to the findings, explicit CF proved to have a greater role than implicit CF concerning the aforementioned aspects of L2. In another study, Nassaji (2009) put the effects of some implicit and explicit types of feedback on learning linguistic forms into investigation. Nassaji (2009) found that students performed better in immediate and also delayed posttests when making use of explicit feedback. Similarly, Ellis et al. (2006) inspected the effect of metalinguistic explanation and recast on the learning of the morpheme "ed". Findings indicated that the explicit experimental group had a better performance than the implicit experimental group.

The mode of the CF has also attracted researchers' attention in recent decades (Erlam et al., 2006; Lochtman. 2002; Lyster & Saito, 2010; Sheen, 2010a). Lyster and Saito (2010) examined the effect of oral CF on the improvement of the second language. Their analyses took into consideration various variables employed in earlier studies (e.g. CF types and outcome measurement types). Their analysis procedure also compared the efficacy of CF concerning contextual factors (the settings of foreign language and second language), the age of students, and the length of the treatment. The analyses boiled down to the fact that oral CF had continuing impact on improving the target language. Similarly, Amoli (2020) investigated the effect of EOF under metalinguistic feedback among different kinds of CF on the students' pronoun accuracy. The findings showed that the EOF group under metalinguistic evidence performed better than the control group receiving explicit CF.

Lyster et al. (2013) studied different facets of oral CF including the targets studied, laboratory vs. classroom studies, preferences, and frequency. As Lyster et al. (2013) state, "classroom studies of CF consistently confirm that oral CF is significantly more beneficial than no

CF, and also students receiving prompts or EOF indicate more gains on some measures than students receiving recasts." (P. 20).

According to the above-mentioned studies, explicit feedback shows to be more beneficial than implicit CF in oral CF since the learners may have the chance of raising awareness. According to Ellis (2017, p. 173), "in the classroom context, it would seem that explicit CF is more useful than implicit CF." In addition, the facilitating impact of the written mode of CF on second language acquisition has also been acknowledged (Alharbi, 2016; Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010a; Bitchener & Storch, 2016; Ferris, 2007; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Sheen, 2007).

According to Bitchner and Knoch (2008), studies regarding CF in written form have been conducted on either comparisons between direct and indirect CF strategies or various CF strategy types. In line with Laland (1982), Ferris and Helt (2000) believe that indirect CF is more effective than direct CF. However, Chandler (2003) argues for the priority of direct CF. Furthermore, Semke (1984) and Robb et al. (1986) mention that direct and indirect CF are not different. Moreover, no difference has been mentioned between various forms of indirect feedback (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Roberts, 1995, Bitchener & Knoch, 2008, p. 415). Moreover, the effect of written CF on the acquisition of grammatical structures was examined by Sheen (2007). Sheen (2007) found that direct metalinguistic feedback better affected the retention of articles by language learners than direct-only feedback.

Oral and written CF and their effectiveness have been compared in some pieces of research. For instance, Bitchener and Knoch (2008) compared some types of CF including direct CF, no CF, direct CF only, written CF and oral CF. Their findings demonstrated that the oral CF was less influential than written CF. Besides, the group receiving written CF helped learners retain second language components. Bitchener and Knoch (2009) also explored the potential impact of written CF on (a) and (the) articles. Their findings revealed that written CF was more influential than oral CF in acquiring these two articles. Rezazadeh et al. (2018) also put into practice the impacts of oral, written, and oral plus written CF regarding the writing skill of EFL students. Findings

showed that the individuals receiving oral plus written feedback had a better performance than those who received oral and written feedback separately. Finally, Sheen (2010b) made a comparison between the effects of oral and written CF on the students' appropriate use of articles in the English language. He compared five conditions: oral metalinguistic, oral recast, direct written metalinguistic, direct written correction, and a control condition. Findings suggested that all CF forms (except for oral recast) were useful.

As the above review shows, different modes of CF have exerted various degrees of effectiveness in learning certain L2 grammatical aspects. Although a good number of studies have delved into the beneficial effect of CF on different domains of L2, few studies have investigated how different modes of CF (i.e. oral and written) affect the retention of L2 grammatical structures. In this respect, Esmaeili et al. (2020) practiced the impacts of CF on the acquisition and retention of grammar in Iranian EFL learners. Esmaeili et al. (2020) came up with substantial gains in students' long-term retention of grammar. In another study, Tayebipour (2019) also investigated how EWF and EOF affected Omani EFL learners' use and also recall of the passive voice. Findings suggested that students profited more from EWF, and that oral CF was fleeting.

