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CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK – ITS ROLE AND IMPACT IN ENHANCING LEARNERS' LANGUAGE PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Coronavirus pandemic has affected teaching and learning scenario in education institutions. The learning motivation of learners is affected by this crisis. One of ways that educators can do to help these learners is to provide support in terms of feedback. Feedback is important in language learning and teaching because not only it can increase learners' motivation but also influence learners' language performance. Debate about the role and the impact of corrective feedback on learners' language learning has been prominent in recent years. Numerous research were conducted to investigate whether corrective feedback facilitates their language learning performance. As educators, we need to recognize the value of effective feedback to both the learners and educators. In this paper, concepts, characteristics and importance of effective corrective feedback in relation to motivation are discussed on theoretical and practical grounds. Furthermore, this paper also discussed reviews of supporting research evidence which indicate the influence of corrective feedback on learners' language performance. Lastly, recommendations for educators to explore ways to improve their feedback techniques in order to maximize learners' achievement in language learning are also suggested.

1.   Introduction

Feedback is information that learners receive about their language learning.   Hattie and Timperley (2007) described feedback as one of the most powerful influences on learning. The

impact of the types of feedback, intentionally or unintentionally which they received will play an important part on the development of their learning progress (Eraut, 2006). Feedback that educators provide can be summative – an evaluation given by a score of learners' work at the end of a period of study or formative – information that is intended to guide the learners in some way as to what they can or should do next, and is given continuously during learning (Lee, 2017).

Researchers have suggested that corrective feedback is an essential element in language learning and teaching because it leads learners to notice second language forms which can influence learners' language learning performance (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Varnosfadrani & Basturkmen, 2009).

The objective of providing corrective form of feedback to the learners is to improve their fluency, accuracy and complexity of learners' production, to increase their motivation and to develop their autonomy in language learning. In feedback on speaking for example, feedback on their use of speaking strategies such as checking understanding, buying time or self-correction may benefit them more than feedback on their grammatical errors. Research also suggests that feedback on vocabulary and pronunciation problems may be more essential because these aspects not only contribute to breakdowns in communication and but also lead to greater learning gains (Lyster et al, 2013). Similarly, in feedback on writing, the focus should also be on both content and accuracy.

Teaching is actually an art and so does providing effective and meaningful feedback. As educators, they should be able to know what types of feedback, when and how to give learners' the feedback they deserved. By understanding the role and the impact of corrective feedback on learners' language learning performance, educators are able to provide appropriate and effective feedback in order to increase their motivation in learning which eventually leads to good performance.

2.   Literature Review

2.1   Errors vs Mistakes
In order to be effective language educators, educators need to be able to differentiate between errors and mistakes when they want to provide feedback to learners. Errors occur because learners do not yet know the correct rules of the target language. Thus, they are making a guess using their native language with their current knowledge of the target language. Since their knowledge to perform correctly has not been imparted, so educators need to give immediate feedback only if they have difficulty to understand what the learners are saying especially to those at the beginning level. Meanwhile, mistakes occur when learners know the correct rules, however, have used them incorrectly (Norrish, 1983). So, the educators have to give direct feedback toward correcting the mistakes because at this point learners are expected to be able to use the correct form of the target language.

2.2   Effective Corrective Feedback
Educators recognize the importance of effective feedback to both learners and teachers. For learners feedback not only indicates what they have done well and what they should keep doing but also what they should change and work on next. Corrective feedback both positive and negative can motivate and promote learners' mind growth which enable them to use errors as opportunities to learn and improve. Feedback is also important to educators. It provides them with the opportunity to analyze whether their teaching is effective and the learners' learning objectives are finally achieved. The feedback gained from the learners will

allow them to value the learners' thinking, and discover their weaknesses, strengths and thus identify the areas which need improvement. So, in order to improve learners' language learning, effective corrective feedback should be implemented in language classes. To provide effective corrective feedback it has to be specific, goal-oriented, consistent, timely, balanced and supportive (Allman, 2019).

