



Exploring Language Learners' Perceptions of Explicit Corrections and Scaffolded Corrective Feedback in the Use of Articles in Oral Productions

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Abstract

The present study explores Iranian EFL learners' perceptions of two types of corrective feedback, i.e., explicit and scaffolded feedback in oral productions. To this end, 30 female EFL learners selected through convenience sampling from two intact classes at a language school in Behbahan, Iran, were randomly assigned into two explicit and scaffolded feedback groups. The participants were all junior and senior high school students aged 15 to 20 at the intermediate level. A qualitative approach in the form of a series of semi-structured interviews was adopted to deeply explore the language learners' perceptions of the corrective feedback types in question. The findings of the interviews demonstrated that half of the language learners in the explicit group set great store by explicit corrective feedback, while the other half were less favourably disposed toward explicit feedback. Likewise, a significant number of language learners in both groups found the teacher's corrective feedback distracting. However, the overwhelming majority of the language learners in the scaffolded group viewed scaffolded corrective feedback as beneficial. The implications of the findings are also elucidated.

Keywords: Corrective feedback; EFL learners; Explicit feedback; Learners' perceptions; Oral production; Scaffolded feedback; Use of articles

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INTRODUCTION

Corrective feedback (henceforth, CF) has sparked off considerable debates in the field of language teaching. The literature on error correction has witnessed a massive bulk of research on the effectiveness of CF types. To Ellis (2005), the incentive for this interest lies in the fact that second language learning relies on negative evidence and positive evidence. The negative evidence offered reactively is conceptualized as CF; the information that a teacher offers to language learners responds to their incorrect language utterances, which is usually done implicitly or explicitly (Oliver, 2018). Negative evidence is the input given to language learners regarding the incorrectness of an utterance (Gass, 2013; Nassaji, 2020). Negative evidence entailing immediate correction is known as explicit feedback. Provided implicitly in the course of interaction, negative feedback may include indirect correction when there is no mention of items in the input (Gor & Long, 2009). Scaffolded feedback is presented within the ZPD in the form of mediation adjusted with language learners' abilities. In fact, it gets language learners involved in correcting their erroneous utterances collaboratively (Rassaei, 2014).

There are inconsistent results as to whether CF is beneficial to learners (Bitchener, 2012). Some studies (e.g., Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010; Swain & Lapkin, 2002) suggest teachers' feedback impacts learners' perceptions of feedback, which considerably affects their learning. However, the literature abounds in

arguments for and against CF. For example, Samad, Rahma, and Fitriani (2016) argue that language teachers should provide learners with CF to prevent them from committing similar mistakes. Likewise, Martin and Valdivia (2017) and Papangkorn (2015) suggest that language teachers should enhance learning by attending to language learners' mistakes. On the contrary, Elsaghayer (2014) concluded that language learners might feel embarrassed by teachers' overcorrection of errors.

Learners' preferences and perceptions of corrective feedback are instrumental in determining how they take advantage of corrective feedback, influencing its efficacy (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Brown, 2009). However, some studies explored learners' perceptions of recasts (e.g., Egi, 2010; Gass & Lewis, 2007; Kim & Han, 2007; Mackey, 2006). Notwithstanding a handful of studies on the use and effectiveness of CF in classroom settings, language learners' perspectives and preferences concerning corrective feedback and, in particular scaffolded feedback are poorly understood and have not been fully researched. Along the same lines, most of the studies on learners' perceptions of CF adopted a quantitative approach using questionnaires that might not display every aspect of learners' perspectives. In light of this gap in the literature, the present study seeks to address the following research question: Inspired by variations in opinions on the part of Iranian language learners regarding receiving CF and the salient role of English in the Iranian context

in meeting academic and professional requirements, we intended to perform this piece of research to shed some light on CF.

What are language learners' perceptions of explicit corrections and scaffolded corrective feedback?

