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Research Article

1. Explicit correction which refers to teachers' giving correct form of mistakes directly.
2. Recast which refers to teachers' reformulating of the students' attempt.
3. Clarification request which refers to teachers' asking a follow-up question.
4. Metalinguistic feedback which refers to teachers' talking about the error, perhaps using the grammatical language.
5. Elicitation which refers to teachers stopping and asking the student or another student to correct the form.
6. Repetition which refers to teachers' repeating the error with highlighting by intonation.
7. Multiple which refers to teachers' use of a mixture of all above.

Speaking Assessment

The last few years have made applied linguists and language testers understand the nature of L2 spoken language assessment. According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2010), there are four categories for oral production. The first one is imitative which refers to the ability to imitate a word, phrase, or sentence and the second one is intensive which refers to producing short amounts of oral language in the narrow form of grammatical, lexical, or phonological features; also, the third one is responsive which includes interaction and comprehension of test within short conversations, and the last one is extensive which is similar to responsive but different in the length and complexity of the interaction.

Picture-Cued Task

Picture-cued tasks are one of the most popular ways of eliciting oral language performance. Pictures may range from very simple to elicit a word or phrase to more complex ones to make students tell a story or an incident (Brown and Abeywickrama, 2010). The current study was an attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of explicit feedback that provides information directly by giving grammatical rules or information related to the well-formed students' speeches as defined by Ellis et al., (2006) to evaluate the effectiveness of explicit oral correction form as compared to simply asking students to engage in speaking assessment without providing them with CF. Pictures were used in this study to elicit one complete sentence to respond to the questions that were prepared focusing on seven English tenses. The participants were familiar with all seven tenses but had difficulty with correct oral production of them.

Review of Related Literature

Psychologically, the effect of explicit and implicit conditions on learning has been a controversial issue. Nonetheless, in spite of the fact that there is a great diversity in the designs and purposes of the previous studies, the findings represent that explicit correction works better than implicit correction where treatment is involved (Varnosfadrani and Basturkmen, 2009).

Explicit correction indicates the process of providing learners with direct forms of feedback. With regard to Carroll and Swain (1993), teachers can explicitly and directly mention that the learners' utterance is incorrect. Through this way, they explicitly direct the attention of learners to the wrong point. Explicit correction in this study consists of direct and metalinguistic explanation of the incorrect structure.

Implicit correction can refer to the process of providing learners with indirect forms of feedback. Learners should deduce that their utterance leads to comprehension problem. Although students pay more attention to explicit CF than implicit CF (Mackey et al., 2007; Nassaji, 2009) and prompts more than recasts (Ammar, 2008), some researchers have proposed that the effects of implicit CF may be more lasting than those of explicit CF, which may be more effective in the short term memory (Mackey & Goo 2007; Li, 2010; Ellis et al., 2006). Other research on acquisition theory might be seen as less focused on either explicit or implicit feedback because its focus is less on instances of noticing CF and more on the opportunities given by CF for improving oral skills through language practice. A growing number of studies (for example, Ellis et al., 2006; Ellis, 2007; Sheen, 2006, 2007) have compared the application of implicit type of CF with more explicit types of feedback and have shown that learners learn better from the explicit feedback as they pushed learners to modify their non-target-like output without providing L2 models. Egi (2010) identified the nature and locus of the errors (Ammar and Spada, 2006; as cited in Faqeih, 2012).
Ellis (2006) investigated the effect of both explicit and implicit CF on learning past test among second language learners in New Zealand with 34 participants. Similarly, Sheen (2006, 2007) investigated the efficacy of CF, language aptitude, and learners' attitudes on the acquisition of English articles. Adult learners of different first language (L1) backgrounds in intermediate ESL classes participated in the study. Fageih (2012) conducted an experimental study entitled "The effectiveness of error correction during oral interaction: Experimental studies with English L2 learners in the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia". The study examined the effects of recast and metalinguistic information, during oral production tasks on the learning of English modals (will, can and must). Similarly, Abbasian and Pourmehdi (2012) investigated a study entitled "EFL oral production via Feedback: Focus on form (FOF) vs. focus on meaning (FOM)". The study was conducted to compare the efficacy of focus on form and focus on meaning corrective feedback on Iranian EFL learners' accuracy and fluency in oral production. While a great deal of research has been conducted, further research is required to have an obvious attitude toward the role of the method of correction in rebuilding the learners’ interlanguage. Moreover, it is essential to indicate whether the method of correction as individual correction or group correction has any effect on learning the type of the structure corrected.

