

## Lecturers' use of corrective feedback and students' uptake in an Indonesian EFL context

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**ABSTRACT:** The aim of this research is to describe the types of corrective feedback used by Indonesian EFL lecturers, learners' uptake, and the effects of lecturers' corrective feedback on students' uptake. This research is based on a descriptive qualitative research design. The participants were three lecturers from the English Department at Universitas Negeri Makassar. The study found that seven types of corrective feedback were provided by the lecturers: explicit correction, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, repetition, peer-repair request and giving options. The students use two types of uptake in response to lecturers' corrective feedback: repair uptake and needs-repair uptake. Lecturers' corrective feedback leads to more repetitions, provides correct forms, and eases the students' access to repair uptake and self-repair. Lecturers' educational background and teaching experience have no relationship with their corrective feedback, and the lecturers provide corrective feedback based on the students' proficiency level and the goal of the lesson.

**Keywords:** Corrective feedback, uptake, Indonesian EFL context

### INTRODUCTION

The pioneers of second language acquisition (SLA) studies, such as Cummins, Krashen, Ellis and Swain have paid serious attention to how language acquisition takes place [1-4]. There are three major hypotheses, which significantly contribute to this issue; namely, the input hypothesis, the interactional hypothesis and the output hypothesis. The input hypothesis, commonly known as  $i + 1$ , is suggested by Krashen [2]. He strongly believes that language acquisition is determined by input. However, Krashen's views have received many criticisms, one of which comes from Swain who argues that even though comprehensible input constitutes a necessary condition, it is not sufficient for SLA [4].

In an attempt to fill this gap, Swain and Lapkin proposed the output hypothesis. It fills the gap left by the input hypothesis alone. The role is that students receive and comprehend the input and, then, with their comprehensible input, they are forced to use that to produce an output. To have good comprehension in SLA, learners need to be pushed to produce language and may try out new structures or modify their own speech. Moreover, some researchers consider that the input and output hypotheses in SLA is still insufficient to support the learner's language development [4].

Some researchers, such as Freeman and Long, propose what they call the interaction hypothesis. Accordingly, comprehension of the language, which is shaped via interaction contributes strongly and directly to the acquisition [5]. The output hypothesis is closely related to the interaction hypothesis, in which the emphasis of language learning is on grammatical form in a context of communicative tasks and activities. Comprehensible outputs formed in the interaction will have a direct effect on acquisition.

One way to shape comprehensible output during the interaction is by receiving corrective feedback for the output produced. Corrective feedback is basically a term used to describe the teacher's response to learners' language errors [6]. Corrective feedback was firstly disapproved of by Krashen [7]. He argued that error correction is a serious mistake. He offered two major reasons for this view. First, error correction puts the students on the defensive. It makes the learner eliminate their mistakes by avoiding the use of complex construction in their sentences. Second, error correction only assists the development of learned knowledge and plays no role in acquired knowledge.

In contrast, Ellis's view is that that corrective feedback alone, which is facilitative in language learning is not enough [8]. It does not improve learners' language acquisition with regard to syntax and the production of output. The output

hypothesis promoted by Swain is the solution to the missing parts of input hypothesis [4]. The output hypothesis enables the teacher to facilitate the learner to have an opportunity to produce an output, so they can convey something in the target language in a language learning process. Also, it gives the students feedback to help them notice parts that need more attention in their utterances.

Another researcher, Van Patten claims that corrective feedback in the form of negotiating for meaning can help learners notice their errors and create form-meaning connections; thus, aiding acquisition [9]. Hence, without over-estimating the contribution of corrective feedback, it is not excessive to say that corrective feedback is helpful in learning a language. It helps the students notice the errors coming up in their utterance and provides an opportunity for the learners to correct the errors they made. Therefore, corrective feedback is uncontested in language learning in classroom.

Moreover, in responding to the lecturer's corrective feedback, students correct their sentences in response to their lecturer's correction. The learners' responses to the teacher's corrective feedback is called students' uptake. More specifically, uptake refers to a student's utterances that immediately follow the teacher's feedback, and that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher's intention to draw attention to some aspect of the students' initial utterances [6].