Improving the quality of corrective feedback delivery calls for incorporating language learners' feedback and perceptions of CF into the design of language tasks and teacher's instruction. To increase language learners' motivation and confidence in employing CF, it is desirable to notice their preferences as an integral part of the teaching cycle. However, exploring learners' perceptions would assist language teachers in dealing with and potentially resolving any Negative attitudes about CF. The results of this study might conduce to teacher educators and researchers to establish a framework for language teachers to provide CF to their language learners. Exploring learners' perspectives concerning CF about different sources of errors, e.g., grammatical structures, vocabulary, etc., can favor a feedback scheme. Taken together, the findings of this study may contribute to the theoretical underpinnings relevant to the implementation of CF in the course of teacher instruction.

Literature Review

Corrective Feedback

Within the cognitive/interactionist perspective, CF is a means of attending to linguistic

structures during communication. However, based on the socio-cultural paradigm, CF intends to empower language learners to gradually attain mastery over their language performance by affording well-time assistance via teacher-learner collaboration (Ellis, 2012).

By definition, CF is the teacher's reaction to a learner's incorrect language forms (Li, 2010) entailing the teacher's input as well as explanations regarding the learner's error (Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2006).

Ellis (2009) categorized oral CF into input-providing and output-prompting. While the former enhances language learning by presenting the correct form to the learner, the latter enhances learning by encouraging the learner to modify the erroneous form (Lyster & Izquierdo, 2009).

Scaffolded CF is premised on socially mediated processes during which learners are directed towards self-regulation, a process wherein learners can attend to their learning problems independently (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011). From the learner's standpoint, scaffolded feedback refers to a sequence of feedback in which they first need to rely on their interlanguage knowledge to modify their non-target structures. Based on the interlocutor's perspective, if learners fail to succeed, they steadily provide more explicit scaffolds. This scaffolded feedback is reflective of learners' ZPD (Rassaei, 2014). During scaffolded feedback, learners make retrieval efforts guided by increasing hints. These incremental hints are provided to learners until the right response can be self-generated (Finn & Metcalfe, 2010). Scaffolded feedback entails

various corrective interventions including prompts, the source of error, and metalinguistic input all targeting learners' ZPD (Rassaei, 2014).

Explicit CF is defined as a straightforward correction of learners' ill-formed utterances (Housen & Pierrard, 2005), implying a clear hint that there exists an error in the learner's form and that it should be replaced by the target-like structure (Long, 2007). Encompassing metalinguistic feedback and

Empirical Studies

Zarei, Ahour, and Seifoori (2020) conducted a study on Iranian EFL learners' perceptions of implicit, explicit, and emergent feedback types. Their study participants were 54 pre-intermediate Iranian EFL learners, including implicit, explicit, and emergent groups. The qualitative results indicated that emergent feedback was effective in enhancing language learners' affective traits. Likewise, the language learners were firmly in favour of emergent feedback as it allowed them to take part in the error correction process.

Gamlo (2019) investigated Saudi EFL learners' preferences and perceptions of corrective feedback in oral productions. The study participants were 60 EFL pre-intermediate female language learners in their prior-year at an English Language Institute in Saudi Arabia. Their results demonstrated that the language learners were favourably disposed towards CF and strongly supported teachers' CF. They also maintained that CF could promote their language learning and preferred

explicit correction (Lyster & Ranta, 1997), explicit feedback is delivered to language learners in response to their ill-formed structure (Ellis, 2008). Metalinguistic feedback is clearly corrective that empowers learners to identify the corrective nature of feedback. In fact, metalinguistic feedback aids learners to identify the error source in their utterance which assists them to cognitively compare or identify the gap between their errors and well-formed structure (Ellis, 1994).

Amalia, Fauziati, and Marmanto (2019) explored students' preferences in the six forms of oral CF. They adopted a qualitative method using observations and interviews as data collection tools. The study was conducted on 39 university students in Indonesia. The interview results showed that male learners favored explicit feedback, while female participants sought recasts and metalinguistic feedback. The findings of the observation revealed that the teacher primarily capitalized on the explicit correction.