Effective corrective feedback should be specific. Educators need to provide meaningful feedback so that learners can easily understand what they should do to correct their error. This requires educators to explain any specific observation of an error pattern that learners make, highlight what they do is right, show what is amiss and give concrete suggestions for improvement. Besides, educators must also determine whether the error made by the learners is language-related or content-related in order to provide them with appropriate feedback. Error which is language-related, requires educators' to model the correct language, help learners to practice using and showing how language appears in the text and reteach grammatical rules. In comparison, when the error is content-related, educators need to reteach or provide materials and support for leaners to master the content together with related language.

Besides that, effective corrective feedback should be goal-oriented and consistent. Educators need to remind learners of the goal of activities conducted in class clearly and regularly. Telling them about the course outline, and the specific task objectives help them to progress in learning. When they receive feedback, they learn to self-access to complete any tasks successfully and adjust their learning when necessary.

Next, effective corrective feedback is timely. It must be given immediately, and continuously while learning is in progress so that learners will have ample time to practice and self-correct. To ease educators burden of overwhelming load of providing prompt feedback, they can use peer-feedback, self-evaluation and technology to automate feedback.

Effective corrective feedback should also be balanced. In order to develop learners' communicative competence, and performance in language learning, it is important for educators to balance their feedback which not only focusing on grammatical correctness but also giving attention to meaning as well as appropriateness. When educators assist learners to focus on both meaning and form, learners are able to use correct vocabulary terms, and grammatical structure on word, sentence and discourse level.

Moreover, effective corrective feedback should be supportive in nature. Educators should provide feedback at the right time and take into account learners' language needs and learning tasks – to learn content or acquire language. When the goal of a task is to practice the correct form, educators need to give feedback on correcting learners' grammatical form. When the focus is on the language, then, they need to give feedback on learners' ability to communicate. Correcting and providing supportive feedback requires the educators to consider learners' feelings and emotions. They should provide positive, non-intrusive, and interactive feedback to avoid embarrassing the learners. Although educators recognize the value of direct and negative feedback, but it is not often received more readily.

Researches have also suggested that corrective feedback is associated with second language learning because it leads learners to notice the second language forms. The use of corrective feedback encourage them to recognize their errors, thus assisting them in producing the correct version of the language (Fan, 2019). Brandt (2008) viewed corrective feedback as more effective when it is focused, descriptive, relevant and meaningful. It should consist of a

moderate amount of positive feedback with a selected and limited negative feedback which allow for response and interaction.

2.3   Types and characteristics of Corrective Feedback

It is crucial for educators to understand that researchers have come up with various different types, characteristics and classifications of corrective feedback. Ellis (2006) categorizes corrective feedback into two categories: input-providing and output-pushing. Input-providing corrective feedback provides the correct reformulation through recasts whereas output-pushing corrective feedback withholds the correct reformulation and encourages learners to self-correct through prompt.

Lyster and Ranta (1997) on the other hand,   classified corrective feedback into six types: clarification, explicit, metalinguistic, recasting, repetition and elicitation. The objective of these feedbacks is to help learners to master the correct use of the language by providing them with the information as to what is correct - positive feedback and what is not correct - negative feedback.

•   Clarification requests are when educators point out to the learners that there is a problem with the language output where it impedes comprehension and understandings or when there is a grammatical or usage mistake that should be corrected for accuracy.

•   Explicit correction is where educators just simply provide the correct answer together with an explanation after the learners' several attempts to produce the correct responses failed.

•   Metalinguistic feedback requires educators to state directly that there is a mistake in the learners' output and instruct them to locate and correct it.

•   Recasting is where educator repeat and correct the learners' mistakes. The learners are then asked to repeat the recast in order to reinforce the correct language form.

•   Repetition is where educators repeat exactly the learners' output and emphasize the mistake made by the learners. When the location of the mistake is identified, it is easier for the learners to focus and correct it.

•   Elicitation is where educators repeat learners output and then pause at the word, phrase or grammatical construction where the mistakes were made to give the chance for the learners to correct their own mistakes.

Gattullo (2000) and Harmer (2001) have classified corrective feedback into three kinds: evaluative, strategic and corrective feedback.

•   Evaluative feedback is provided by using indicators like good, excellent or poor to rate learners' performance.

•   Strategic feedback is used to improve learners' performance by providing some advices, techniques and suggestions to encourage them to become self-reliant. Learners are guided to correct their mistakes by themselves.

