

Peer-to-peer Corrective Feedback in a Group Interaction

Sulia Masturina Che Razali

Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), 23000 Dungun, Terengganu, Malaysia
Email: sulia@tganu.uitm.edu.my

Nurul Amilin Razawi

Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), 23000 Dungun, Terengganu, Malaysia
Email: nurulamilin@tganu.uitm.edu.my

Chittra Muthusamy

Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), 23000 Dungun, Terengganu, Malaysia
Email: chitt911@tganu.uitm.edu.my

Siti Norliana Ghazali

Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), 23000 Dungun, Terengganu, Malaysia
Email: liana265@tganu.uitm.edu.my

Angelina Subrayan @ Michael

Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), 40000 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
Email: angiesubrayan@hotmail.com

Abstract—Interaction is regarded as a fundamental requirement of second language acquisition (SLA). The study investigated the provision of corrective feedback and learner repair of errors following feedback in interactional context of peer-to-peer conversations, particularly in a group setting. A total of four students in their early twenties participated in the study. These students are participants of the “Friends of English” (FoE) programme conducted by Centre of Teaching and Learning, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. The relationship among error types, feedback types and learner repairs were examined. The interaction between these students in a group setting was recorded using *Sony Sound Forge*. The recorded interactions were transcribed and coded for types of errors (Syntactic / Lexical / L1), types of negative implicit feedback (Negotiation / Recasts) and learner repairs. Findings indicate that the mentor focused on recasts. He provided implicit negative feedback in the form of recasts to all three types of learner errors while engaging in the discussions. The majority of L1 errors were corrected followed by Lexical errors. Syntactic errors had the least number of repairs. Lexical error was the focus of the mentor as over half of Lexical errors received feedback followed by Syntactic error and L1 use.

Index Terms—peer-to-peer, group discussion, implicit negative feedback, recasts, lexical error, syntactic error, L1 use, learner repair

I. INTRODUCTION

In line with the new world of globalization, international communication has been increasing and resulting in the growing demand for communicative competence in English in Malaysia. Many graduates are unemployed and one of the reasons of the unemployment is their lack of English communication skills. The deficiency of communicative competence in English in Malaysia appears to result from the lack of interpersonal interaction in English as a Second Language (ESL) learning context where English is not fully used as a means of communication. Thus, this research examines the benefits of corrective feedback in a different context, other than classroom interaction.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the vital requirements for second language acquisition (SLA) to occur is through interaction. Researchers such as Krashen, 1986; Rivers, 1987 & Ellis, 1988 have proposed that the important element in the teaching of communication as well as language acquisition is the development of interactional competence. The interactionist perspectives in SLA have placed much attention on the role of interaction in general, and meaning negotiation in particular, with respect to the conditions considered theoretically important for SLA (Pica, 1994, cited in Cheon, H. 2003). Pica (1994) also claims that interaction modification through meaning negotiation is one of the ways for SLA to occur, that is by helping learners make input comprehensible and modify their own output, thus providing opportunities

for them to access second language (L2) form and meaning. Therefore it is considered as very important for L2 teachers to construct an interactive learning environment in which learners can negotiate meaning through interaction.

According to Hatch (1978) and Long (1983), second language acquisition (SLA) researchers have investigated the effects of participating in communicative interaction on second language (L2) development. In addition to the advantages learners can get when given the opportunity to interact in their L2s (Mackey, 1999), researchers have attempted to explain that participation in interaction may promote linguistic development. One common account suggests that interaction is beneficial because it provides learners with exposure to negative feedback in response to their non target like utterances (Gass, 1997; Long, 1996 & Pica, 1994).

As agreed by Oliver (2000) and Pica (1994), implicit negative feedback is more commonly provided in naturalistic interaction in comparison with explicit feedback in the same naturalistic setting. Such implicit negative feedback includes various types of interactional features such as recasts and negotiation strategies that provide the unacceptability of non target utterances (Carroll & Swain, 1993).

Input as one of the most important aspects in second language acquisition (SLA) has been agreed by many second language researchers. As proposed by Krashen (1981; 1985 & 1987), Gass and Varonis (1994) language learning and language acquisition is closely related to the amount of comprehensible input a learner receives. However, there are different opinions on the type of input (implicit and explicit) in order for language acquisition to occur. According to Long (1996) and White (1990), negative evidence (both explicit and implicit) provides the needed information to learners about what is not possible in the target language (TL). As an example, consider the following:

Speaker 1: Hana go to the national zoo yesterday.

Speaker 2: Hana went?

In the set of interaction above, Speaker 1 receives feedback about the ungrammaticality of what was said. Speaker 1 might not realize that the feedback is intended to be the correction for the ungrammaticality of his utterance, and might as well think that it is just a clarification request by Speaker 2. This example shows how negative feedback occurs in interaction. It is implicit information to show to the learner what is not possible in the target language.

