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CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK AND REPAIR STRATEGIES IN MEANING-FOCUSED LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Abstract: The practice of corrective feedback in communicative language classroom has become a debate among applied linguists. Some consider it obstructs students' fluent speech and some assert it is vital to show students their linguistic gaps. This study aims to describe the practice of oral corrective feedback in meaning-focused instruction specifically to answer the questions 1) what is to correct, 2) how it is corrected, and 3) how repair is constructed. The data are in the forms of teacher's and students' utterances obtained through video recording during meaning-focused instruction in a secondary school. The result shows that in meaning-focused instruction, the ESL teacher mainly corrects semantic errors and among six types of corrective feedback (explicit correction, recast, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition), the teacher mostly uses elicitation and recast while the repair strategies that occur in this class takes the pattern of other initiation-self repair. So, it can be concluded that in a meaning-focused instruction the teacher does not relatively interrupt the students' fluent speech and that the communicative activity is maintained. And with self-repair, students notice their linguistic gaps. Therefore corrective feedback is still worth practicing in meaning-focused language classrooms.

Keywords: corrective feedback, meaning-focused instruction

INTRODUCTION

According to van Lier (1988, p. 276), apart from questioning, correction of errors is the activity which most characterizes language classrooms. It is any indications of learners' non-targetlike use of the target language (Gass, 1997; Schachter, 1991) or oral production that differs from the model of target language.Lightbown and Spada (1999) use the terms 'corrective feedback' to refer to utterances that indicate to the learner that his or her output is erroneous in some way.

Corrective feedback (henceforth CF) is an evaluative feedback which can be useful in facilitating the progression of students' skills toward more correct language use. The majority of SLA

researchers believe that L2 learning is different from child L1 learning. This implies that adult L2 learners cannot develop native-like accuracy only based on exposure to positive evidence or models of grammatical input (e.g., Carroll & Swain, 1993; DeKeyser, 1998; Doughty & Long, 2003; R. Ellis, 2001; R. Ellis, Loewen, &Erlam, 2006; Mackey, Oliver, &Leeman, 2003; Pica, 2002). Therefore, L2 learners need both negative and positive feedback in order to acquire an L2 successfully.

Lightbown and Spada (2010, p. 32), assert that language classroom is the only place where feedback on error is typically present with high frequency and through CF, learners are exposed to modified or adapted input. There seems to be a general agreement that instruction in which students are given CF is effective, at least in the short term (Ellis, 1997; Lightbown, 1998). A study by Lyster&Ranta (1997) also suggests that negative feedback is valuable in drawing learner attention to some problematic aspect of their interlanguage. In fact, many learners may require help in "noticing" (Schmidt, 1990) their mistakes.

Many people also belief that teachers cannot leave erroneous utterance uncorrected. In this case, CF may be a beneficial environment because it may provide learners with information about the ungrammaticality of their utterances. Moreover, Ohta, (2001, p.134) argues, 'CF is significant to L2 development because it provides the learner with an opportunity to reflect on the utterance and consider other possibilities'. Anyhow, feedback is not always provided consistently.

Changes in pedagogy particularly in second language classrooms have influenced teacher attitude towards error and its treatment. With the emergence of the communicative approach to language teaching, less emphasis has been addressed on formal accuracy than was formerly the case, and more importance given to the communicative effectiveness. However, language learners' speech usually deviates (to some extent) from the model they are trying to master as part of interlanguage development. And the deviations or discrepancies in form have typically been considered as problematic. Influenced by communicative approach many teachers are often more concerned with second language learners ability to convey their ideas, get information, etc., than with their ability to produce grammatically accurate sentences. In short, the accomplishment of the communicative goals is more important than perfect well-formed sentences.

Some teachers think that students prefer not to be corrected for each speaking error because this practice obstructs their confidence and force them to work harder on details that they use which inhibit the overall ability to use language. Correction is sometimes also considered to break the flow of conversation as the teacher interrupts the student before he has finished his utterance and it may also lower the student´s motivation as only his failures and not his goals are highlighted.

However, for many teachers, Walsh (2006, p.10)says, "repair, like other practices which prevail in language classrooms, is a ritual, something they 'do to learners' without really questioning their actions. This is not intended as a criticism, merely an observation." And for many practitioners, the feedback move, where correction of errors typically occurs, is considered crucial to learning. Seedhouse confirms, this is what learners want (1997) 'learners appear to have grasped better than teachers and methodologists that, within the interactional organization of the L2 classroom, making linguistic errors and having them corrected directly and overtly is not an embarrassing matter'.