Shooshtari, Jalilifar, and Ostadian (2018) examined the efficacy of asynchronous scaffolded corrective feedback, synchronous scaffolded corrective feedback, and motivational scaffolding in third-person singular –s and past tense as target structures. The participants of their study were 45 female Iranian EFL learners in three intact classes. The results of semi-structured interviews performed to delve into language learners' perceptions of recalling errors revealed that most participants in the motivational scaffolding group failed to completely recall their grammatical errors.

METHODS

Participants

The participants of this study were 30 junior and senior high school intermediate female learners selected through convenience sampling from two intact classes at a language institute in Behbahan, Iran. They were all Persian native speakers with the age range of 15 to 20. Twenty and ten participants were junior and senior high school students, respectively. They also took the English course for two years and had two sessions of English per week. Noteworthy to mention is that all the participants enjoyed the same socio-cultural background. The language learners agreed to participate in the study and were assured that they could withdraw from the study for any reason at any time. Parents of language learners under 18 also provided written informed consent before the study.

The participants to the semi-structured interviews were selected through purposive sampling (Dömyei, 2007) among those who volunteered to be interviewed. The logic for applying purposeful sampling was the lead researcher's (the teacher) judgment in selecting the cases that could provide rich insights into the study.

Materials

Eight short story language tasks containing a maximum of 500 words were employed for the teaching sessions. The content validity and the complexity level of the short stories were

checked and approved by three language teaching specialists holding PhD degrees in applied linguistics with about 20 years of teaching experience in higher education settings. During teaching sessions, five tasks were utilized to provoke the participants' responses. The teacher was then able to deliver CF to learners on their incorrect use of target forms. The two groups received identical language tasks during sessions which continued for about 90 minutes. The study continued for about two months, starting from April 2019 and ending in June 2019.

Target Structure

The English definite and indefinite articles, namely 'the' and 'a', constituted the present study's target forms. These linguistic targets were selected because they are problematic even for advanced language learners. Also, it is easy to elicit these forms in meaning-oriented communicative tasks. Further, the misuse of articles provides language teachers with ample opportunities to deliver CF to learners.

Instruments

An oral production test (OPT) and a series of semi-structured interviews constituted the instruments of the study. The OPT consists of three different short stories that the participants narrated. These stories allowed the learners to use English articles. Given the communicative function of narrative tasks, they focus on the negotiation of meaning and take notice of their non-target forms.

To maintain validity, care was taken concerning the complexity of the three language tasks by controlling the length of the stories at a maximum of 500 words. Moreover, to make the task less complex and more comprehensible to the learners, the Persian narration of the stories was presented to the learners before performing the tasks.

A series of semi-structured interviews were also utilized to investigate the language learners' perceptions of CF types in both groups.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted one day after the end of the last session. They were done to gauge learners' attitudes towards the type of CF they received during the session and to find if scaffolded and explicit CF affected language learners' inclination to communicate. Ten EFL learners from each group voluntarily took part in the semi-structured interviews to respond to the following questions:

1. *Did you get confused and distracted when the teacher interrupted your flow of thought with his own hints?*
2. *Could you recall your grammatical errors during the treatment sessions? To what extent?*
3. *How do you rate the feedback you received? How do you weigh up its pros and cons?*

The questions were the same for the two groups, and the third question was designed to elicit responses from the learners highlighting

their opinions on CF and the type of feedback they received. The validity of the questions was confirmed by the same panel of experts in the field of language teaching.

Procedure

At first, the two classes were assigned to two conditions, including scaffolded CF and explicit CF. For each of the five teaching sessions, the language learners in each group were assigned to three groups of five. Then, each one of the participants of the three groups was presented with a short story to narrate. Before narrating the story as a class, they were required to read the story and discuss it within 15 minutes. After checking the learners' understanding of the story, the teacher read the collected stories aloud. In the meantime, the participants wrote down the keywords to narrate the story. Having finished narrating the stories in groups, the participants of each group narrated the story again as a class. The teacher delivered feedback to the learners when they committed an error while producing target forms.

