

A Comparison of Teacher Cognition and Corrective Feedback between University Graduates and Teachers Certified in English Language Teaching

Manoochehr Jafarigohar
Payame Noor University of Tehran, Iran

Saeed Kheiri
Payame Noor University of Tehran, Iran

Abstract—This study attempted to investigate teachers certified in English language teaching (referred to as TCELTs hereafter) and university graduates' teacher cognition in respect to error correction strategies they applied in classroom which would offer an insightful analysis of teachers' pedagogical knowledge and how and why university graduates and TCELTs deal with the students' spoken errors in certain ways. A questionnaire, containing twenty ill-formed sentences along with the feedback, was developed to unearth university graduates and TCELTs' teacher cognition in relation to their corrective feedback strategies. A sound recorder was also utilized to record the proceedings of the class to be analyzed as the indication of their practice. The findings suggested that the university graduates and TCELTs held similar views regarding their stated beliefs towards different types of error correction strategies, whereas, university graduates had higher stated beliefs toward the corrective feedback and made more correction of their students' ill-formed sentences. Furthermore, the study indicated that both the TCELTs and university graduates had opposite perspectives concerning their beliefs vis-a-vis practices of error correction strategies. In addition, the study demonstrated that the TCELTs tended to make the corrections implicitly, whereas, university graduates were more willing to correct students' ill-formed sentences explicitly. Finally, this study suggests some pedagogical implications that teachers could follow to bridge the gulf between their stated beliefs and practices.

Index Terms—teacher cognition, corrective feedback, pedagogical knowledge, educational background, University graduates, teachers certified in English language teaching

I. INTRODUCTION

The study of teacher cognition - what teachers think, know, and believe - and of its relationship to teachers' classroom practices has become a key theme in the field of language teaching and teacher education (Borg, 2006). There is a general consensus among educational and language teaching scholars that what teachers do in the classroom is mirrored by what they believe and their beliefs often operate as a filter through which instructional judgments and decisions are made (Farrel & Lim, 2005). Therefore, classroom practice and teacher cognition exist in a symbiotic relationship (Foss & Kleinnsasser, 1996). Research into the relationship between beliefs and classroom practices has revealed consistencies (e.g., She, 2000) and inconsistencies (e.g., Borko & Niles, 1982; Karavas-Doukas, 1996) between stated beliefs and practices. Farrokhi (2006) reported a case study of five teachers investigating the relationship between their stated beliefs and classroom practices to explore the actual effectiveness of error correction and the conditions under which such corrections may function effectively. His data showed some mismatches between the teachers' stated beliefs and their classroom practices. The reasons for such mismatches would seem to be highly complex (Phips, 2010; Phips & Borg, 2009). However, he did not probe the reasons why such mismatches exist. Obviously, little empirical investigation has focused on the rationale behind such an intricacy. The incongruence can be considered from various perspectives such as teachers' personality, contextual factors, and cultural factors. To explain the complexity, all the relevant, influential and practical factors in language teaching which a teacher is supposed to know should be taken into account to assess the reasons for such practices.

One of the factors that may mold teachers' beliefs and practices is their educational background which can help them acquire knowledge on the subject they are going to teach after graduation. In addition to teachers' subject matter (content) knowledge, their general knowledge of instructional methods (pedagogical knowledge), and pedagogical content knowledge were suggested as a significant component of teaching expertise (Lee Shulman, 1987). To put it simply, a teacher should not only have a good command of what he or she is supposed to teach in the class but also have knowledge about the act of teaching and strategies a language instructor is expected to know. Teachers' pedagogical knowledge is based on the assumption that what teachers do in the classroom has its origins in thoughts or mental acts,

which have been shaped by attitudes, values, knowledge, and beliefs gathered through years of being a student and being a teacher (Borg, 1999, 2003; Calderhead, 1996; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Gabonton, 2000). It is reasonable to expect that teachers' behaviors and practices in the class can be shaped due to their education as a student and what they have learned during this period of time may be mirrored in their teaching practices to an extent which can instruct them how to make on-the-spot decisions based on pedagogical and content knowledge they have developed during their education. Although some studies have been done to explore the development of course subjects teachers' pedagogical knowledge (eg. Lannin et al. 2013; Prescott, Bausch, and Bruder, 2007), little empirical study has been done to delve into that of English teachers' as practitioners of English teaching in EFL classes who are supposed to have gained a relative command of what they are going to teach due to a course they have done on teaching methodology and the mere fact that attending such a course creates expectations that teachers would acquire some pedagogical knowledge to apply in their classes.

One of the key issues in language teaching, which English teachers learn through their education and is likely to shape their practice, is the strategies applied in error correction. There have been a range of approaches to error correction in language teaching and learning from among which four strategies are coded in this study: (a) recast, (b) repetition, (c) metalinguistic feedback and, (d) explicit correction (as cited in Ellis, 2012, pp. 227-228). These error correction strategies are described and exemplified as below:

Recast: It is an utterance that rephrases the learner's utterance by changing one or more components (subject, verb, object) while still referring to its central meaning. *Example:* Learner: I lost my road. Teacher: I see, you lost your way and then what happened?

