Teacher's Tendencies and Learners' Preferences Regarding Corrective Feedback Types

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Abstract

This paper illustrates one case study which investigated typical types of corrective feedback used by one Japanese teacher and favorite types of corrective feedback of 36 Japanese EFL learners to see if there were differences between the teacher and learners. One classroom was audio-recorded and the transcribed data was categorized into items followed by one framework to investigate the teacher's tendencies of corrective feedback. Also, one questionnaire was administered to examine learners' preferences of corrective feedback. The results revealed that there was a difference between teacher's feedback and learners' preferences. The teacher used indirect types of corrective feedback whereas learners expressed their interests to direct types of corrective feedback. Some suggestions for classroom interaction, emphasized on corrective feedback, are mentioned in response to the results.

Having effective classroom interaction and providing effective corrective feedback require teachers' careful attention and efforts as there are various points that teachers need to be aware of when interacting with students and correcting their errors. According to Tsui (2004), having comfortable classroom interactions and sharing common grounds are beneficial, which leads to effective learning. At the same time, educators need to pay attention that every communication situation, especially during error correction, has the potential for conflict (Brown & Rodgers, 2002). To avoid negative interactions with students, teachers need to make extra efforts to provide feedback, especially when dealing with students' errors. Also, preferences for corrective feedback vary from individual to individual depending on learning contexts or experiences.

From these reasons, classroom interaction and corrective feedback are complicated issues. In the current study, frequent types of corrective feedback used by one female teacher as well as the preferred corrective feedback of EFL learners ($n=36$) in one Japanese university will be explored.

Literature Review

This section overviews several studies regarding; (a) classroom interaction, (b) corrective feedback, and (c) effective classroom interaction through corrective feedback.

Classroom Interaction

Communication is achieved by means of a variety of resources and undertaken for a purpose. In a classroom setting, the primary purpose of communication is a pedagogical one. Usually, the teacher knows the language; the learners do not (Brown & Rodgers, 2002). Therefore, the classroom communication is clearly in the control of the teacher (Ellis, 2011). Thus, Nunan (2003) explained that teachers play an important role in shaping classroom discourse and in maximizing opportunities for learning.

In terms of effective classroom interaction, a common ground, as previously mentioned, is also an important concept. Tsui (2004) mentioned that establishing and sharing common grounds between teachers and students is crucial, which makes interaction smoother. Students learn best in their preferable classroom atmosphere and, in a classroom with lots of laughter, learning successfully occurs (Brown & Rodgers, 2002). Consequently, Nunan (1995) added and concluded that it is the teachers' responsibility to discover how students feel about their classroom interaction.

Corrective Feedback

Among various interactions, corrective feedback is one of the important features that teachers need to be aware of. Since making errors is a natural process and an unavoidable situation of language learning, teachers are required to provide corrective feedback. Generally speaking, in both EFL and ESL settings, the majority of learners prefer receiving frequent corrective feedback (Cathcart & Olsen, 1976; Chenoweth, Day, Chun, & Luppescu, 1983). For instance, Chenoweth et al. (1983) found that, not only during grammatical activities but also during communicative activities, adults ESL learners liked to be corrected and had a positive attitude towards error correction.

Ellis (1997) pointed out three good reasons for focusing on errors: (a) it is important to ask why learners make errors, (b) it is useful to know what kinds of errors learners produce, and (c) it is possible to consider that errors help students' acquisition. In terms of options of corrective feedback, they can be divided into two types: implicit as well as explicit. The important thing is that no type of corrective feedback is superior to others (Ellis, 2008, 2011). Ellis (1990) continued that some errors should be ignored but others ought to be corrected. He listed these important points: (a) distinguish mistakes as well as errors and treat them differently, (b) correct global, not local errors, (c) correct errors that affect the overall comprehensibility of an utterance, (d) correct stigmatized errors, and (e) correct errors relating to the learner's next stage of development (pp. 54-55). With regards to (a), if the learner does not know grammatical knowledge, errors occur. On the other hand, if the learner knows grammatical knowledge and cannot perform correctly, mistakes occur. Also, as per (b), global errors violate the overall structure of a sentence. On the other hand, local errors affect only a single constituent in the sentence.