Following Morris (2005), negative evidence can be provided pre-emptively or reactively. Pre-emptive negative evidence is provided to learners before they attempt to produce language structures which were done by providing and explaining grammar rules, while reactive negative evidence is available as a response to an ill-formed utterance. Reactive negative evidence "highlights differences between the target language and a learner's output and as such is described as negative feedback (NF)" (Oliver, 2000, p. 120).

In Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis, he argues that negotiation for meaning elicits NF, and that NF contains various types of reformulation and repetition in addition to input modifications that serve to make L2 target forms salient to learners. Thus, NF facilitates second language development.

Based on these claims, it shows that NF carries important pedagogical and theoretical implications for classroom SLA. If this research shows that peer to peer interactions make NF available to them, in a form that is usable and used by them, and thus facilitates L2 development, we can gain a better understanding of the relevance of classroom interactions between teacher-learners and between learners and peers.

Although many studies have been done on corrective feedback in negotiated interaction, few or none focused on mentor-mentee or peer-to-peer interaction in a group setting outside of the classroom. Mentor-mentee or peer-to-peer interaction creates a different context of interaction apart from classroom interaction.

Therefore, this research is carried out to examine the benefits of corrective feedback in this different context, other than classroom interaction. It is also questionable whether implicit negative feedback occurs in a way that is usable by learners in mentor-mentee context. Thus, this research is one avenue in showing the availability of implicit negative feedback and the relationship among error types, feedback types and immediate learner repair in a context that is different from most of the research that has been done.

This research seeks the following objectives; a) to discover the type(s) of learners' errors that lead(s) to implicit negative feedback. b) to examine the type(s) of learners' errors that was repaired when receiving implicit negative feedback. c) to ascertain the type of learners' error that was the focus of implicit negative feedback given by the peer.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

The participants of this study are members of "Friends of English" (FoE) programme conducted by English Language Unit from Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). This programme is one of the courses offered by CTL under English Language Support Programme which offers opportunity for UTM students to practise using English in a semi-casual, relaxed and informal way. The goal of this programme is to improve English proficiency of UTM students through interaction. This can be achieved by carrying out conversations with mentors or Conversation Partners.

The Conversation Partners are UTM students who have undergone training in facilitating discussion through one-on-one or group discussion as well as training in teaching English. Therefore, the Conversation Partners are students who are undertaking TESL (Teaching English as Second Language) programme. The focus group of this study is one of the groups in this FoE programme whereby the researcher consistently recorded the interaction during the meetings.

However, the mentor was not a native speaker, but uses English as his first language in a fluent and accurate manner and has undergone training in teaching English.

B. Speech Sample

The conversations among FoE members during their meetings are recorded. The duration of each recording is fifty minutes to one hour of interaction with the same participants throughout the semester. The frequency of recordings that is collected is five recordings, which includes the whole conversation. After the conversation session, the recorded interaction is transcribed. The research focuses on three variables in the analysis of the transcription. The first variable is implicit corrective feedbacks which are negotiations and recasts. The second variable is the three different errors or “unwanted form”; syntactic and lexical errors, as well as uses of first language (L1). The last variable is immediate repair done by the learners following feedback.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings permit the following responses to the three questions posed earlier in the study. What type(s) of learner errors lead to implicit negative feedback? What type(s) of errors was repaired when learners receive implicit negative feedback? What type of learner errors was the focus of implicit negative feedback given by peer? The result and discussion for each question posed in this research is shown below.

A. What Type(s) of Learners' Errors Lead to Implicit Negative Feedback?

When the peers in this study engaged in the semi-formal interaction, they were provided feedback in response to the learners' errors by the mentor. The results show that all three types of error made had received feedback by the mentor. All three types of error identified in the study lead to implicit negative feedback in the form of recasts. However, there were very little corrections in the form of negotiation. Learners were consistently provided with recasts as the corrective feedback of their errors. As shown in Table I, over 38% of the errors were lexical, thus making it the highest percentage of the error which received feedback. 34% was syntactic and only 28% was L1. Table II illustrates that the highest percentage of syntactic errors done which received feedback was in session 3, whereby 60% of the errors made were syntactic error. This is different with lexical errors where a total of 53% of the lexical errors receiving feedback was done in session 5. As for the usage of L1 which received feedback, most of it was committed during the fifth session. The outcome of this analysis might be related to the background of the mentor. He is someone who has undergone training in teaching English as a Second Language; therefore, he may be comfortable in correcting the learners' errors. He may have perceived himself as not just an ordinary peer, but also a teacher to the other speakers, which may explain why all types of errors were given feedback.