•   Corrective feedback is used to correct the errors made by learners. Corrective feedback can be implicit or explicit. When giving implicit (indirect) feedback, educators will indicate the errors but will not provide any information as to the correct form of the errors. In contrast, explicit (direct) feedback offer clear information for the learners to correct their errors by providing the correct form of the language.

2.4   The importance of using effective corrective feedback (CF) to promote learners' motivation in language learning.

Feedback is an important concept in most theories of learning and is closely related to motivation. Gass and Selinker (2001) stated that motivation is a social psychological factor and an indicator of success in second language learning. When learners are motivated, they will learn language a great deal more and faster. Thus, feedback is considered as a vital approach to facilitate learners' language development as they become independent users of the language

by monitoring and evaluating their own learning (Ferguson, 2011). Numerous studies have provided evidence that signify the importance of corrective feedback.

Corrective feedback has been documented to increase learners' enthusiasm and motivation (Leyla, 2016). The study which investigated the effects of CF on learners' enthusiasm and motivation revealed that learners who were motivated after receiving individualized CF from their teacher after any writing tasks; produced coherent essays and performed well in their writing assessments. A study by Mezhoud (2015), attempted to investigate the impacts of CF on learners' enthusiasm and motivation also revealed similar findings. The learners who received individualized CF after formative assessments were asked to respond to a thirty items Likert-scale questionnaire. The results revealed that 87% of the learners were excited to receive CF form their teachers, 80% were not upset when receiving CF, 90% were not ashamed when being provided with CF, 90% were happy with the CF and 98% appreciated the teachers' efforts in providing them with CF.

Mueller and Dweck (1998) discovered that feedback for effort influenced learners in their goals and attributions. Since the emphasis is placed on effort, learners tend to work hard to ensure that they progress and develop their skills in learning. They become focus on their achievement and continue to display persistence that eventually lead to good performance. Burnett (2002) in his study discovered that learners who are praised for hard work or effort displayed more adaptive achievement attributions after failure than those praised for intelligence or ability. He concluded that effort or hard work feedback is preferred to intelligence or ability feedback with regard to the consequences of learners' failure. In short, CF has demonstrated it effectiveness in increasing learners' motivation to practice and exercise the target language.

Providing corrective feedback can also bring positive as well as negative impact to learners. If the feedback is given incorrectly, learners will be demotivated. So, what kind of errors to correct, what kind of feedback to provide, when to provide the feedback, and how the feedback is delivered are aspects that educators need to consider when providing feedback to the learners. According to Sermsook, Liamnimitr and Pochakorn (2017), it is crucial that educators anonymously correct learners who make mistakes. Revealing the learners who made these mistakes can be quite discouraging to them and can impinge their motivation negatively. The study highlights the importance of discretion in handling learners' mistakes and indicates that oral CF can have negative impact on the learning process especially when the educators adopt the approach as a way of evaluating the learners. Outright rebuking the learners defeats the purpose of the oral CF provided and adversely affects the learners' motivation. This article further suggests that the best way of giving oral CF is by providing it as a response to the learners' work. For example, the educators should provide oral CF systematically in stages, give time for the learners to self-correct their mistakes , provide insight on how they can improve their speech from a neutral point while at the same time acknowledge the learners' efforts to learn the target language.

Other researchers also discovered similar findings. Loewen and Erlam (2006) found that learners are more comfortable speaking when the teacher does not correct all errors but only select some to correct. Similarly, Truscott (1999) found that corrective feedback which is given in classroom can bring negative emotional experience to the learners which can impede their learning process.

2.5   The impact of corrective feedback (CF) (oral and written) in improving learners' language learning performance

"Corrective feedback is correction of errors made by students," (Coleman, 2020). Corrective feedback can be implicit or explicit. Implicit corrective feedback might be as simple as restating an incorrectly formatted response. Explicit feedback would include a detailed explanation of why and how the answer was incorrect, as well as an explanation of how to use the language correctly (Iizuka, & Nakatsukasa, 2020).

Errors and mistakes are inextricably linked. Linguists have made several distinctions between the two. Error occurs as a result of lack of knowledge. Without sufficient knowledge, people make mistakes with their unconscious thinking. Most errors occur when learning a second language. However, just like second language, first language learners make mistakes. "Children acquiring their first language also make errors," Bloom (1970) stated. Errors have been described by different authors. Phuket and Othman (2015) mentioned that, "Errors used to be recognized as the undesirable problems which teachers tried to prevent. The conception of an error as a negative output of language learning was based on the behaviorist theory of learning" (p.100).