Uptake is considered significant for language acquisition. Lyster and Ranta state that there are two major reasons of the importance of uptake to second language acquisition: 1) uptake provides opportunities for learners to retrieve the knowledge of the target language after receiving a feedback; and 2) when the students repair their utterance, they notice the error, draw the correct form, lead them to picture the correct form and reform their sentences [6].

Extensive studies have been done to explain the relationship between corrective feedback and learner's uptake. Yet, the effect of the lecturer's corrective feedback has not been clearly defined in the Indonesian context. Many educators seem to correct the learner's errors, but have not yet realised the role of the corrective feedback and its effect on the learner's uptake. Hence, it is considered worthwhile to explore further the lecturer's way of performing corrective feedback, and also to examine its effect on the learner's uptake in language learning in the Indonesian context at a university.

### Corrective Feedback

The term error is derived from Latin word *error* [10]. Error may seem an easy term to define. However, it is not that simple. There are various ways of defining it according to the different perspectives of looking at it. In terms of language learning, Day et al define error as the use of a linguistic item or discourse structure in a way, which, according to fluent users of the language, indicates faulty or incomplete learning [10]. In addition, Lyster and Ranta state that error includes non-native-like uses of language [6].

Different terms have been used by researchers to describe the act of correcting learners' errors in SLA. Those terms are repair, negative feedback, error treatment and correction/corrective feedback [11][8]. Corrective feedback is an indication to the learner that his or her use of the target language is incorrect. Corrective feedback can include a wide variety of responses, ranging from implicit to explicit, and some also containing additional metalinguistic information. Ellis defines corrective feedback as taking the form of responses to a learner's utterance that contain an error [8]. Zhao stated that corrective feedback is a teacher's response to the learner's error. Corrective feedback in SLA refers to the responses to a learner's non-target like L2 production [12].

Many types of corrective feedback have been proposed; for example, Lyster and Ranta developed six pattern types of feedback used by teachers in their teaching:

- 1) *explicit correction* refers to the explicit provision of the correct form. As the teacher provides the correct form, he or she clearly indicates that what the student has said is incorrect;
- 2) *recast* involves the teacher reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance, minus the error;
- 3) *clarification request* is a feedback type that can refer to problems in either comprehensibility or accuracy or both;
- 4) *metalinguistic feedback* contains either comments, information or requests related to the well-formedness of the student's utterance, without explicitly providing the correct form;
- 5) *elicitation* refers to at least three techniques that teachers use to elicit directly the correct form from the student;
- 6) *repetition* refers to the teacher's repetition, in isolation of the students' erroneous utterance. In most cases, teachers adjust their intonation to highlight the error [6].

In addition, Syam identified two new types of corrective feedback in research she conducted at a high school level in Indonesian context. They are *peer-repair request*, a type of feedback, which is provided by inviting another student to correct their friend's errors and *giving opinion*, and a type of corrective feedback by offering two possible correct answers to the student [13].

### Uptake

Zhao, in his study, defines learner's uptake as a term that refers to a learner's immediate responses to a lecturer's feedback about the learner's errors during a lesson. Uptake is considered successful when it demonstrates that the

learner has understood the linguistic form or has corrected the error [12]. On the other hand, uptake is considered unsuccessful when a learner fails to demonstrate the command in the future [6]. There are no studies, which clearly claim the relationship between uptake and language learning. Brock et al highlight that the lack of uptake does not necessarily mean that the learner did not benefit from the feedback [14].

Conversely, Lyster and Ranta state that there are two major reasons for the importance of uptake to second language acquisition: 1) uptake provides opportunities for learners to retrieve knowledge of the target language after receiving feedback; and 2) when the students correct their utterances, they notice the error and work out the correct form, leading them to picture the correct form and making the reform of their sentences [6].

Supporting Lyster and Ranta's conception [6], Swain argues that the students need more input to acquire a language; they need to be pushed to produce output in the target language [4]. The output, then, will be worthwhile, if it leads to feedback that enables them to revise their output, if they make errors in the target language [15]. To sum up, there is no clear provision on uptake. More studies need to be conducted to look at the clear effect and the relevance of uptake in second language acquisition.