Although the studies mentioned above have dealt with different aspects of CF concerning L2 development, explicit written and oral metalinguistic evidence and their impact on the learners' retention of grammatical structures have received less attention. Therefore, more research needs to be done on them. The present study delved into the following research questions:

(1) Does the mode of providing feedback lead to the retention of grammatical structures by EFL learners?

(2) Is there a significant difference between explicit oral and explicit written feedback regarding retention of grammatical structures?

3. Method

The present study employed a pretest-posttest-delayed posttest design

to explore the effect of oral and written metalinguistic feedback on remembering or retaining grammatical structures over time.

3.1. Participants

Sixty Iranian female EFL students from girls' high schools in a city located in Iran participated in the study. They were chosen in terms of a non-probability sampling of convenience type due to the problems regarding the availability of the participants. By randomly assigning the participants into two groups, two experimental groups were formed: EWF and EOF groups. The participants majored in experimental science and mathematics, and their ages ranged between 17 and 18.

3.2. Instruments

To achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the following research instruments were used:

3.2.1. Oxford placement test (OPT)

In order to evaluate the participants' general language proficiency, Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered before the treatment. OPT is available on the computer as well as in paper-and-pencil format. The test included 60 multiple-choice questions on grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension that took between 30 and 45 minutes to complete. According to the Oxford University Press website, the reliability and also validity index of this test are high enough to be used as a leveling test (2001).

3.2.2. Target structures

Research has indicated that certain grammatical structures were suitable for CF (Ferris, 1999, 2002; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Common ESL errors were categorized into two kinds: what is treatable and what is not treatable (Ferris, 1999). Generally, treatable errors have proved to be more systematic (e.g. verb tense and articles). The overlap between the treatable errors of Ferris (1999) and the errors identified as the most problematic errors in L2 writing (Martinez, 2006) were the main criteria for choosing the target structures. Therefore, the target structures selected for the present piece of research were simple past, passive voice,

articles, and relative pronouns.

3.2.3. Teacher-made grammar test

The test items were derived by researchers from a book titled Grammar (9246 Questions) Part A-Birmingham. The forty multiple-choice questions of the grammar test had equally been distributed among four predetermined structures: article, relative pronoun, passive, and simple past. These structures were measured collectively. In the current study, this grammar test served as the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest to examine how well the learners had improved their ability to correct grammatical errors and retain grammatical structures over time. The place of the items and the distracters for each item were arranged in different ways in the pre, post, and delayed posttests to eliminate the possibility of remembering the answers.

To prevent students from paying more attention to the pretest items, the researchers withheld any information about the upcoming tests from the students. A pilot study was conducted with thirty pre-intermediate EFL students to assess the grammar test reliability, and the calculated reliability coefficient was .73. Two Ph.D holders who were authorities in language testing and design confirmed the test content validity.

3.2.4. Writing tasks

Having taken the pretest at the semester outset, the participants were required to write about various issues derived from their English textbook during treatment. They received explicit oral and written CF under metalinguistic explanations about target structures and other grammatical points. Four additional written tasks were also performed by the learners during the treatment process to obtain the teacher's explicit oral and written CF.

3.3. Data collection

Approximately, eighteen weeks (thirty-six sessions) were required for the pre-experimental design of this study. After gaining students' consent at the onset of the research, the researchers' first objective was to check and confirm the homogeneity of the participants. For this purpose, from among ninety-two participants who took the OPT, sixty students with score distributions between about 1 SD around the mean score were

identified as appropriate to take part in the study. The sixty partici-pants were randomly assigned to explicit oral and written experimental conditions, each including thirty participants. Both experimental condi-tions were taught by the same instructor.

After running the homogeneity procedure, a forty-item teacher-made grammar test was taken by the two experimental groups as a pretest. The participants were given forty minutes to respond to the questions. The results of the pretest were used in order to be compared with those of the posttest and the delayed posttest in order to answer the research ques-tions. The results of the pretest were also used to assess the homogeneity of the participants' grammatical knowledge. The learner's pretest was scored on a scale of 0 to 20, and the test sheets were not returned to the participants.