Mistakes are comparable to errors, however most mistakes occur because learners are unaware of their mistakes or fail to recognize that they are making them. For example, the majority of students will become confused, thus, they make mistakes all the time.

Direct or explicit corrective feedback (CF) occurs when the error is identified and the correct form is provided by the educators. In contrast, indirect or implicit feedback occurs when the educator points out the error made by the learners but provide no correction. Therefore, the learners need to identify and correct their own errors (Bitchener, et. al., 2005).   Ferris (2002) discovered that direct CF has led to more correct revisions which is 88% than the indirect feedback (77%). Some educators prefer to provide feedback on the same written work or on a clean sheet of paper and others prefer to give feedback to learners face to face with the hope that the 'discussions of the learners can be 'two-way' (and) clarification and explanation (can be) facilitated' (p.101).

Many scholars have debated on the effectiveness of corrective feedback. In Malaysian context, learning English still poses problems to learners and one of the skills that needs to be focused on is writing. Thus, educators need to help the learners improve their writing skills by providing feedback on their linguistic errors. Ganapathy, Tan & Pan (2020) in their mixed method research on written CF to 482 students and 15 teachers found that teachers perceived written CF as a beneficial strategy in enhancing students' writing skills as well as improving teachers' pedagogical practices. They also discovered that students preferred to get feedback from teachers as this will improve their writing skills.

Arifin, Zaim & Kurnia Ningsih (2018) in their quasi experimental research claimed that direct corrective feedback has had a better effect towards learners' writing skill as compared to the indirect strategy. The respondents in this study were given a writing test after several treatments were done.

Furthermore, Atman and Mirici (2017) assessed the effects of corrective feedback on learners' writing performance. In this study, the learners were divided into two groups: control and experimental group. The control group did not receive any feedback on their assessments whereas the experimental group received CF. In the beginning of their academic semester, a diagnostic test was administered to assess their writing skills, and later at the end of the semester, a post-test was employed to evaluate the intervention's effectiveness. The findings indicated that the performance of the experimental group was exceptional in the post-test in comparison to the control group.

Rouhi, Dibah & Mohebbi (2020) in their research to 61 English learners (feedback giver, feedback receiver and control groups) found that the feedback giver group outperformed the participants in the feedback receiver group and control group in the tasks given to them. The findings reveal that feedback given by peers was effective.

In addition, Sobhani and Tayebipour (2015) investigated the impact of corrective feedback on English as Second Language (ESL) learners. The researchers divided their students into two groups: control and experimental and group. The control group had not been provided with any feedback while the experimental group had been provided with corrective feedback. A pre-test was given at the beginning of the semester to test their levels in English grammar and a post-test was administered at the end of the semester to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. After analyzing the students' scores using the t-test and ANOVA, the researchers concluded that the experimental group's performance in grammar outperformed the control group.

Irwin (2017) explored the interaction between learners' preferences for written corrective feedback and the actual educator feedback practices in the EFL second year writing class in Japan and discovered that educators offered various types of feedback while learners were passive in the feedback process. Therefore, there is a need for diversification and range of feedback strategies that need to be considered by educators as forms of feedback so that learners will be more active in responding to the feedback given.

Oral corrective feedback also plays an important role in helping learners in their L2 learning. Zahratul Maujudatul Mufidah (2017) investigated the oral corrective feedback (OCF) with weak learners with different anxiety levels and found out OCF motivate them to study more and made them realize the mistakes they made. She further claimed that OCF has different impacts to the learners' level of language anxiety.

- OCF given by the educator to the learners from very anxious (VA) and anxious group (AG) - is more debilitated rather than facilitated.
- The learners in very anxious (VA) and anxious group (AG) - have negative reaction to OCF since the practice prevents their creativity to produce more output in speaking performance.
- The impact of OCF on mildly anxious (MA) group - is not quite clear since the learners have different response and reaction to its efficacy. Some of them argued that OCF increased their enthusiast because it enlarged their feeling afraid of receiving negative reaction from peers if they made a lot of mistakes.
- The relaxed group (R) who have a great positive response about the efficacy of OCF - felt so happy and satisfied when the educator corrected their utterance contained linguistic errors, so they could learn through their mistakes.