According to Lyster and Ranta, two different kinds of uptake can occur: a) uptake that results in repair of the errors on, which the feedback focuses; and b) uptake that results in an utterance that still needs repair [6]. Repair consists of 1) *repetition* refers to a student's repetition of the teacher's feedback when the latter includes the correct form; 2) *incorporation* refers to a student's repetition of the correct form provided by the teacher, which is then incorporated into a longer utterance produced by the student; 3) *self-repair* refers to self-correction, produced by the student who made the initial error, in response to the teacher's feedback when the latter does not provide the correct form; and 4) *peer-repair* refers to peer-correction provided by a student, other than the one who made the initial error, in response to the teacher's feedback.

Needs-repair covers:

- 1) *acknowledgement* generally refers to a simple *yes* on the part of the student in response to the teacher's feedback;
- 2) *same error* refers to uptake that includes a repetition of the student's initial error;
- 3) *different error* refers to a student's uptake that is in response to the lecturer's feedback, but that neither corrects nor repeats the initial error. Instead, a different error is made;
- 4) *off target* refers to uptake that is clearly in response to the teacher's feedback, but that circumvents the teacher's linguistic focus altogether without including any further errors;
- 5) *hesitation* refers to a student's hesitation in response to the teacher's feedback; and
- 6) *partial repair* refers to uptake that includes a correction of only part of the initial error [6].

## RESEARCH METHOD

As this study focuses on lecturers' corrective feedback and students' uptake, qualitative research can be considered to be suitable as Gay et al state that ... *qualitative research is the collection, analysis and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual data in order to gain insight into a particular phenomenon of interest* [16]. To answer the research questions, the data were collected through classroom observation using check lists, note taking and technology devices: video and audio recordings. This study involved three lecturers and their students in the English Education Study Programme of the Faculty of Languages and Literature at Universitas Negeri Makassar. The three lecturers as participants of this study were selected on the basis of their profile, teaching experience and English proficiency level. A short informal interview was conducted to find these out, and asked for their willingness to be observed as well.

Three classes of students being taught by the lecturers using information and communication technology were observed. Each class consisted of around 30 students. They were third and fifth semester students of the English Education Study Programme. The students' L1 and L2 are Makassar or Bugis and Indonesian. Their ages were in the range of 18-20 years old. The observation was conducted at two meetings of each class. The researchers acted as non-participant observers. In analysing the data from the observations and interviews, the researchers used discourse analysis. The researchers applied qualitative data analysis based on Miles and Huberman's theory [17]. This analysis involved three stages: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification.

Data reduction took place through a process of coding. The researchers took only the lecturers' and students' utterances, which could be categorised as errors, corrective feedback or uptake. The researchers categorised the chosen utterances into the categories suggested by Lyster and Ranta [6] and Ellis [8]. Furthermore, the utterances were reviewed by separating the extracts needed by the researchers. After that, the data were displayed in the form of tables. Selected extracts were analysed and reported.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research are discussed in five main areas based on the research questions. First, the study discovered that five of the six types of corrective feedback developed by Lyster and Ranta were used by the lecturers; namely,

explicit correction, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation and repetition [6] and two types of corrective feedback proposed by Syam; namely, peer-repair request and giving option were also performed by the lecturers in the current study [13]. In total, the lecturers provided seven types of corrective feedback. The findings show a great difference from the previous related studies. Most of the previous studies revealed that recast is the most frequently used feedback. This research, on the other hand, shows that lecturers used various types of corrective feedback, but no recast.

Second, the findings show, surprisingly, that the types of corrective feedback provided by the lecturers are mostly followed by students' uptake. All the types of uptake identified by Lyster and Ranta were used by the students [6].

Furthermore, one new type of uptake has been revealed in this research. This new type is called *asking for explanation*; it is when the students respond to the lecturers' corrective feedback by asking another question to have more explanation from the teacher.