The following treatment process was considered for this research: dur-ing the first treatment session, the researchers introduced explicit CF and further detailed metalinguistic information to both experimental groups. In line with Ellis (2009), learners should be provided with ex-plicit comments on the errors they make. Therefore, in the case of explicit written CF, the students' incorrect sentences were corrected through metalinguistic explanations provided by the teacher at the end of their papers. For this purpose, incorrect words or incorrect structures were underlined and each student was provided with error explanations in the margin of her test sheet.

Example: *Learner's writing: The poems is collected by a famous poet. In-structor's explanations in written form: The poems are collected by a famous poet. [Explanation: since "poems" is plural, a proper plural aux-iliary verb must be used after "poems". In this particular example, "are" should have been used instead of "is"].*

For EOF, the researcher read each participant's written sentence aloud, and each student received an in-person explanation of oral met-alinguistic feedback. The two feedback methods only differed in one re-spect: In the oral group, the feedback was expressed and presented orally, whereas in the written group the feedback was presented in a written format.

Similarly, explicit oral and written CF under metalinguistic CF were received by the experimental groups during the treatment process. At each session, participants from each experimental group were required to write a piece of writing on a common subject as part of their homework and present it to the instructor at the next session. The grade given by the teacher was not solely based on the written work. In the explicit written/oral conditions, after the teacher explained the grammatical errors (target structures) in written and oral formats, students were required to incorporate their comments into subsequent writing. Students had to review previously graded assignments and write new essays. The teacher performed this process twenty-eight times consecutively (twice a week).

During the final week of the treatment, participants underwent a post-test to determine whether EOF and EWF affected the language learners' ability to correct grammar after receiving pertinent written or oral feedback from the teacher. To determine whether EOF and EWF had any possible effects on the students' ability to retain their grammatical knowledge over time, the participants underwent a delayed posttest twenty-eight days after their posttest. Participants' posttest and delayed posttest results were corrected and scored by their instructor.

In order to check the normality of the distribution, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used. An independent samples t-test, four paired samples t-tests, and a mixed between-within subjects analysis of variance were also performed to fulfill the aims of the study and answer the research questions.

4. Results

In this section, besides presenting the normality test results, each previously raised research question is answered.

4.1. Tests of normality

Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed to check the normality of the data distributions. The one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test found that all distributions had p-values greater than $0.05(P > 0.05)$, indicating even distribution of information ($P = 0.416, 0.645, 0.650, 0.205, 0.138, 0.176 > .05$). To measure whether the participants were homogeneous

regarding grammatical knowledge, the average scores from the pretest groups were compared. Tables 1 and 2 compare the results of the pretest of the explicit oral and written CF groups.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics Regarding the Pretest of Written and Oral Groups

	Number	Mean	SD
Oral Explicit	30	11.02	.86
Written Explicit	30	10.90	1.06

Table 2: Results of Independent Samples T-test for the Explicit Written and Oral Feedback Groups' Pretests

t-test		
T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1.53	58	.131

The mean scores for the oral and written groups were 11.02 and 10.90, respectively. The t-test table includes only the "assumed equal variances" leaving out the equal variances not assumed since the Levene's test was not significant ($p = .323 > 0.05$). Results of the independent-samples t-test also showed no significant difference between oral and written groups in terms of pretest scores. Therefore, both groups were grammatically homogeneous at the start of the study.

4.2. Answer to the first RQ: Does the mode of providing feedback lead to the retention of grammatical structures by EFL learners?

A mixed between- within subjects analysis of variance was performed to assess the effect of the two experimental conditions (oral CF and written CF) on the participants' scores on pre, post, and delayed post-tests. The results of this analytical method are shown in the following table.

According to Table 3, no significant interaction was found between the treatment and time, i.e., Wilks' Lambda = .53, F = 24.61, p = .59, Partial eta squared = 46. There was a substantial effect for time, i.e., Wilks' $Lambda = .28, F = 71.02, p < .001$, partial eta squared = .71, with both

groups indicating an increase in grammar scores across the three time periods (see Table 3). Therefore, according to the results of the mixed between-within analysis of variance, significant differences were found between the pre, post, and delayed posttest for both experimental conditions. As a result, it could be concluded that the two types of CF (oral and written) led to an improvement in the participants' retention of grammatical structures.