Jean & Simard (2011) in their study on different aspects of grammar instruction to 2,321 high school students and 45 teachers discovered that students were favorable towards CF. Questionnaires were used to get the data. These students claimed that they would like to …'get their oral errors corrected all the time' (p. 474). Furthermore, learners preferred their educators to correct their oral errors immediately (Brown, 2009). CF can be done either online or off line. Online CF refers to the errors can be responded to during a task, while off line CF refers to the feedback given after the task was completed. "Both online and offline CF can focus on a particular linguistic target or on a variety of linguistic features," (Li, 2014).

Besides, direct, written feedback combined with oral one-to-one feedback significantly improve learners' writing using simple past tense and the use of definite article, (Bitchener, Young and Cameron, 2005). Younger learners are more sensitive to CF and they benefitted more than the older learners in terms of the learning progress (Lyster & Saito 2010).

By looking at the previous studies, it can be concluded that CF has benefitted learners as well as educators in the teaching and learning of L2. Besides its advantages, corrective feedback also has its

drawbacks like too much affective (emotional reaction) feedback causes over confidence and inhibits any attempts in communication (Allwright & Bailey, 1991 as cited in Ali & Karim, 2014). Moreover, corrected learners tend to simplify and shorten their writing as to avoid making mistakes (Siti Noraisyah, 2017). In addition, Belhadi (2013) investigated the impacts of corrective feedback on learners' performances using a ten items Likert-scale questionnaires. The data indicated that 95% of the students reported receiving regular feedback from their teacher, 68% confessed being discouraged to practice the target language after receiving feedback, 76% stressed on receiving feedback from their peers, 33% believed to be demotivated by the feedback, 70% admitted having an average performance after receiving feedback, 80% acknowledged feedback as an integral part of the teaching process, 54% felt comfortable and calm when receiving feedback, 60% confessed being undisturbed by their teacher's feedback and 90% acknowledged the importance of feedback on their learning. Therefore, educators should adopt suitable strategies that can better enhance learners' level of motivation and performance to learn and improve themselves in speaking and writing in the L2

3. Recommendations to educators on ways to improve their feedback techniques

It is deemed vital for educators to know the learners well as this helps them to tackle their emotion in order to provide corrective feedback. This is due to the fact that some learners are not comfortable when they are corrected especially verbally in front of their peer. This is very true in the Asian context. Oral corrective feedback seems suitable with young learners (and is favored by lower school educators) as an explanation and examples are needed so that they will understand what they need to do to improve themselves (Mollestam & Hu, 2016).

Educators should also vary their oral and written corrective feedback to adapt to the learners' needs and preferences. In providing CF, educators often face risks as learners have their self -esteem. Learners' motivation and joy of learning will also be affected when educators are not sensitive in giving their feedback. However, some learners feel that CF makes them motivated as they feel that they are guided in their learning as to improve their L2 proficiency in writing and oral communication.

To summarize, when providing CF, it is important for educators to consider their learners' individual needs and personalities. In addition, they must tell their students to act or respond to the feedback given (revise their work). It is important for educators to know that the CF given should relate to the task given and not be targeted on learners' level of intelligence or family background. When giving feedback, there should be a balance between positive (feedback) and critique (corrective feedback) as this will affect learners' morale. Lastly, there should also be trust and respect in learners' and educators' relationship.

4. Conclusion

Giving feedback is an important skill for educators and has a huge influence on the quality of learners' language learning performance. Thus, to encourage learners' better learning outcomes, they need to establish ways on how to provide appropriate and effective corrective feedback, and encourage them to self-assess and participate actively in their learning. This paper highlights firstly, the aspects of feedback by providing the definitions of concepts: errors vs mistakes and effective corrective feedback. Secondly, it also explains the types and characteristics of corrective feedback and its' importance to promote learners' motivation. Thirdly, it provides review of studies on the impact or influence of corrective feedback on learners' language performance; and lastly, suggests ways for educators to improve their feedback techniques to maximize learners' achievement in language learning.

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