Data Collection Procedure

To explore EFL learners' perceptions of CF, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted at the end of the sessions. Regarding the semi-structured interviews, twenty EFL learners were selected from among the two groups of the study. To preserve anonymity, we used L1...L20 (learner) codes to refer to the participants. L1...L10 and L11...L20 were

allocated to the participants of the explicit and scaffolded groups, respectively. The interview took about 5 to 10 minutes for each respondent and was conducted in language learners' first language (Persian) to avoid any ambiguity and obscurity of expression. The interviews were conducted in the language institute. Moreover, informed consent was obtained from the participants to audio record the interviews for further consideration.

Operationalization

Scaffolded CF Group

Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994) framework concerning mediation targeting learners' ZPD was utilized to operationalise scaffolded feedback.

Accordingly, the teacher interacted with the participants in the class and delivered scaffolded CF to them through some negotiation moves. These moves start with the least guidance depicting the most implicit or inductive prompts to enhance self-regulation. The moves finally ended with the teacher's well-formed structure reflecting more explicit prompts. The following episode from our data explains how scaffolded feedback worked.

(1) L (learner): One day in jungle, he fun with his fellow grazers.

(2) T (teacher): Sorry – could you repeat that? → clarification requests

(3) L: One day in jungle ... um... he made a fun with his fellow grazers.

(4) T: No, the definite article. Think about the definite article. → metalinguistic information

One day in...? → elicitation

(5) L: Um, yeah, in the jungle, yes, one day in **the** jungle, he made fun with his fellow grazers.

As evident in the example above, the teacher started with the least scaffold through implicit feedback in response to the learner's error. If the learner failed to attend to the errors, the teacher gradually increased scaffolding levels which aid *the learner to modify* linguistic errors. The two incremental moves helped the learner revise the erroneous forms. The assistance given within the learner's ZPD made her an independent learner who did not need to rely on explicit feedback.

Explicit CF Group

Upon making a grammatical error, the learner received explicit and direct error correction. The following excerpts depict how explicit CF was delivered to the learner:

L: They went into kitchen to see if there was any food.

T: Not into kitchen. You should say into the kitchen.

In this example, the explicit correction was employed to provide the learner with information related to the well-formedness of the student's utterance (Lyster & Ranta, 1997).

It indicates to the learner that the learners' utterance was incorrect. Accordingly, the corrected form was presented to the learner (Brown, 2007).

L: I saw him left a few minutes ago.

T: No, we say, "I saw him leave", not saw him left.

Design

The study employed a qualitative approach entailing two intact classes *randomly assigned* to explicit and scaffolded groups. It is worth mentioning that this piece of research is a part of a more extensive study on the effectiveness of different CF types. To explore the language learners' opinions on CF types, semi-structured interviews were performed with twenty language learners. The interviews were performed as a triangulation method to cross-validate the quantitative phase of the study in question. However, semi-structured interviews provide substantive data by probing deeply into individuals' perspectives (Richards, 2009).

Data Analysis

The semi-structured interview data were analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Dömyei, 2007). The data were analyzed inductively. The data itself was used to form the themes, and that there was no predetermined framework or theory for the study. To this end, the data were first

transcribed and reviewed back and forth. The common patterns in the data were then coded and semantically analyzed. The themes and sub-themes were identified. The emerging sub-themes were subjected to frequency analysis and were tabulated and in the last step, the data were analyzed in Persian and the themes, sub-themes, and exemplary quotes reported in the study were translated into English by the lead researcher. A professional English translator approved the accuracy of English translations.

RESULTS

Results of the Research Question

The research question explored the language learners' opinions on the type of feedback received. The responses of twenty participants of the two groups to the three interview questions were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interestingly, these three questions form out the main underlying themes including learners' opinions on getting distracted by the teacher's hints, recalling errors, and their opinions about CF received.

The first interview question asked: "Did you get confused and distracted when the teacher interrupted your flow of thought with his own hints?"

Table 1 summarizes the themes and sub-themes associated with the language learners' opinions on getting distracted by the teacher's hints.