Table 3: Multivariate Tests of Mixed Between-within Subjects Analysis of Variance

Effect		Value	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Time	Wilks' Lambda	.286	71.022[b]	.000	.714
Time * Treatment	Wilks' Lambda	.537	24.615[b]	.59	.463

Moreover, for examining the grammar retention and providing more pieces of evidence for answering the first research question, four paired-samples t-tests were also employed. The first Paired-samples t-test compared the mean of the EOF group on their posttest and delayed-posttest, to explore the possible impact of EOF on grammar retention. Tables 4 and 5 demonstrate the comparative results of the EOF group on the posttest and the delayed posttest.

Table 4: Posttest-Delayed Posttest Data for the EOF Group

	Number	Mean	SD
Posttest	30	14.53	1.11
Delayed-posttest	30	16.41	.764

Table 5: Paired Samples T-test for Comparison of the EOF Group's Posttest and Delayed-posttest

	Mean	SD	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Posttest-delay posttest	1.88	1.04	9.84	.000

The calculated P value for Levene's test was 0.51 which was well high 0.05 (F=3.9) threshold. Based on Table 4, the delayed-posttest and

posttest mean scores of the EOF group were 16.41 and 14.53, respectively. The results of paired samples t-test number one showed a significant difference between the post-test and delayed post-test means ($p = 0.000 < 0.001$). Thus, referring to Tables 4 and 5, using oral explicit CF under metalinguistic feedback improved the retention of grammar over time.

The second Paired-samples t-test compared the means of the EWF group on their posttest and delayed-posttest, to examine the effect of EWF on the development of grammatical retention. The results of this comparison are shown in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6: Posttest-delayed Posttest Comparative Data for the EWF Group

	Number	Mean	SD
Posttest	30	14.91	1.12
Delayed-posttest	30	15.36	1.0007

Table 7: Results of Paired Samples T-test for Comparing the Posttest and Delayed-posttest of the EWF Group

	Mean	SD	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Posttest-delay posttest	.450	.461	5.34	.000

The calculated P value for Levene's test was 0.458 which was high 0.05 (F=.558) threshold. Based on Table 6, the posttest mean score was 14.91 and that of the delayed-posttest was 15.36. As shown in Table 7, the second paired-samples t-test results showed a significant difference in the mean scores of the posttest and delayed-posttest ($p = 0.000 < 0.001$). As a result, referring to Tables 6 and 7, written explicit CF under the metalinguistic explanations improved the retention of grammatical structures over time.

The third Paired-samples t-test was employed to delve into the effect of EOF on the improvement of grammar retention from the pretest to the delayed-posttest. The results of this t-test are demonstrated in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8: Pretest-Delayed posttest Data for the EOF Group

	Number	Mean	SD
Pretest	30	11.02	1.22
Delayed-posttest	30	16.41	1.11

Table 9: Results of Paired Samples T-test for Comparing the EOF Group's Pretest and Delayed-posttest

	Mean	SD	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest-delayed posttest	5.39	1.83	16.95	.000

The Levene's test P value was 0.511 which was well high 0.05 (F=3.9) threshold. Based on Table 8, the mean scores for the delayed-posttest and the pretest of the EOF group were 16.41 and 11.02, respectively. The results of paired-samples t-test number three showed a significant difference in the pretest and delayed-posttest means ($p = 0.000 < 0.001$). Consequently, as shown in Tables 8 and 9, the oral explicit CF under metalinguistic condition contributed to the retention of grammatical structures over time. Paired-samples t-test number four was done to examine the effect of EWF on grammar retention from the pre-test to the delayed-posttest. The results of this t-test are illustrated in Tables 10 and 11.

Table 10: Pretest-Delayed posttest Data for the EWF Group

	Number	Mean	SD
Pretest	30	10.90	1.33
Delayed-posttest	30	15.36	1.12

Table 11: Results of Paired Samples T-test for Comparison of the EWF Group's Pretest and Delayed-posttest

	Mean	SD	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest-delay posttest	4.46	2.00	12.49	.000

The calculated P value for Levene's test was 0.511 which was well high 0.05 (F=3.9) threshold. Based on Table 10, the mean scores for the

delayed-posttest and pretest of the EWF group were 15.36 and 10.90, respectively. Moreover, the results of Table 11 indicated a significant difference in the pretest and delayed-posttest mean scores ($p = 0.000 < 0.001$). As a result, explicit written CF with relevant metalinguistic feedback in Tables 10 and 11 improved the retention of grammatical structures over time.

Results of the multivariate tests of mixed between-within-subjects analysis of variance (Table 3) plus the four paired samples t-tests (Tables 4 to 11) indicated that the two modes of CF (oral and written) led to an improvement in the participants' retention of grammatical structures. Therefore, the first research question is answered positively.

