

Conference Paper

Indonesian EFL Teachers' Practice of Interactional Feedback

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Abstract

Interactional feedback is defined as feedback that is generated by teachers in response to both erroneous and communicatively inappropriate utterances that students produce during conversational interaction (Nassaji, 2015). Interactional feedback has been investigated in second language acquisition contexts, but little has been done concerning interactional feedback in foreign language settings, particularly in Indonesian context. In this descriptive study, conducted at junior high school level, it was aimed to identify the actual practice of instructors of English as a foreign language on interactional feedback in their classrooms. A classroom observation protocol was used to collect the data. The results show that teachers in general have applied different types of interactional feedback. However, not all interactional feedback results in students' uptakes.

Keywords: interactional feedback, uptakes, Indonesian EFL

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1. Introduction

Teacher interactional feedback has received a great deal of attention. Interactional feedback is defined as a feedback that is generated by teachers in response to both erroneous and communicatively inappropriate utterances that students produce during a conversational interaction (Nassaji, 2015). Interactional feedback (IF) has contributed to the learning of the target language, because when teachers provide interactional feedback, students become aware of their mistakes and they are able to notice gaps between their language production and the target language. Consequently, these linguistic consciousness raising and noticing gaps encourage students to modify their output in constructive and long-lasting ways.

According to recent studies [9, 16, 22], interactional feedback can be categorized into 6 types:

1. Explicit corrections

When the teacher supplies the correct form and clearly indicates that what the student had said was incorrect, it called explicit correction. In [21] indicates that phrases such as "It's not X but Y", "You should say X", "We say X not Y" usually accompany this treatment.

Example:

S: She go to the party last night.

T: It's not "she go", but "she went".

2. Recasts

A recast is a reformulation of the learner's erroneous utterance that corrects all or part of the learner's utterance and is embedded in the continuing discourse" ([21], p. 2). The teacher implicitly reformulates all or part of the student's utterance, without providing any explanation about the students' errors.

Example:

S: At midnight, Cinderella is leaving the palace.

T: Cinderella left the palace.

Prompts, on the other hand, include a variety of signals, other than alternative reformulations, that push students to self-repair (i.e., elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests, and repetition).

3. Elicitation

The teacher directly elicits a reformulation from the student by asking questions such as "How do we say that in English?" or by pausing to allow the student to complete the teacher's utterance, or by asking the student to reformulate his or her utterance. This way self-correction is promoted.

Example:

S: Once upon a time, there lives a poor girl named Cinderella.

T: Once upon a time, there...?

4. Metalinguistic clues

The teacher provides comments or questions related to the student's utterance.

S: Cinderella is beautiful than her stepsister.

T: You need a comparative adjective.

The teacher wants student to revise his incorrect utterance by providing a metalinguistic clue 'a comparative adjective'

5. Clarification request

The teacher uses phrases such as "Pardon?" and "I don't understand" following the errors to indicate to students that their utterance is incorrect in some way and that a reformulation is required.

Example:

S: Why does he closing the door?

T: Sorry?

6. Repetition

The teacher repeats the student's incorrect utterance, adjusting intonation to highlight the error.

Example:

S: May I gave you.

T: May I gave you?

When correcting, teachers need to identify the type of error the students make so that teachers can provide interactional feedback appropriately. Errors have been categorized by Mackey, Gass and McDonough (2000) as follows:

- *Morphosyntactic error*

Students incorrectly use word order, tenses, conjugation and particles

- *Phonological error*

Students mispronounce words (or we suggest it could also include suprasegmental errors such as stress and intonation).

- *Lexical error*

Students use vocabulary inappropriately or they code-switch to their first language because of their lack of lexical knowledge.

In a classroom-based research on Interactional Feedback (IF), it is found that IF contributes to students' learning. In [9] found that IF-initiated instruction contributes to better performance than the one with no IF in practice. Mackey & Silver (2005) reports that Chinese immigrant children in Singapore who received interactional feedback in response to their problems with question forms, produced higher level of questions (64%) and showed more development in terms of questioning than the control group. McDonough (2005) reports that output produced in response to interactional feedback was a significant predictor of ESL question development. McDonough & Mackey (2008) showed there was a relationship between syntactic priming and ESL question development. Syntactic priming was a student's production of a new utterance using the syntactic structure model in an interlocutor's recast (implicit reformulations of students' non target utterances). Their finding indicates that participants who frequently produced developmentally advanced questions after hearing interlocutors' recast moved to a higher stage of ESL questions.