Statement of the Problem

English teachers always face this common phenomenon that although many students have learned a great deal of grammatical knowledge, most of them are still not capable of speaking English accurately. An ongoing concern of English teachers is whether or not to correct students' mistakes at the time of oral assessment. To the best of our knowledge, studies have not been conducted on providing feedback on oral assessment such as interviews which need individual correction. As teaching and testing are inseparable, teachers should not ignore the importance of learning at the time of providing students with language assessment.

Research Questions

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. Does corrective explicit feedback in speaking assessment have a positive effect on improvement of Iranian EFL learners' linguistic accuracy as to productive use of English tenses?
2. Which English tense can be produced better after providing learners with corrective explicit feedback?
3. Which English tense is produced less accurately after providing the learners with corrective explicit feedback?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Method

This quasi-experimental study dealt with providing the participants with explicit error correction with metalinguistic explanation to determine the efficacy of CF on picture-cued tasks of speaking assessment.

Participants

To fulfill the purpose of the study, 54 participants studying at onelanguage institute in Shiraz, Iran were chosen based on non-probability (non-random sampling) because they just happened to be present when the research was conducted and they had the same teacher, the researcher. The participants were female intermediate learners of English and their age ranged from 14 to 18 years old. 54 learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) were assigned to one of the two following conditions: 27 learners received explicit feedback in oral form, and 27 learners received no corrective feedback (CF) through picture-cued tasks of speaking assessment.

Instrument

At the outset of the study, in order to ensure about homogeneity among the fifty-four participants of the study, a sample model of Oxford Placement test was administered. In order to ensure about the homogeneity of oral production of the participants, pre-tests were used in the form of structured interviews. All participants in both groups, either control or experimental, were interviewed individually. Similar to pre-tests, the treatment session was a kind of speaking assessment task that was picture-cued
tasks. Immediate and delayed post-tests were similar to pre-test in the form of structured interviews. The participants’ voice was recorded and transcribed later. A checklist based on Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) two point rubrics was used to score all the oral tests. Top Notch books were used as the source of data gathering on English tenses.

**Procedure**

This study was based on an experimental classroom design. A battery of pre-tests, treatment, immediate and delayed post-tests were used to assess the students’ acquisition of seven English tenses including Simple Present tense, Simple Past Tense, Present Continues Tense, Past Continuous Tense, Present Perfect Tense, Future (Be Going To) Tense, and Future (Will) Tense. The pre-test consisted of forty-two questions based on all the seven mentioned tenses. The participants were asked to answer all questions in no more than one sentence. The treatment session was a kind of speaking assessment task that was picture-cued tasks. Both the control and experimental groups received picture-cued tasks. The difference between the two groups was in providing the experimental group with explicit feedback after finishing the task while the control group did not receive any CF. In the control group, if the interviewee made a mistake, her mistake was ignored and the interviewer provided her with offering placebo, while in the experimental group if the interviewee made a mistake, after finishing the task, the interviewer corrected the mistakes explicitly and provided her with metalinguistic rules.

**Data Analysis**

A pilot study was conducted to measure the validity and strengths of pre-tests and picture-cued tasks. Ten students matched with the participants of the study participated in the pilot study. The validity of the pre-test and picture-cued tasks was confirmed by the academic staff of English language department. The reliability of pre-test questions was .70 through Cronbach alpha. In order to score the pre-tests, treatment picture-cued tasks of speaking assessment, immediate, and delayed post-test oral production, the two point rubric was used. If the interviewees answered the question correctly, grade one was given and if she failed to answer correctly or the answer was partially correct, zero was given (Brown and Abeywickrama, 2010). If a participant self-corrected herself, then only the initial incorrect production was scored, as this would provide a better measure of the participants’ implicit knowledge (Ellis, 2007).

After collecting the data from pre-test, immediate and delayed post-test, the researcher analyzed the results of the study. The results of the two groups’ tests were compared to see whether providing participants with picture-cued tasks of speaking assessment with or without CF had any effect on increasing the participants’ level of accuracy on seven English tenses. Mean scores, standard deviations, and independent and paired t-test were calculated through SPSS to respond to the first, second and third research questions.

To respond to the second and third research questions of the study to indicate which English tense could be produced better after providing learners with corrective explicit feedback, paired t-test was used through SPSS 20 software.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Results**

**Descriptive Statistics**

After receiving scores on pre-test, immediate and delayed post-test from two experimental and control groups, the researcher calculated the Maximum, Minimum, Mean, and Standard Deviation of scores of both groups.