4.3. Answer to the second RQ: Is there a significant difference between explicit oral and explicit written feedback regarding retention of grammatical structures?

To answer the second research question, tests of between-within subjects effects were conducted as follows.

Table 12: Tests of Between-within Subjects Effects

Source	df	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	1	28321.295	.000	.998
Treatment	1	3.905	.053	.063
Error	58			

Levene's test showed that the error variance of the dependent variables was equal across groups (p for pretest = .323, p for posttest = .809, p for delayed posttest =.518). According to Table 12, the main effect comparing the two types of experimental condition was not significant, F = 3.90, p =.053, partial eta squared =.063, which suggests that there are not any differences in the effectiveness of the two types of CF on grammar retention over time. In other words, there were not any statistically significant differences in the performance of the two experimental conditions on their delayed posttest. In other words, there was no significant difference in the retention of grammatical structures between the two experimental groups. From this, it can be concluded that both oral and written CF under metalinguistic explanation have the same impact on the retention of grammatical structure.

5. Discussion

The discussion of the results is expanded upon the findings of the previously reviewed pieces of research. According to the response to research question number one, EOF significantly affected language learners' retention of grammatical structures. In other words, findings suggested that language learners' retention of grammatical structures improved when EOF under metalinguistic explanations was provided. This is in line with Lyster and Saito (2010), which studied the impacts of various types of oral CF on students' oral errors, and discovered that CF has a long-lasting impact on L2 development. Li (2010) also found that oral CF significantly affected the development of the target language with long-term effects.

The results pertinent to the first research question also showed that EFL learners in Iran retained grammatical structures significantly better after receiving explicit written CF. This result is harmonious with that of Tayebipour (2019), which found that making use of explicit written CF affected the retention of the passive voice among L2 learners in Oman. The result is also in agreement with those of some other researchers, including Chandler (2003), Ferris (1999), and Bitchener (2008), which hypothesized that teaching students to recognize their errors or providing them with a suitable form leads to the development of linguistically correct written output. Additionally, Lyster and Ranta (1997) investigated written metalinguistic feedback, which proved to be the most influential method helping students retain information. In contrast, Khoshsima and Jahani Farid (2012) stated that written CF can induce writing accuracy development only for a short time. Similarly, Ellis (2007) claimed that providing low-proficient students with explicit CF might be beneficial, but it might not lead to long-term learning.

Regarding the next research question, both types of oral and written CF under metalinguistic explanations had similar effects on the retention of grammatical structures. More specifically, there was no significant difference between explicit oral and written CF regarding their impact on learners' retention of grammatical structures. In the same vein, Bitchener and Knoch (2010b) concluded that written and oral metalinguistic

feedback functioned similarly in assisting students to retain grammar knowledge over time. Therefore, the findings of the current study regarding the second research question contradicted those of Tayebipour (2019) that found a significant difference in the impact of EOF and EWF on learners' retention of passive voice, with EWF being more helpful than EOF. In other words, this is because the EOF may have caused more transient and shorter effects. According to Tayebipour (2019), poor listening may have contributed to participants' poor performance on the delayed posttest.

6. Conclusion

This study examined whether different modes of CF (oral and written) assisted EFL learners to retain grammatical structures. Results of the present piece of research revealed that oral and written explicit CF in the form of metalinguistic CF (explanations) were both effective in increasing the students' awareness to decrease grammatical inaccuracies and remember grammatical structures.

This result may help the existing body of literature on the effect of CF on L2 acquisition. For instance, previous research has claimed that explicit feedback is more operative than implicit feedback in assisting students to improve their writing accuracy. As little research has examined the facilitative role of different modes of CF on improved retention of language features, the results of the present study might be useful. Not only did the results of this work indicate that explicit written and oral feedback significantly improved retention of grammatical structures over time, but they also demonstrated that both types of CF performed well on EFL students' retention of grammar.

Taking all these into consideration, the achieved results may encourage teachers to apply more explicit CF techniques to their instruction processes. The results may also encourage syllabus and curriculum designers and also material developers to design books and materials in which corrective feedback techniques are incorporated. However, the outcomes of this study may have been affected by a number of limitations. This study only considered four grammatical structures. Future research can take into consideration the impact of CF on the retention

of more grammatical structures and investigate the effect of implicit CF. Moreover, the existence of a control group can be considered for future studies.

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