The effectiveness of the types of teacher interactional feedback for student learning was investigated by [5, 14, 23]. In [5] investigated whether adult international students who were studying in a private language school in New Zealand learn more from one type of interactional feedback than from another type. Their findings indicate that explicit feedback in the form of metalinguistic feedback (teacher repeats the error and

then supplies metalinguistic information) was more effective than implicit feedback in the form of recasts.

In [23] compared the effectiveness of implicit and explicit error correction on adult Iranian students' performance. They found that explicit correction was significantly more effective than implicit correction. They argue that explicit correction creates attention. Implicit correction was less clear. Students saw explicit error correction as feedback that required them to correct their errors. Also, immediate corrections have a greater effect on learning than delayed error correction.

According to [9], in form-focused instruction, prompts are more effective than recasts. Exploring the effect of recasts and prompts in the acquisition of grammar, [1] demonstrated that the groups receiving IF had a better performance in comparison to the control group. However, the group receiving prompts significantly outperformed the recast group. In [5] also investigated the effectiveness of recasts and metalinguistic feedback on the acquisition of regular past tense forms in English. The study was conducted for the purpose of examining whether the students' exposure to two different IF types that foster explicit knowledge could lead to the development of implicit knowledge. In this study, it was shown that the metalinguistic feedback was more effective than recasts.

In [14] confirms the effectiveness of explicit interactional feedback. He investigated the effects of two categories of interactional feedback: recast and elicitation, on learning linguistic forms that arose incidentally in dyadic interaction. Forty two adult ESL students who participated in a task-based interaction with two native ESL teachers in a dyad received recast or elicitation feedback for their errors. In both cases the more explicit forms of each feedback type led to higher rates of immediate and delayed post-interaction correction than implicit feedback.

Although some researchers [14] believed that in comparison to implicit IF, explicit IF is noticed more frequently by the students, it was revealed that implicit CF may be more effective in the long run [8, 13]. According to [19], the students exposed to recasts during their involvement in a set of tasks concerned with the development of argumentative skills outperformed the control group at both controlled-speech and spontaneous speech levels. In another study, [18] demonstrated that use of explicit phonetic information and recast form of IF could largely enhance the effectiveness of the instructional practices accompanied by IF strategies.

Studies also reveals many mediating factors, such as noticing and attention, cognitive factors (working memory), social factors (pedagogical setting, social status of interlocutors), and the type of target (the acquisition of L2 grammar, lexical aspects, phonology, and pragmatics) may influence the use of interactional feedback [6]. This means that the balanced use of IF in forms of prompts and recasts may vary depending on the classroom context and its accompanying variables [15]. Based on the international studies mentioned above, it can be concluded that teacher's interactional

feedback is beneficial for students' target language development. However, there has been very little research which focuses on the provision of IF in Indonesian junior high school level. This research is intended to investigate the types of interactional feedback employed by EFL teachers in junior high school level in Malang, Indonesia. The research questions were formulated as follows:

1. What types of IF do EFL junior high teachers employ?
2. What are the targets of the teachers' interactional feedback?
3. What is the effect of different types of IF in relation to students' uptake?

2. Method

Three EFL teachers with the average age of 30 and 5 average years of English language teaching experience in a public junior high school participated in this study. At the time of data collection, the teachers were teaching the seven and eight graders using the 2013 English Curriculum. The topic of the lessons consisted of telling days and dates, giving instructions, inviting, asking permissions and prohibition, and narrative texts. These students were classified as beginners.

For the purpose of exploring EFL teachers' actual practice in using IF strategies and focusing on different linguistic targets, the researcher relied on a 6-meetings, non-participant observation. Along this line, each teacher's classroom was observed for 2 meetings at each class (about 180 minutes). The audio-records of the lessons were accompanied by field notes in the classroom. All instances of the students' errors and the teachers' use of different IF strategies in response to their erroneous oral productions in a variety of tasks and activities were recorded as carefully as possible. The frequency, type, task, and context of IF were also categorized by the researcher.

This was followed by working on analysis of the teachers' focus of attention to different morphosyntactic, phonological, and lexical errors. To examine the effectiveness of IF, the students' uptakes following the IF were also analyzed. Uptake is the students' immediate responses to oral corrective feedback. As ([17], p. 52) put it "uptake refers to a student's utterance which immediately follows the teacher's feedback". According to [17] there are three possible uptakes: correct or successful uptake, referred to as 'repair', and incorrect or otherwise unsuccessful uptake, referred to as 'needs-repair' (The category of 'needs-repair' also includes student acknowledgements, such as "yes", "aha" or "oh") and no learner uptake when there is a topic continuation or the teacher might use a type of corrective feedback once more to have the students repeat the correct answer.