The minimum score in the experimental group in the post-test was 17 and the maximum was 38 out of 42, and the minimum score in the experimental group in the delayed post-test was 19 and the maximum was 38 out of 42. The mean scores which showed the central tendency of pre-test, immediate, and delayed post-test of the experimental group were as the follows:

**Experimental Group**

1. Pre-test: Mean $\pm$ SD=15.33 $\pm$ 6.45
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2. Post-test: Mean ± SD=30.59 ± 5.92
3. Delayed post-test: Mean ± SD=30.85±5.26

The mean scores obtained from the experimental group through pre-, post-, and delayed post- indicated that CF was influential on increasing the mean scores of post- test and delayed post-test. The minimum score obtained in the control group in the post-test was 10 and the maximum was 27 out of 42, and the minimum score obtained in the control group from in the delayed post-test was 10 and the maximum was 29 out of 42. The mean scores of pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test of the control group were as follows:

Control Group
1. Pre-test: Mean ± SD=14.03 ± 5.08
2. Post-test: Mean ± SD=14.02 ± 4.64
3. Delayed post-test: Mean ± SD=14.74 ±4.95

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Experimental and Control Groups (Pre-, Immediate, and Delayed Post)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed post-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed Post-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 1 shows, the mean score in the experimental group after receiving feedback increased in the immediate and delayed post-tests.

Figure 1 demonstrates that there is no significant difference between mean scores of pre-tests in the experimental and control groups.

Figure 2 demonstrates there is a significant difference between mean scores of delayed post-tests in the experimental and control groups as well.
Inferential Statistics

In order to consider homogeneity of the control and experimental groups in the pre-test, an independent sample t-test was run. The independent sample t-test showed whether the difference between the two groups’ variance in the pre-test was equal or not. The results shown in Table 2 indicate the fact that the participants’ variances were equal.

Table 2: Independent Sample t-test (Experimental and Control Pre-tests)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variances</th>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Variances assumed</td>
<td>2.547</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>.820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Variances not assumed</td>
<td>.820</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>.416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 2 demonstrates, there is no statistically significant difference between experimental and control groups' performance in the pre-test.

Research Question 1

Does corrective explicit feedback in speaking assessment have a positive effect on improvement of Iranian EFL learners’ linguistic accuracy in the productive use of English tenses?

The paired sample t-test, the mean scores of pre-test and delayed post-test for both experimental and control groups indicated that there was a significant difference between the scores of both groups. The mean score of the experimental group in the delayed post-test (after receiving CF and passage of two weeks) increased greatly but those of the control group from pre-test to delayed post-test did not show any significant change. The results are shown in Table 3.
### Table 3: Paired Sample t-test between Pre- and Delayed Post-test in the Experimental and Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>St. Error Mean</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1 Pre-Test</td>
<td>15.3333</td>
<td>6.45100</td>
<td>6.45100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed Post-Test</td>
<td>30.8519</td>
<td>5.26749</td>
<td>5.26749</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17.8314 - 13.792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1 Pre-Test</td>
<td>14.0370</td>
<td>5.08755</td>
<td>5.08755</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>-1.52338 - .11598</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed Post-Test</td>
<td>14.7407</td>
<td>4.95047</td>
<td>4.95047</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = p < 0.05

### Research Questions 2 and 3
Which English tense is produced more accurately after providing the learners with corrective explicit feedback?
Which English tense is produced less accurately after providing the learners with corrective explicit feedback?
In order to investigate the second and third research questions, the researcher investigated the efficacy of CF on all seven tenses two by two through paired sample t-test. Table 4 indicates the mean scores of seven tenses.

### Table 4: Mean Scores of Seven Tenses in Pre-, Post-, and delayed Post-tests in Experimental Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenses</th>
<th>Pre-</th>
<th>Immediate Post-</th>
<th>Delayed Post-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Simple Present</td>
<td>3.5185</td>
<td>4.5556</td>
<td>4.8519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Simple Past</td>
<td>2.8519</td>
<td>4.7407</td>
<td>4.9259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Present Continuous</td>
<td>2.3333</td>
<td>4.1852</td>
<td>4.2222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Past Continuous</td>
<td>1.1111</td>
<td>3.9630</td>
<td>4.0370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Present Perfect</td>
<td>.9630</td>
<td>4.2593</td>
<td>3.9259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Future (Be Going To)</td>
<td>1.3333</td>
<td>3.7037</td>
<td>3.5926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Future (Will)</td>
<td>3.1481</td>
<td>5.1852</td>
<td>5.2963</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on mean scores obtained through paired t-test, it was found that giving CF had the most influential effect on Present Perfect Tense to increase the mean scores from pre-test (.9630) to delayed post-test (3.9259).
Discussion