TABLE I:
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF ERRORS (RECEIVING FEEDBACK (RECASTS) BY ERROR TYPES

SESSION/ERROR	SYNTACTIC	LEXICAL	L1
1	5 (9%)	5 (8%)	6 (13%)
2	9 (17%)	19 (31%)	17 (38%)
3	25 (46%)	8 (13%)	9 (20%)
4	15 (28%)	21 (34%)	6 (13%)
5	0 (0%)	8 (13%)	7 (16%)
TOTAL/ ERROR	54 (34%)	61 (38%)	45 (28%)

Total number of errors: 160

TABLE II:
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF ERRORS (RECEIVING FEEDBACK (RECASTS) BY SESSIONS

ERROR/ SESSION	1	2	3	4	5
SYNTACTIC	5 (31%)	9 (20%)	25 (60%)	15 (36%)	0 (0%)
LEXICAL	5 (31%)	19 (42%)	8 (19%)	21 (50%)	8 (53%)
L1	6 (38%)	17 (38%)	9 (21%)	6 (14%)	7 (47%)
TOTAL/SESSION	16 (10%)	45 (28%)	42 (26%)	42 (26%)	15 (9%)

Total number of errors: 160

B. What Type(s) of Errors was Repaired When Learners Receive Implicit Negative Feedback?

Learners repaired 74% of all three types of errors made throughout the FoE session. The majority of repairs done was for L1 use (82%), followed by lexical errors (79%) and syntactic errors (63%). (Figure1). While most of L1 use and the majority of lexical errors were corrected, the rate of syntactic error correction was the lowest. Why were most L1 uses repaired? These students who joined FoE programme need to have their own self-motivation to learn English through interaction. Therefore, they may have just been careful in tolerating their own L1 usage. The outcome that shows lexical errors were corrected at higher rates than syntactic errors should not come as a surprise, as the focus of FoE is to encourage fluency over accuracy. Therefore, the learners and the mentor may have concentrated more on their lexical growth over grammatical accuracy. In addition, the mentor may not have as much chance to correct syntactic errors done due to the on-going interaction by the learners whereby he does not want to interfere with the learners' fluency and confidence as they are speaking.

From the findings, over seventy percent of learners' errors that received feedback were repaired. Studies that examined face-to-face and child-to-child interactions have also reported that children frequently repair their errors immediately following feedback (Oliver, 2000). This is also true with regard to this peer-to-peer interaction. It is possible that the rate of repair was high because, peers are comfortable with each other and considered as eager to learn, thus may not be afraid and willing to take chances when producing or modifying their L2 with their peers or mentor. Following the feedback, the learners repaired the majority of lexical errors and most of the L1 uses. They repaired their syntactic error the least in comparison to the repair of lexical and L1 errors. It is possible that syntactic errors are more difficult to process than lexical errors because processing and assessing the rules of grammar is far more complex than retrieving lexical items (Morris, 2005). In addition, the learners are not focusing on form, but more on fluency in English, as the main objective of FoE is for the learners to improve their English communication proficiency in a casual and informal way. Therefore, the mentor focuses less in syntactic uses over lexical errors.

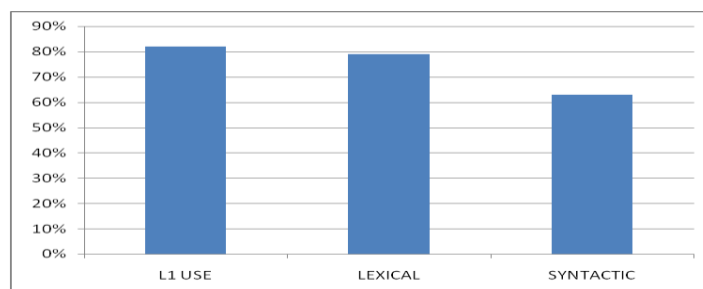


Figure 1: Percentage of Repairs of Errors (Receiving Feedback (Recasts)) throughout the sessions.

C. What Type of Learners' Error was the Focus of Implicit Negative Feedback Given by Peer?

Of the three types of errors, lexical use was the main focus of recasts by the peer. 38% of the feedback provided to the learner was for lexical errors. 34% of the recasts were meant for the syntactic error and only 28% was for L1 uses. (Refer to Table 1). The main focus of feedback by the mentor was for lexical uses. This may happen due to the fact that lexical errors are easier to correct because it is usually made in the form of incorrect and inappropriate vocabulary. Therefore, the mentor could easily interrupt the interaction to correct the inappropriate vocabulary. This is not true with syntactic errors whereby it is more difficult to correct. This is mainly because syntactic error usually happens in a sentence grammatical structure and the mentor would rather have the learners to talk confidently than stopping them just to correct their syntactic errors.