From the perspectives of sociocultural theory (SCT), corrective feedback can also be explained. According to SCT, corrective feedback is the process from other-regulation to self-regulation through scaffolding (Ellis, 2008). Ellis (1997) elaborated on the importance of scaffolding: "Learners use the discourse to help them produce utterances that they would not be able to produce on their own" (p. 48).

Error correction is a complicated interaction. It also requires a lot of effort and

expertise such as with the type of error, and how and when it should be corrected. In terms of types of corrective feedback, various studies have found different results, which leads to difficulty in generalizability. However, according to Allwright (1975), such inconsistency is a good sign because it means teachers try to be aware of and cater to individual differences among learners. Chaudron (1977) identified corrective feedback as "any reaction of the teacher which clearly transforms … or demands improvements of the learners' utterance" (p. 31).

Effective Classroom Interaction through Corrective Feedback

Brown and Rodgers (2002) mentioned that feedback on students' performance and treatment of error sometimes create negative exchanges or hurt students' feelings. For instance, teachers have a tendency to correct students using negation. In contrast, students prefer having the chance to self-correct. Yoshida (2008) found that different thoughts create an uncomfortable moment and cause conflicts. To avoid such situations, using various types of corrective feedback instead of overusing particular types is one solution (Ellis, 2011). Also, mutual efforts and agreement between teachers and students are helpful. Specifically, teachers need to discuss the use of corrective feedback openly with students and to modify it according to students' requests. Receiving feedback from teachers in a comfortable way, students can lower their affective filter, and then both sides can interact effectively (Ellis, 2011).

In addition, observation is one of the effective ways to monitor interactions. It is important for teachers to examine their own language by audio- or video-recording lessons for self-critique (Walsh, 2002). This way, teachers can monitor their use of language, watch the data several times, and receive useful information about how to develop their interaction (Roloff Rothman & Watanabe, 2016). Through reflection, it would ensure students' output to optimize their learning experiences (Foster & Ohta, 2005).

Research Questions

In order to have effectiveness of instructional practices, matching the expectations of teachers and learners is important. Accordingly, this case study aimed to explore one teacher's methods of error correction in an adult EFL classroom and learners' preferences for how they would like their erroneous utterances to be corrected. There are two research questions addressed: (1) Which types of error corrections does the teacher use frequently?; (2) What are the similarities and differences between the teacher and learners' preferences for corrective feedback?

Methodology

Participants

The participants were 36 first year EFL learners (30 male, six female) in the component of engineering at a private university in Japan. They were all Japanese and were about 19 years of age. They had studied English from junior high school. With

respect to their English proficiency, they were false beginners ranging from 370 to 410 in the TOEIC. Previous test results confirmed that they relatively excelled in receptive skills, but performed poorly with regards to productive skills. The teacher, the author of this paper, was a Japanese female with seven years experience in teaching English at the tertiary level. She was curious about classroom interactions, especially corrective feedback.

Tasks

This class was designed mainly to improve learners' speaking and listening abilities. It also aimed to improve the learners' score in the TOEIC and to achieve a fair degree of grammatical competence. For this particular class, participants were asked to do the TOEIC grammar exercises as homework and its answer-check was conducted in class. Since this was a feedback session for form-and-accuracy contexts, the teacher initiated to respond to learners' answers and dealt with pedagogical as well as erroneous issues. The main sequence of the lesson was the following orders: (1) learners made errors, (2) the teacher gave feedback, and (3) learners corrected errors.