Three research questions guided the overall considerations that resulted in the decision of whether to provide students with feedback while involved in speaking assessment. The results of data analysis of the first research question indicated the efficacy of treatment sessions. In this regard, Cardelle and Corno (1981) discussed when students receive more feedback; they understand better to correct their mistakes. In addition, Driscoll (2007) believes that feedback can serve two functions during learning process. It can provide learners with information about the correct form of their response or performance and also it can provide learners with corrective information that can cause them to modify their performance. The results of comparing mean scores of seven tenses to justify second and third research questions show that CF had the most effect on Present Perfect Tense and the least effect on Simple Present Tense. In this regard Antinucci and Miller (1976) argued that it has been believed in the literature, particularly in those studies that are based on Piaget's strong determinism position that language acquisition and language use rely on prior acquisition of supportive cognitive structures. Hollebrandse (2000) studies on the acquisition of the sequence of tenses. Also, Stromswold (1990) focuses on the acquisition of tense-aspect functional elements. Odlin (2003) proposed that similarities between the first and the second language help learning; while, differences can impede the acquisition. In addition, Jarvis and Odlin (2000) indicate that cross-linguistic influence can cover either positive or negative transfer, and having highly accurate morphological predictions could depend on how positive and negative transfer involved in the comprehension and production.

Conclusion

In this study, there was an attempt to determine whether corrective explicit feedback in speaking assessment has a positive effect on improvement of Iranian EFL learners’ linguistic accuracy as to productive use of English tenses. The results revealed that the use of corrective explicit feedback in speaking assessment had a significant effect on improvement of Iranian EFL learners' linguistic accuracy in producing seven English tenses more competently.

This study also investigated which English tense can be produced better after providing learners with corrective explicit feedback. The results indicated that giving CF had the most influential effect on Present Perfect Tense to increase the mean scores of pre-test (.9630) to delayed post-test (3.9259) and least effect on Simple Present Tense. The results also indicated that there were significant differences among accurate production of seven tenses after providing learners with feedback. The obvious effects of explicit feedback with metalinguistic rules in the current study might be attributed to the fact that all participants in the experimental group received feedback individually not in a group. They also received repeated feedback since all their mistakes were corrected not just one out each tense category. Therefore, the participants had a good opportunity to get enough practice over correct use of that given tense.

The effectiveness of picture-cued tasks of speaking assessment was observed in the current study possibly because learners were in favour of this type of activities for they were novel for them.

Implication

Theoretical Implication

The results of this study revealed some facts based on Long's interaction hypothesis indicating that the tasks which provide opportunities for interaction help learning. This might be because the metalinguistic feedback provided implicit positive evidence and/or because the learners construed their own, explicit, grammatical rules. On the other hand, the usefulness of the interventional materials suggested by Krashen's Input Hypotheses might have assisted learners to get involved in the activities successfully. Krashen (1985) states that explicit error correction of grammar might just improve the learners' explicit knowledge which might not be available during special tasks. The current study proposed other results as the metalinguistic feedback was found useful in particular tasks for both implicit and explicit knowledge in pre-, immediate and delayed post testing times.

In the current study, the beneficial role of the explicit feedback with metalinguistic information is similar to that stated by Schmidt's (1995, 2001) noticing hypothesis. The learners' understanding observed in the
experimental group was relevant to the output hypothesis (Swain, 2005) which discusses the developmental effects of pushed output.

Finally, this study represents the significance of examining the efficacy of explicit CF with metalinguistic feedback regarding EFL language context. It was found that explicit CF with metalinguistic feedback can be effective in EFL contexts.

**Pedagogical Implications**

The current study was conducted to investigate the relative effectiveness of explicit type of CF on improvement of seven English tenses EFL learners to be produced orally in an appropriate manner. The following implications may be applicable and pertinent to other language features; yet, more research may be needed to confirm this.

This study proposed that metalinguistic CF technique can be effective for EFL learners. This could be against the attitude of some teachers' disagreement on direct and overt negative feedback, believing that explicit feedback might lead to demotivation and embarrassment of the learners (e.g. Seedhouse, 2001). On the contrary, the results in the current study indicate the positive and importance of providing explicit and metalinguistic CF.

Trainee teachers should be familiarized with these different kinds of feedback in their methodological training courses. It is believed that classrooms in EFL are large. Therefore, the opportunity to explain and express attitudes cannot be easy to be applied into lessons. Whether such CF can be used effectively in larger classes is a matter for further research since in this study participants in the experimental group were provided with feedback individually.

**Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research**

This project was limited to 54 female participants to study the effect of using explicit error correction; however, other models of error correction were not taken into account. In this study, feedback was used in the form of explicit error correction of seven English tenses. However, other forms of English tenses were not taken into account. In the current study, the students' productive skill of using English tenses in speaking was important and other aspects of speaking assessment, such as vocabulary, pronunciation, interaction, etc. were ignored. Despite the limitations, this study may contribute to our understanding of the effectiveness of explicit CF on oral accuracy of interviewees while engaging in speaking assessment.

What is needed is more systematic and fine grained analyses, which take into account providing CF on all aspects of standard interview components as speaking assessment. In this study, the speaking assessments were based on responsive and intensive tasks.

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