Table 1***The Interviews Data on Getting Distracted by Teacher's Hints for the Two Experimental Groups***

| Main theme(s) | Sub-themes | Frequency | Percentage | Total |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Distracted | Focusing on grammar instead of telling the story | 5 | 25 | 90% |
| | Willing to be error corrected at the end of the story | 3 | 15 | |
| | Being unable to carry on the conversation with the teacher's hints | 10 | 50 | |
| Stayed focused | The usefulness of this CF type in learning English | 2 | 10 | 10% |

Getting distracted

The first theme on which EFL learners voiced a wide range of complaints was the teacher's distractions. They described teachers' feedback and hints as distracting that challenged their attention, concentration, and cognitive processing capacity. They perceived the teacher's corrections as inappropriate, shifting their focus away from the content and learning objectives.

Staying focused

The interview data manifested that an overwhelming majority of EFL learners were positively disposed towards the teacher's feedback. They were of the opinion that feedback and hints influenced their learning, consequently directing their attention towards desired information. They maintained that the

teacher's feedback was not a source of distraction but the potential for attentiveness to grammatical mistakes.

As displayed in Table 1, the most frequent response given by 50% of the respondents was "Being unable to carry on the conversation with teacher's hints". Another respondent's response (25%) was that these hints made them focus on grammar instead of narrating the story. In total, an overwhelming majority of them (90%) believed that teachers' hints made them get distracted and 10% of learners maintained that their attention was not distracted by the teacher's hints. The following are some of the learners' accounts of teachers' hints:

L1: *The main focus of my attention was on grammatical errors instead of focusing on narrating the story. It was distracting me from the whole story, actually (Attention to form rather than meaning).*

L2: *I was totally confused. honestly, it was impossible to carry on a conversation with all this interruption and it was very difficult for me to resume telling the story again and it broke my chain of thought to be interrupted every single minute (Being interrupted).*

L4: *Well, basically, we've come here to learn something new. If the teacher interrupted us by constantly correcting errors, it would be to our benefit (Usefulness of explicit CF).*

L20: *It was much better if our conversations were tape-recorded and the teacher allowed us*

to finish our words, then he informed us of our errors by playing our voices at the end of the conversations (Delaying feedback until the end).

The second interview question was: "Could you recall your grammatical errors during the treatment sessions? To what extent?"

Table 2 summarizes the themes and sub-themes relating to the language learners' opinions on recalling errors:

Table 2
The Interviews Data on Recalling Errors for the Two Experimental Groups

| Main theme(s) | Sub-themes | Frequency | Percentage | Total |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Totally recalled | Being able to remember in case of concentrating | 2 | 10 | 20% |
| | Being able to use English articles correctly in case of encountering new items | 2 | 10 | |
| Partially recalled | Having difficulty using the definite article | 8 | 40 | 65% |
| | Getting confused due to the existence of many | 5 | 25 | |
| Not recalled | Being unable to remember anything | 3 | 15 | 15% |

Recalling errors

Another salient theme uncovered from the interview data was recalling errors. Recalling an error here refers to a specific time or instance of receiving feedback upon making a grammatical mistake or error on the side of the language learners. The ease with which the language learners could recall such instances

were outlined as totally recalled, partially recalled, and not recalled. The emerged sub-themes refer to the extent to which the language learners could recall their language mistakes.

As depicted in Table 2, 40% of the respondents held that they had difficulty using the definite article. In total, more than half of the language learners (65%) stated that they partially recalled their errors. Further, 20% of

the language learners commented that they totally recalled their errors and 15% of them mentioned that they were unable to remember their errors. The following excerpts depict some of the language learners' opinions on recalling errors:

L2: ... *But in many cases, it was confusing. There are many exceptions and because the definite article does not follow a specific rule, I'm not able to remember much about it, actually* (Confused due to special rules).

L6: ... *I remember so much that if I come across a new case of using the articles in a new sentence, I can use them correctly* (The articles' well-formedness)

L8: *I didn't have any problem regarding indefinite articles and I remember so well, but the English definite article is a very real problem for me* (Definite article problem).

L11: *I'm afraid. I don't remember anything right now. I kept my mind on telling the story. I focused on the content of the story rather than making grammatical errors* (Unable to remember).