Data Collection

The class was audio-recorded during the class time and the device was placed at the back of the classroom. In addition, one questionnaire was administered. It was distributed to the participants in person during the class period and completed at the time of distribution in the last class. The participants were asked to choose and mark their most favorable corrective feedback among 12 types: negation, repetition with change, prompt, explanation, question, transfer, disapprove, repeat (explicit), repeat (implicit), altered questions, ignore, and finally, provided and expand. For this study, examples of teacher error corrections were changed based on Yucel's observational system (2000) to provide similar settings of regular interaction. Individual items were explained in Japanese by the teacher. Participants were informed that completing this questionnaire was voluntary, and that results would not affect their course grades.

Data Analysis

The transcribed data (see Appendix A) was identified and matched to each of the teacher's verbalizations to categorize the data into types of correction (see Table 1) following the Yucel scheme (see Appendix B). Additionally, the questionnaire (see Appendix C), which was an adaptation of Chaudron's typology of teacher talk (1988), was analyzed to investigate learners' preferences for corrective feedback (see Table 2).

Results

Table 1 shows the error-correction behaviors of the teacher.

Table 1
Teacher's Error Correction Behaviors

Types of correction	In-class instance
Negation	0
Repetition with change	3 (8%)
Prompt	4 (11%)
Explanation	5 (13%)
Question	22 (61%)
Transfer	0
Disapprove	0
Repeat (explicit)	1 (4%)
Repeat (implicit)	1 (4%)
Altered questions	0
Ignore	0
Provided and expand	0

Note. Adapted from Yucel, 2000.

According to Table 1, the teacher had an inclination to use a question type of correction quite a few times (61%) The following are examples of interactions between the teacher and learners (see below). All students' names are pseudonyms.

S: …
T: Flight is ~, the flight leaves ~. You have to have a present tense. 両方、現在形ですね。Leave ではなく、Leave に S つけますね。Please focus on the third person, present, and singular form. So the answer is? ←*question*
Kou, number 5. Give me your answer.
S: C.

Then, the explanation type (13%) came next (see below).

S: Pardon? … Ah, pardon? I beg your pardon?
T: Ok. Please give me one verb to express "make a reservation." We have three, two more ways to say 「予約をする。」The answer is book. Book means to make a reservation. ←*explanation*.
S: Reserve.

The prompt type (11%) was also used (see below).

S: C.
T: C is wrong. Arrive… ? ←*prompt*
"Arrive to" is mistake so what do you put after arrive?
S: …
T: "Arrive at" or you can say "arrive in." Either one is fine. Arrive at or arrive in. So starting from number 1, so the answer is "arrive ….."? ←*prompt*

Further details about the teacher's error-correction behavior are provided in Appendix B.

Next, Table 2 represents the questionnaire results of the learners' error correction preference.

Table 2
Learners' Error Correction Preference

Types of correction	Preferences of learners (n=36)
Negation	27 (75%)
Repetition with change	1 (3%)
Prompt	3 (8%)
Explanation	5 (14%)
Question	0
Transfer	0
Disapprove	0
Repeat (explicit)	0
Repeat (implicit)	0
Altered questions	0
Ignore	0
Provided and expand	0

Note. Adapted from Yucel, 2000.

According to Table 2, 27 participants were in favor of explicit error correction, that is, negation (75%). Explanation (14%), prompt (8%), and repetition with change (3%) were followed respectively.

Discussion

The first research question was to examine one teacher's tendencies towards correcting learners' errors: which types of error corrections does the teacher use frequently? The answer is the teacher had a tendency to use question, explanation, and prompt types. A possible interpretation of these results is that the teacher would like to focus on the process of learning: assisting learners in order to have them notice their errors. This supports SCT which states that scaffolding helps learners with self-correction (Ellis, 2011). As another interpretation, the teacher also would like to avoid potentially face-threatening and discouraging detours from learners of the interaction. This finding is similar to other studies (e.g., Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Yoshida, 2008) which revealed that teachers have a strong tendency to use recasts, elicitation, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, and repetition. Among these types, according to Lyster and Ranta (1997), recasts have been receiving considerable attention. Using these feedback types, due to teachers' thoughtful considerations, learners would feel less offended which further supports that explicit corrections are not popular among students (Ellis, 2011; Ur, 1996).