In formal classroom instruction of second or foreign languages, the role of teacher reaction to learner errors has been seen as a legitimate object of a number of inquiries into classroom teaching and learning. A number of studies on CF have been conducted by researchers for examples, Panova and Lyster (2002) conducted an observational study of patterns of error treatment in an adult ESL classroom examining the range and types of feedback used by the teacher and their relationship to learner uptake and immediate repair of error. They found that clear preference for implicit types of reformulative feedback, namely, recasts and translation. A study of CF and learner uptake (i.e., responses to feedback) in four immersion classrooms at the primary level was conducted by Lyster and Ranta (1997). The findings indicate an overwhelming tendency for teachers to use recasts at eliciting student-generated repair. Then Sheen's (2004) study confirms that recasts are the most dominant type of feedback. Seedhouse (1997) concludes his finding that teachers do indeed prefer this non-threatening, mitigated, unobtrusive, implicit feedback type. Tedick (1998) highlighted Lyster and Ranta's (1997) findings which indicate the dominant use of recast, and made suggestions for classroom teachers which among the four suggestions, she mentions that teachers should practice a variety of feedback techniques. Thus, teachers CF should both be non-threatening and cover various techniques.

Based on this statement, there are two important things in human communication: cooperation, which in the communicative L2 classroom is a general interactional discourse principle where a more competent person interlocutor is helping a less competent one, and focus on meaning (Nizegorodcew, 2007, p. 34). On the part of all those more competent interlocutor feedback is usually provided as unobtrusive scaffolding (see Hatch, 1978; Scollon, 1976), whose goal is to facilitate communication in L1 and L2, focusing on the meanings when the less competent speaker wants to get across.

Based on the coding scheme offered by Mackey et al. (2000),there are four error types which are commonly corrected by teachers in oral performance. These error types are:

(1) Morphosyntactic error, whichoccurs when learners incorrectly use items such as word order, tense, conjugation and particles.
(2) Phonological error, which normally indicates mispronunciation of vocabulary.

(3) Lexical error, which involves the inappropriate use of vocabulary or a switch to the learner's L1 (first language) because of their lack of lexical knowledge.
(4) Semantic error, occurring when a teacher does not understand a learner's utterance, even though the speech does not contain any grammatical, lexical or phonological errors.

While Lightbown and Spada (2010, p.31) propose a slightly different identification of error area namely: grammar, pronunciation, meaning, word choice, and politeness. So, it can be concluded that the common errors students make are grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. However, the focus of corrective feedback may vary depending on the instructional objectives, teacher preferences and other possible factors.

Based on Lyster and Ranta's (1997) typology of CF, there are six types of CF, they are:

(1) Explicit correction, referring to clear indication ofstudents' incorrect utterance and provision of the correct form.
(2) Recast, referring to the teacher implicit reformulation of the student's error without directly indicating that the student's utterance was incorrect.
(3) Clarification request, referring to the use of phrases like "Excuse me?" or "I don't understand," showing that the message has not been understood or that the student's utterance contained some kind of mistake.
(4) Metalinguistic clues, referring to CF type in which the teacher poses questions or provides comments or information related to the formation of the student's utterance without providing the correct form.
(5) Elicitation, referring to the teacher direct elicitation of the correct form from the student by asking questions by pausing to allow the student to complete the teacher's utterance or by asking students to reformulate the utterance.
(6) Repetition. The teacher repeats the student's error and adjusts intonation to draw student's attention to it.

Ohta (2001, p. 141) also categorizes CF based on her data such as: Recast reformulation of students' erroneous utterance), incidental recasts (an utterance that incidentally contrasts with student's erroneous utterance), repetition (repetition of erroneous utterance without altering misformation), prompt (partial repetition for reformulation by the learner), explicit (explicit indication of student's incorrect utterance), re-ask (re-asking of the question that yielded incorrect response), answer (an answer to the targeted student's question), confirmation question (asking a confirmation question), comprehension question (question to clarify understanding), and multiple (the use of two or more of the above strategies).

In everyday interactionerrors are not only committed by language learners but also adult speakers when talking together. Errors that occur during meaningful communication are not always corrected unless they cause communication breakdown. This means only errors which may lead to communication difficulties should be repaired. This can be done in a classroom as well when the focus is on meaning. However, repair also often takes place when errors are committed.Research on conversation found patterns of repair covering four possible combinations of initiation and repair which include self and other Schegloff et al. (1977) as the following:

(1) Self-initiated other-repair, in which speakers note breakdowns and request assistance
(2) Self-initiated self-repair, in which the speakers note breakdowns and correct them by themselves
(3) Other-initiated self-repair, in which the interlocutors note and comment on the errors, but the speakers themselves are able to repair the breakdowns
(4) Other-initiated other-repair, in which people other than the speakers

METHODS

This is a pilot study involving ninety-minute section of meaning focused-activity with a native English teacher and 20 students, andcovered the session when they worked on the regular whole class sessions. All the students in this class were categorizedas having an "intermediate" English proficiency level based on theplacement test. Their ages ranged from 16 to 18 years and they were in their second year of study at the ESL courseof high school. These students come from many different countries whose native language is not English.In this study, the students were working on reading comprehension materials withteacher-students question and answer.

The data of this descriptive study are in the forms of students' and teachers' utterances including words, phrases, and sentences. This study describeserror treatment conducted by the teacher especially to answer the questions: 1) Whatstudents' errors are mostly corrected by the teacher? , 2) What types of CF are mostly used by the teacher?, and 3)What pattern types of repair strategies take place in the classroom?