L15: *Um..., if I focus my mind, I will be able to remember it clearly, and* (Remember if focused).

The third interview question asked: "How do you rate the feedback you received? How do you weigh up its pros and cons?"

Table 3

The Interviews Data on Learners' Opinions on CF in the Scaffolded Group

| Main theme(s) | Sub-themes | Frequency | Percentage | Total |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Positive | Helping us become autonomous learners | 3 | 30 | 100% |
| | Making us explore our errors and avoid using them in the future | 5 | 50 | |
| | Being an effective method | 2 | 20 | |
| Negative | - | - | 0 | 0 |

Language learners' perceptions of CF

Perceptions point to the language learners' perspectives and the way they view, understand, and interpret the teacher's CF. More specifically, perceptions entail the pros and cons of CF and language learners' preferences regarding the type of CF. Generally, language learners' perceptions of

CF refer to their appreciation of CF interpreted in the light of their feedback receiving experiences. Overall, the language learners' perceptions of CF varied but were encapsulated in two sub-themes: positive and negative attitudes.

Based on Table 3, the most frequent opinion held by 50% of the respondents was that they

thought CF made them explore their errors and helped them avoid repeating them in the future. In total, all the respondents (100%) of the scaffolded group (L11- L20) pointed out that they were strongly in favor of CF. Some of the language learners' quotes on CF in the scaffolded group are as follows:

L12: *One of the advantages of this type of feedback is that it enables us to become relatively independent of the teacher and helps us become autonomous learners* (Becoming autonomous).

L14: *A good strong point of this method was that it pushed us to understand our own grammatical errors and to correct them*

ourselves. This would cause the mind to be concentrated on the errors so that we would not repeat them in the future (Becoming self-correcting learners).

L15: *It is not a good method for classes with a lot of students because it is a dull, boring, difficult, and time-consuming process. Nonetheless, this method will greatly benefit the learners as a whole* (Effective though boring).

The third interview question regarding language learners' CF Opinions was also asked from the explicit group. Table 4 summarizes the main themes and sub-themes emerging from their responses.

Table 4

The Interviews Data on Learners' Opinions on CF in the Explicit Group

| Main theme(s) | Sub-themes | Frequency | Percentage | Total |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Positive | A good and effective method | 3 | 30 | 50% |
| | Rapid in progress in learning | 2 | 20 | |
| Negative | Ineffective in focusing the mind on the story | 2 | 20 | 50% |
| | Rote learning or Parrot-like repetition | 3 | 30 | |

As displayed in Table 4, the respondents of the explicit group (L1-L10) held different views on their CF. Half of the participants (50%) were favorably disposed toward CF, while the other half held unfavorable attitudes on CF.

The following extracts clarify how the participants in the explicit feel about CF:

L1: *In general, I think it's a pretty good method ... um... and it's an effective method of training, although every method has its own strengths and weaknesses* (Effective).

L3: *This type of feedback can cause parrot-like repeating. When the teacher immediately says this is true, we may not understand the exact cause of the error* (Rote learning).

L7: *One of the things I liked about this method which helped me learn quickly was that the teacher didn't focus on the explanation of grammar points. You know, I hate* (Rapid learning)

L9: *I was so involved in telling the story that I just forgot my grammatical errors. Sadly, this way of teaching made the person pay more attention to the grammatical points rather than to the content of the story* (Excessive stress on grammar).

DISCUSSIONS

The current study investigated the impacts of scaffolded and explicit feedback on the acquisition of English articles. All the respondents of the scaffolded group were strongly in favor of CF, while half of the participants of the explicit group were favorably disposed toward CF and the other half held unfavorable attitudes toward CF. According to the interview data, an overwhelming majority of learners in both groups held that teachers' hints made them get distracted and partially recall their errors.

The respondents of the explicit group maintained that their attention was easily distracted by the teachers' hints and diverted from the content of the story. One major justification for the learners' distraction is that in the explicit CF, the guidance was provided through form-focused instruction that induced language learners to pay more attention to linguistic forms rather than meaning-based forms. Fang and Xue-Mei (2007) also believe that learners often become frustrated with being

corrected by their teacher's feedback. Sometimes they are unable to realize what has been corrected and where they made errors. This leads to learners' discouragement and makes them inattentive to their errors. Thus, this kind of feedback might not improve the quality of learning.