Third, regarding the effect of lecturers' corrective feedback to the students' uptake, there are no reliable data showing how lecturers' corrective feedback directly affects the students' uptake. However, it is understood that in this case study, peer-repair request and metalinguistic feedback successfully lead repair uptake although its occurrence shows rarity.

Based on the finding, explicit correction is seen to lead to more repetition. It is assumed that it is because those two types of corrective feedback provide the correct form. It eases the students to have repair uptake by repeating the correct form. On the contrary, metalinguistic feedback is seen to lead successfully to self-repair. It is assumed that this type of uptake leads the student more, by providing guiding questions or even information about the error; hence, the students get new insight and, therefore, they can fix the error after guidance from the lecturers. Hence, it can be assumed that metalinguistic feedback is better for leading the student to produce self-repair, which is helpful for the students' language acquisition, while explicit correction shows a lower contribution to students' language acquisition.

Fourth, with regard to the relation between lecturers' teaching experience and educational background with their way of conducting corrective feedback, the data reveal that these factors show no significant correlation. Lecturers tend to vary different types of corrective feedback based on several factors.

Fifth, the lecturers conduct corrective feedback based on the students' proficiency level and the goal of the lesson. Different from non-English department students and senior high school students, university students with sufficient comprehension of grammar are mostly senior students who learn more from theories of English teaching and related pedagogical theories. It can, therefore, be concluded that students' proficiency level and their subject of the study relate to teachers' corrective feedback.

#### Implications for Engineering Education

The teaching learning process used for the study involved the use of information and communication technology (ICT) applications. Therefore, the findings of this study imply that the activities involving corrective feedback and students' uptake reflect not only class interaction in general, but also class circumstances in which the communication occurs involving ICT applications.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and discussion in the previous part, it can be concluded that this study shows that the types of corrective feedback provided by the lecturers are explicit correction, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation and repetition, peer-repair request and giving option. The finding of this research shows a big difference from previous related studies. Most of the earlier studies revealed that recast was the most frequently used form of feedback. This research on the other hand shows that several types of corrective feedback are used by the lecturers.

The types of corrective feedback provided by lecturers were mostly followed by uptake from the students. All the types of uptake except recast were used by the students. One new type of uptake is revealed in this research, called asking explanation, which successfully leads to repair uptake. The types of uptake are repair, which involves repetition, incorporation, self-repair and peer-repair, and needs-repair uptake, which involves acknowledgement, same error, different error, off target, hesitation and partial repair. While previous studies found that repetition appeared to be the number one uptake performed by the students, the current study reveals that self-repair is the highest rate of uptake performed by the student and different error is the lowest rate.

Regarding the effect of teachers' use of corrective feedback to the students' uptake, there are no reliable data showing how teachers' corrective feedback directly affects the students' uptake. However, it is understood that in this case study, peer-repair request successfully leads repair uptake, although both are represented. Explicit correction, then, recast appear to be the next feedback leading to repair uptake. Metalinguistic feedback, surprisingly, comes as the main use of corrective feedback which successfully leads to self-repair that contributes to students' comprehensible output, while recasting merely achieves repetition.

Explicit correction is the type of corrective feedback that provides the correct form; it eases the student towards repair uptake by repeating the correct form.

However, metalinguistic feedback is also seen to lead successfully to self-repair; this type of uptake leads the student more, by providing guiding questions or even information about the error; hence, the student can gain new insight and can fix the error after guidance from the teacher. Hence, it can be assumed that metalinguistic feedback is better for leading the student to produce self-repair, which is helpful for the student's language acquisition, while explicit correction and recast show lower contributions to student language acquisition.

Regarding the relationship between teachers' teaching experience and educational background with their way of providing corrective feedback, the data reveal that these factors have no significant relationship, since the teacher conducts corrective feedback based on the students' proficiency level and the goal of the lesson. It seems that university students with sufficient comprehension of grammar learn more about theories of English teaching rather than English proficiency. So, it can be concluded that students' proficiency level and their subject of the study relate to teachers' corrective feedback.

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