To get the answer to the first question, the data are analyzed using the classification of error types proposed by Mackey et al. (2000), there are four error types which are commonly corrected by teachers in oral meaning-focused instruction. These error types are morphosyntactic, phonological,lexical,and semantic error.And the second question is answered based on the classification of teacher CF type of explicit correction, recast, clarification request, metalinguistic clue, elicitation, and repetition from Lyster and Ranta (1997).

Finally, the last question is analyzed using patterns of repair strategies covering four possible combinations of initiation and repair which include self and other Schegloff et al. (1977). These four patterns are self-initiated other-repair, self-initiated self-repair, other-initiated self-repair and other-initiated other-repair.

FINDINGS

During the 90-minute lesson period, each of the three focuses of investigation is observed. The lesson period was recorded using video recording and then transcribed. Each teacher and students' turn is analyzed. The first focus is the identification of error types occurring in meaning-focused instruction. In the reading class of ESL classroom of secondary school, the students did make some errors. They made morphosyntactic, lexical, and semantic errors

The errors made are mostly semantic errors while phonological error did not take place or not significantly paid attention of.The second point to investigate is the types of corrective feedbacks applied by the teacher. This was identified in the same lesson in which the teacher and students were engaged in questions and answer during meaning- focused instruction. Through the classroom observation it was found that the teacher used various CF types ranging from implicit to explicit form. Such corrective feedback types are recast, elicitation, repetition and metalinguistic feedback. such as the followings:

Then, the last question is intended to find the repair strategies upon the utterances of the students. In the analysis of the transcription of the meaning-focused lesson, it can be found that most repairs are other-initiated self-repair. While self-initiated self-repair and self-initiated other repair are not found. Thus, errors made by students and corrected by the teacher are semantic, morphology, and lexical. Pronunciation errors correction does not take place. Errors mostly found in this class are semantic and morphology, so the teacher mostly also mostly correct semantic and morphological errors.

The types of repair that take place in the classroom are other initiated-self repair and other initiated-other repair. Other types of repair strategies proposed by Schegloff et al. (1977 do not occur. On the other hand, there occur other initiated-no repair. This happens because the teacher does not give the students chance to make a repair, instead he pointed other students to obtain an expected answer.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

To discuss about the findings of the analysis of CF and repair strategies that take place in meaning focused instruction, the three research questions are restated. The first research question asks about the types of errors students make in meaning-focused instruction. Based on the error type classification proposed by Mackey et al. (2000) the teacher mainly corrects semantic error. Other errors like morphological and lexical error are not seriously considered. Furthermore, phonological error does not occur in this classroom though the students come from many different countries with linguistic differences. This may because English has become their second language and they have reached their intermediate level. Semantic error is considered important to be corrected because in reading lesson the primary goal is that students comprehend the content of the text. Thus, the feedback the teacher gives to students is to lead them toward understanding the content of the text.

The second question asks about the types of corrective feedback the ESL teacher applies in meaning-focused instruction. Using the CF model of Lyster and Ranta's (1997) the data reveals that the teacher uses various feedback types ranging from explicit to implicit CFs.However, he uses mainly implicit CFs namely recast, elicitation, and repetition and the explicit CF used is only metalinguistic feedback. Thus, clarification request and explicit correction do not occur.Interestingly, the teacher does not use a type of CF in isolation, instead he often combines two types together for example recast with metalinguistic feedback and repetition with elicitation. Thus he actually employs multiple corrective feedbacks.

The last question to answer asks about the pattern of repair strategies of the teacher and student interaction. According to Schegloff et al. (1977), there are fourtypes, however, during the meaning-focused instruction investigated not all patterns did occur. The patterns used are only other-initiated self-repair in which a student makes a repair of his or her ill-formed utterances upon the teacher's CF. This is done mainly after the teacher's elicitation or recast which is combined with confirmation check. This is because elicitation and confirmation check require the interlocutor to answer. It will sound awkward if they are not responded. This is different from recast which produces a type of other-initiated other-repair. Recast is in the form of affirmative sentence in which the interlocutor does not have to provide an answer. Therefore, as long as the answer from the teacher or other student is acceptable there is no obligation of further comments to exist.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In this paper, three things concerning with CF and repair strategies have been discussed. It can be concluded that ESL teacher does not every single mistake or error the students make. He corrects only the errors that he thinks impede comprehension. Then the CFs mostly used by the teacher are the

implicit ones. He hardly ever uses direct correction. The interaction between the teacher and the students is thus more conversational than pedagogical practice. While repair strategy that is employed in the communicative classroom is mostly other initiated self-repair. It is believedthat self-repair may promote better comprehension and it is also a sign that students have notice the gap between their interlanguageuses with the targetlike language.

However, this is only a pilot study which has a lot of limitations especially on the number of participants as well as the amount of observation hour. Besides, many factors may also contribute to the way the CFs and repair strategies to take place in the classroom interaction which are beyond the discussion. These factors include the student language proficiency, the context, student age, the goal of instruction and so forth. Therefore, further research with a similar topic is worth conducting for more comprehensive and consistent result.

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