For the scaffolded group, the results showed that although the learners seemed distracted by the teacher's hints, they stated that the benefits of this strategy outweigh its disadvantage. These findings contradict those of Sa'adah, Nurkamto, and Suparno (2018) who revealed that teacher's oral CF did not disturb learners to interact well with the teacher in their classroom activities. The students' cultural differences might be the reason for not being distracted.

The interview data also showed that most of the learners encountered difficulty using the definite article and they got frustrated because grammatical rules regarding articles are not straightforward. For this reason, some of them were not able to completely learn and recall the errors they made in the treatment sessions. Nonetheless, some were able to recall their errors. They were firmly of the opinion that they did not experience such a problem regarding the indefinite article. Surprisingly, Shooshtari et al. (2018) obtained two contradictory results. Our results agree with those of Shooshtari et al. (2018) study in which the majority of learners in the motivational scaffolding group were unable to completely recall their grammatical errors. Moreover, the results of our study contradict theirs in that learners in asynchronous scaffolded corrective feedback and synchronous scaffolded

corrective feedback groups in their study were able to recall their grammatical errors either independently or through stimulated recall techniques.

Furthermore, although the interview's results indicated some differences of opinion in evaluating the effectiveness of explicit CF, the respondents found scaffolded CF valuable and exciting. This result is in harmony with that of Shooshtari et al. (2018) study in which nearly all learners believed that teachers should provide indirect feedback first so that they can find an opportunity to reflect and act on their errors.

CONCLUSION

This study probed into language learners' perceptions of CF in the context of language learning in Iran. Based on the themes and sub-themes that emerged, a substantial majority of learners in the explicit and scaffolded groups held that the teacher's hints drove them to distraction and that they partly recalled their errors. In view of this, EFL teachers can deliver written or group-focused feedback to language learners. The collective feedback covers the most common errors made by language learners and makes them more focused. Teachers may be better off allowing learners to choose their CF types to enhance their learning. To help prevent learners' distraction and negative attitudes toward CF, language teachers need to raise learners' awareness concerning feedback goals and feedback-related issues.

The study's finding also revealed that the language learners in the explicit group

entertained mixed opinions about the effectiveness of explicit CF. About half of the learners in this group were appreciative of CF. However, the absolute majority of the language learners in the scaffolded group perceived scaffolded CF as beneficial and interesting. In light of these findings, language teachers are suggested to pay heed to learners' opinions on CF to heighten its potential positive effect on language learning. EFL teachers should also seek an equal balance of explicit and scaffolded feedback in the course of their instruction. Also, teachers need to focus on descriptive rather than evaluative feedback which makes feedback be aligned to evaluation criteria. That is, feedback should be learning-oriented rather than grade-loss centered.

This study holds clear implications for EFL teachers and syllabus designers. Armed with comprehensive knowledge of CF, language teachers can constructively home in on different CF strategies tailored to students' learning needs. Syllabus designers can also explore new lines of approach in constructing form-focused tasks embedded into communicative and interactional tasks, making the delivery of feedback less focused. Interpreted within Vygotsky's ZPD and social interaction theory, it is helpful to promote collaborative and assisted performance in classroom settings. This can be operationalized by providing scaffolded CF to learners.

The study suffers from several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the language learners involving in this study were all females with intermediate language proficiency levels. Consequently, results

should be interpreted with caution. That is, the findings may not be generalized to elementary or advanced learners. Given the differences in the psychological traits of males and females, different findings may be achieved concerning males' perceptions of CF. Future researchers can address the issues in question which can

facilitate the formation of a fine-grained feedback scheme. Another limitation concerns the number of teaching sessions (5 two-hour sessions) in which the teacher provided the participants with a small number of CF. Thus, there is a need for longitudinal studies to unearth learners' perceptions of CF better.

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