V. CONCLUSION

This study could support other studies on the issue of corrective feedback considering the context in which it was carried out. This study investigated the provision of implicit negative feedback demonstrated in a group of peer-to-peer interaction. The findings show that all repairs followed implicit negative feedback in the form of recasts. Therefore, this study indicates some support for the use of recasts rather than the use of negotiation. Teachers could be familiarized with the techniques of corrective feedback, especially the implicit feedback which will keep the communicative nature of the language classes. Moreover, designing communicative tasks to provide opportunities for corrective feedback and repairs through one of the recommended ways, especially between peers, seems very much advisable. This hopefully will encourage the language acquisition among the learners.

Since this study was narrowed down in terms of its variables, such as its participants and types of corrective feedback, it seems necessary to point out some further research to be done in this regard. Firstly, considering the fact that this study was limited to only one type of corrective feedback, i.e., implicit negative feedback, it is suggested that similar studies be conducted with other techniques of corrective feedback especially the explicit ones. Besides that, since the present study focused on only the three types of errors in English, similar studies could examine the occurrence of errors in terms of other structures in English or any other languages. Furthermore, the need is felt to carry out similar research to investigate the long-term effects of negotiation and recasts to the learners repair through different techniques,

strategies and setting. Finally, this study could be replicated with learners at higher and intermediate levels of language proficiency.

In conclusion, by investigating the effect of implicit negative feedback in a group of peer-to-peer interaction, it is hoped that some contributions could be made to the development of language teaching. Besides, it is believed that this study has covered a narrow scope of corrective feedback issue, and other researchers and interested students are recommended to carry out related studies to push the frontiers of knowledge in this regard.

REFERENCES

- [1] Carroll, S & Swain, M. (1993). Explicit and implicit negative feedback. An empirical study of the learning of linguistic generalization. *Studies in second language acquisition*, 15, 357-386.
- [2] Cheon, Heesook. (2003). The viability of computer mediated communication in the Korean secondary EFL Classroom. Retrieved 21 February, 2011 from <http://www.asian-efl-journal.com.march03.sub2hc.doc>
- [3] Ellis, R. (1988). *The Study of Second language Acquisition*. Oxford: OUP.
- [4] Gass, S. (1997). *Input, interaction and the second language learner*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- [5] Gass, S.M. & Varonis, E.M. (1994). Input, interaction and second language production. *Studies in second language acquisition*, 16, 283-302.
- [6] Hatch, E. (1978). Acquisition of syntax in a second language. In J. Richards (Ed.), *Understanding second and foreign language learning* (pp. 34-70). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- [7] Kramsch, C.J. (1986). From language proficiency to Interactional Competence. *The Modern language Journal*, 70, 366-372
- [8] Krashen, S. (1981). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- [9] Krashen, S. (1985). *The input hypothesis*. New York: Longman.
- [10] Krashen, S. (1987). Applications of psycholinguistic research to the classroom. In M. Long & J. Richards (Eds.), *Methodology in TESOL: A book of reading*. (pp. 33-44). New York: Newbury House.
- [11] Long, M. H (1983). Linguistic and conversational adjustments to non-native speakers, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 5(2), 177-193.
- [12] Long, M.H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W.C. Ritchie & T.K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 413-468). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- [13] Mackey, A. (1999). Input, interaction and second language development: An empirical study of question formation in ESL. *Studies in second language acquisition*, 21(4), 557 - 587.
- [14] Morris, F. (2005). Child-to-child interaction and corrective feedback in a computer mediated L2 class. *Language Learning & Technology*, 9(1) 29-45.
- [15] Oliver, R. (2000). Age differences in negotiation and feedback in classroom and pair work. *Language Learning*, 50(1), 119-151.
- [16] Pica, T. (1994). Research on negotiation: What does it reveal about second language learning conditions, processes and outcomes? *Language Learning*, 44(3), 493-527.
- [17] Rivers, M., (1987). Interaction as the key to teaching language for communication. In W.M. Rivers, (Ed.). *Interactive language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [18] White, L. (1990). Second language acquisition and universal grammar. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 12, 121-133.

Sulia Masturina Che Razali is currently a lecturer with the Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Terengganu. She specializes in testing spoken English, peer and self evaluation in communication and teaching methodology.

Nurul Amilin Razawi is currently a lecturer with the Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Terengganu. She specializes in second language acquisition, language and culture and teaching methodology.

Chittra Muthusamy is currently a lecturer with the Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Terengganu. Her areas of interest are language, literature and literary and literacy in ESL as well as nineteenth century British and American Romanticism.

Siti Norliana Ghazali is currently a lecturer with the Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi Mara Terengganu. She specializes in the areas of language and literature and has published in these areas specifically in materials and curriculum development.

Angelina Subrayan @ Michael is a lecturer at the Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi Mara. Prior to joining UiTM, she was with the Ministry of Education. She completed her Masters in literature with distinction at Universiti Putra Malaysia. Her research interests are in linguistics and gender studies and literature. She has 20 years of teaching experience and has taught students at different levels and age groups