The second research question was to examine how learners would like to have their errors corrected by teachers: What are the similarities and differences between the teacher and learners' preferences for corrective feedback? The answer is there was a discrepancy between the teacher and learners. This study showed that direct feedback was popular among learners, which supports that adult learners expect and want to be

corrected directly (De Bot, 1996; Seedhouse, 2004; Walsh, 2006). A possible interpretation is that indirect error correction provides ambiguous connotations and confusing moments for learners and they may not be able to notice their errors. In form and accuracy contexts, most learners expressed that an explanation with no correction was not helpful. Instead, they needed more specific advice as well as straight forward correction. Another interpretation is that learners think indirect ways take more time than direct ways. One participant freely commented during the casual conversation after class:

> To save time, I just need correct answers and explicit explanations from
> the teacher. Unclear explanations and questions do not help me at all.
> They just make me confused and irritated.
> <div align="right">(translated into English by the author)</div>

This result supports that Japanese EFL learners are accustomed to having classes that use knowledge based and transmission style, so they lack classroom interaction with teachers (Ellis & Shintani, 2013). Learners are more likely to prefer and feel comfortable with lecture based lessons.

Conclusion

The present data showed one teacher's tendencies and learners' preferences for corrective feedback. This case study found that there was a difference between the teacher and learners: the former preferred an indirect type of error correction but the latter preferred a direct type of error correction.

Several limitations of this study require mentioning. First, only one researcher was involved in reviewing and coding the data, so it should be kept in mind when interpreting the results. Also, novice learners required more support and input from teachers compared with advanced learners. Proficiency level greatly influences classroom interaction so generalization of these findings would be difficult. Thirdly, this specific task was mostly led by the teacher. The class was focused on form and accuracy and therefore impacted classroom interaction. Thus, another task (e.g., discussion, debate, content-based task) also needs to be examined in order to investigate communication between teachers and learners.

Regardless of these limitations, this present study reveals unique results and might remind English language teachers and researchers of the importance of classroom interaction and corrective feedback. It is beneficial for teachers to discover students' perceptions toward error correction and to try to reduce the gap between the different perceptions, if any. It might cause educators (a) to be aware of how to deal with learners' erroneous utterances, (b) to modify corrective feedback types, and (c) to provide more comfortable classroom interactions. In order to meet students' expectations and needs, teachers, hopefully, will take some time to find out students' preferences and to survey their perceptions toward pedagogical instructions.

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APPENDIX A

Extract from a Lesson Recorded

1 **T**: I would like to check your homework. I gave you, ah, four-page homework which was page 32. Please open your textbook to page 32. Can anybody tell me the number, ah, the number one, the answer of number one?
S1: B
 T: B.The number one is B. Yoshihiro, number two is…
5 **S2**: C
T: Very nice. The number two is C. Marina, number three?
S3: A.
T: Good. A. Number four, Atsuki.
S4: Number four?
10 **T**: Page 32, number four.
S4: Number four, number four is B.
T: B? The answer is B.
S4: あ、当たった。
T: Akinori, number five.
15 **S5**: A
T: Very nice. The answer is A. Number six is, Ryo?
S6: B
T: Say it again?
S6: B
20 **T**: The answer is B. One more time, starting number one, D, C, A, B, A, D. Number seven, Takayuki
S7: B.
T: Ok, B. Chicago. The answer is B. Number eight, Tomohiro?
S8: A
T: Very nice. The number eight, the number eight is A. Number nine, Yoshihiro.
25 **S9**: B
T: Very nice. The number nine is B. Hiroko, number ten?
S10: A
T: A. Good job. Number eleven, Takashi.
S11: C
30 **T**: Very nice. The answer is B. Number twelve, Ryo.
S12: ….
 T: The answer is …

S13: B

T: Very nice. The answer is B. Number thirteen, another Ryo.