No	Types of IF	Percentage
1.	Explicit corrections	39,5%
2.	Recasts	17%
3.	Initiations to self-correct: distributed over:	
4.	- Clarification requests	4%
5.	- Metalinguistic clues	25.5%
6.	- Elicitations	6%
7.	-Repetitions	8%

TABLE 1: The frequency and distribution of the different interactional feedback types (n = 132).

No	IF Target	Percentage
1	Morphosyntactic errors	49%
2	Phonological errors	33.57%
3	Lexical errors	17.43%

TABLE 2: Frequency of overall IF targets (n = 132).

3. Findings and Discussion

In 540 minutes of classroom observation, 132 corrections were identified for the three teachers together. The results suggest that in one meeting, a teacher made an average of 22 corrections .

Table 1 shows the distribution of the six interactional feedback types in the three EFL classrooms. The first interesting finding which is related to the specific context of junior high school context in Malang, Indonesia is that the most popular teacher correction moves is explicit corrections (39,5%). Teachers seem to enjoy providing the correct versions for the students' ill-formed utterances together with the explanation using Indonesian language or native language (Javanese language). Teachers do a lot of explanation in grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary perhaps due to the low level of English proficiency of their students.

Then metalinguistic clues (25.5%) are preferred by the teachers than elicitation (6%) and repetition (8%). Clarification requests are not popular as they are only accounted for 4% of the total feedback. Seventeen percent of the oral corrective feedback consists of recasts.

In response to the second question addressing the target of IF on the part of the teachers, it is shown (Table 2) that among different targets for error correction, Morphosyntactic error is ranked as the first. This is followed by phonological errors and lexical errors. This pattern of error correction may reveal the higher frequency and greater importance of grammatical and phonological errors attracted the attention of the teachers.

No	Types of IF	Repair	Need Repair	No uptake	Total %
1.	Explicit corrections	62%	21%	17%	100
2.	Recasts	14%	18%	68%	100
3.	- Clarification requests	20%	40%	40%	100
4.	- Metalinguistic clues	54%	25%	31%	100
5.	- Elicitations	50%	25%	25%	100
6.	-Repetitions	55%	18%	27%	100

TABLE 3: The frequency and distribution of student’s uptakes (n = 132).

The third step is to take a closer look at the effectiveness of the correction types defined as leading to learner uptake. Table 3 displays the patterns of learner uptake following the different feedback types in the study. When there is no learner uptake, there is either topic continuation or the teacher employs another correction move in order to have the students repeat the correct answer or correct the errors themselves.

An interesting finding, as Table 3 shows, is that metalinguistic feedback, elicitation and repetition are efficient strategies for eliciting learner uptake. Metalinguistic feedback, elicitation and repetition lead to learner uptake of more than 50%. Similarly, explicit corrections lead to students’ uptake 62% of the time. Another important finding is that there is a high frequency of no students’ uptake following the recasts as an interactional feedback strategy (68%).

Based on the findings, the first question, i.e. how junior high school teachers use the oral interactional feedback in their classroom interaction, can be answered as follows. The teachers who participated in the study used a range of different interactional feedback types. The teachers seem to depend on explicit correction moves with metalinguistic feedback and recast in order to invite the students to correct themselves. This may indicate that the most practical IF strategy from the teachers’ perspectives in this context is explicit correction of errors [2, 9]. The use of explicit correction strategy could be associated with the teacher’s concern for on-the-spot provision of correct linguistic forms for the purpose of promoting accuracy. The teachers may employ more explicit IF strategies due to their function for attracting the learners’ attention [14]. The teachers participated in this study also use more explicit corrections and prompts in the form of metalinguistic clues in comparison to recasts, although according to some studies implicit IF provides a more powerful effect on L2 learning [8, 13].

In this study, the teachers prefer concentrating on morphosyntactic, phonological, and lexical errors for the provision of IF strategies. The highest number of IF in morphosyntactic areas, indicates the teachers’ perspectives of the importance of students’ grammar mastery to ensure students’ accuracy in their target language production [7, 12]. In this study it is found that explicit corrections and prompts (metalinguistic clues, elicitation and repetition) generate higher students’ uptake as compared to recast.

4. Conclusions and Suggestions

To conclude explicit corrections and prompts (metalinguistic clues, elicitation and repetition) strategies are effective for correcting students' errors in junior high schools of Malang. The findings show that the amount of correct uptake is more or less the same for both strategies. However, further investigation with larger sample is needed in order to confirm their effectiveness.

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