35 **S14**: D

T: D. One more time, starting from number seven, D, A, D, A, C, B, D.

T: Next page, I also give you homework. Tomohiro, page 34, number 1. Where did you find a mistake?

S15: C.

T: C. How did you correct this mistake. C is not necessary so please take out will. will は要りませんね。これは、もう
40 does が入っているので簡単に will を取って下さいね。will が無しね。What time does the train for Jamestown leave?

T: Number 2. Anybody?

S: …

T: Number 2 is Idiom. 「予約がある」っていうのは take a reservation ではなくて、「予約を持っている。」have a reservation. Have a reservation is an idiom so please remember. Taichi, can you give me other verbs to say "make a
45 reservation". Two verbs?

S16: Pardon? … Ah, pardon? I beg your pardon?

T: Ok. Please give me one verb to express "make a reservation." We have three, two more ways to say 「予約をする。」The answer is book. Book means to make a reservation. One more?

S17: Reserve.

50 **T**: Reserve. Make a reservation, book, and reserve mean the same meaning.すべて「予約をする」という意味ですね。Number 3. Where is mistake? Daiki.

15 S18: …

T: PM 9:30, they do not usually say 9:30, 9:30 PM. PM or AM come after the time. 9:30 PM or 9:30 AM. How about number 4? Wataru, give me your answer.

55 **S19**: …

T: Flight is ~, the flight leaves ~. You have to have a present tense. 両方、現在形ですね。Leave ではなく、Leave に S けますね。Kou, number 5. Give me your answer.

S20: C.

T: C is wrong. Arrive…? "Arrive to" is mistake so what do you put after arrive?

60 **S20**: …

T: "Arrive at" or you can say "arrive in." Either one is fine. Arrive at or arrive in. So starting from number 1, so the answer is arrive …..?.

C: Students read sentences after the teacher.

APPENDIX B

A Report of Teacher Error Correction Behaviors

Example of teacher error correction	Type of correction
Do not say PM 9:30, say 9:30 PM	1. Negation
I will be arriving at 9:30 PM.	2.Repetition with change
I will be arriving at …	3. Prompt
PM and AM come after time in English.	4. Explanation
How do you say 午後 9 時半？	5. Question
Students?	6. Transfer
Mmmmmmm	7. Disapprove
Please repeat the sentence.	8. Repeat (explicit)
What?	9. Repeat (implicit)
Again. When will you be arriving?	10. Altered questions
Really? Where will you be staying?	11. Ignore
After you will be arriving at 9:30 PM at Tokyo, where will you go?	12. Provided and expand

(adapted from Yucel, 2000)

APPENDIX C

A Report of Learner Error Correction Preferences

英語学習者のためのエラーコレクションに関するアンケート

このアンケートは、エラーコレクションに関して、あなたの意見を問うためのものです。様々なエラーコレクションの方法を以下に記しました。例文を読んで、みなさんが一番望むエラーコレクションにチェックマークをつけて下さい。

みなさんの希望のエラーコレクションを把握し、より良い授業を目指すことが目的であり、成績に関係するものではありません。また、このアンケートの提出をもって、結果の研究使用に同意していただいたものとみなせていただきます。

ご協力をおねがいいたします。

恒安眞佐(masathorikawa@gmail.com)

Example of teacher error correction	Type of correction	Your preference
Do not say PM 9:30, say 9:30 PM	1. Negation	
I will be arriving at 9:30 PM.	2.Repetition with change	
I will be arriving at …	3. Prompt	
PM and AM come after time in English.	4. Explanation	
How do you say 午後 9 時半？	5. Question	
Students?	6. Transfer	
Mmmmmmm	7. Disapprove	
Please repeat the sentence.	8. Repeat (explicit)	
What?	9. Repeat (implicit)	
Again. When will you be arriving?	10. Altered questions	
Really? Where will you be staying?	11. Ignore	
After you will be arriving at 9:30 PM at Tokyo, where will you go?	12. Provided and expand	