Repetition: It is an utterance that repeats the learner's erroneous utterance highlighting the error. *Example:*

Learner: The book was bored. Teacher: The book was **bored?**

Metalinguistic feedback: It is an utterance provides comments, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of the learner's utterance. *Example:*

Learner: I am here since yesterday. Teacher: Well, ok but remember we talked about the present perfect tense.

Explicit correction: It is an utterance that provides the learner with the correct form while at the same time indicating an error was committed. *Example:*

Learner: we don't have *many* homework. Teacher: homework is an uncountable noun so you should say "much" instead of "many".

To shed light on the relationship between what teachers have learned at the time of being a student which can influence teacher cognition in respect to their practices, this study is going to examine how two kinds of teachers with different educational and pedagogical backgrounds correct their students' errors. Based on the education received, there are two kinds of English teachers practicing English at private schools, namely university graduates who have academic credentials, and teachers certified in English language teaching who hold English language teaching certificates and are qualified to teach English at private institutes.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate TCELTs and university graduates' teacher cognition in respect to error correction strategies they apply in classroom which may offer an insight into how these two types of educational backgrounds may shape their instructional practices and how university graduates' stated beliefs differ from those of TCELTs' in terms of error correction.

The following research questions were used to frame the present investigation:

- 1) Do university graduates' corrective feedback strategies mirror their stated beliefs?
- 2) Do TCELTs' corrective feedback strategies reflect their stated beliefs?
- 3) In what aspects university graduates and TCELTs tend to differ or be similar?

II. METHOD

Participants

The participants were comprised of one hundred teachers at some English institutes in Alborz and Tehran provinces. Based on their educational backgrounds, the teachers were divided into two categories: (a) teachers who had obtained their qualifications from a university both BA and MA graduates without attending any English courses at institutes (b) instructors holding English language teaching certificates which had been trained to teach English. Out of 100 selected teachers, 52 were university graduates and 48 TCELTs. Three classes of each teacher were selected where the number of students in each class ranged from eight to fifteen. To preserve anonymity, numbers were assigned to teachers. The classes were selected from elementary and pre-intermediate levels. The reason for such selection of classes regarding their levels was that in elementary and pre-intermediate levels, the fluency and speed of students' speech are in a way that the teachers would be able to stop and correct the students so that such interruptions do not impede communication. By contrast, in advanced classes both fluency and speed of students' outputs make the correction unwieldy and this fact suggests that the instructors may ignore some mistakes for the sake of fluency and communication process. Teachers were of both sexes having teaching experience of two to fifteen years. After the observation of the classes, teachers were interviewed to ask them why they had applied such correction strategies in their classes.

Instruments

A questionnaire, containing twenty ill-formed sentences as well as feedback, was developed to trace university graduates and TCELTs' teacher cognition in respect to their corrective feedback strategies. This questionnaire was submitted to teachers two weeks prior to their class observation. The participants were asked to choose one of the five response options: 1=*strongly agree*, 2=*agree*, 3=*somewhat agree*, 4=*disagree*, and 5=*strongly disagree*. A sound recorder was also utilized to record the teachers' class as the data. This procedure was conducted in three successive sessions and one of them was randomly chosen for transcription and analysis. This is done to lessen the impact of the contents of the questionnaire on their practice.

III. RESULTS

In order to address the first research question, concerning the relationship between the university graduates' corrective feedback strategies and their stated beliefs, the Kendal correlation coefficients was employed. The results showed that there was a negative and significant relationship between the university graduates' teacher cognition with regard to recast, repetition, metalinguistic feedback, and explicit correction strategy vis-a-vis their practice.

TABLE 1.
KENDALL CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS; UNIVERSITY GRADUATES' STATED BELIEFS AND PRACTICE

		Recast Practice	Repetition Practice	Metalinguistic Practice	Explicit Practice
Recast	Correlation	-.467**			
Stated	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
Belief	N	52			
Repetition	Correlation		-.336**		
Stated	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004		
Belief	N		52		
Metalinguistic	Correlation			-.449**	
Stated	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	
Belief	N			52	
Explicit	Correlation				-.379**
Stated	Sig. (2-tailed)				.001
Belief	N				52

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

To examine the second research question, regarding the relationship between TCELTs' teacher cognition and their corrective feedback strategies, the Kendal correlation coefficients was run which showed that there was a negative and significant relationship between the TCELTs' stated beliefs about recast, repetition, and explicit correction strategy in respect to their practice. However, there was a negative and non-significant relationship between TCELTs' stated beliefs towards metalinguistic feedback strategy and its practice.

TABLE 2.
KENDALL CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS; TCELTs' STATED BELIEFS AND PRACTICE

		Recast Practice	Repetition Practice	Metalinguistic Practice	Explicit Practice
Recast	Correlation	-.401**			
Stated	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001			
Belief	N	48			
Repetition	Correlation		-.272*		
Stated	Sig. (2-tailed)		.025		
Belief	N		48		
Metalinguistic	Correlation			-.422**	
Stated	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	
Belief	N			48	
Explicit	Correlation				-.577**
Stated	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000
Belief	N				48

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

To investigate the third question of the present study, eight separate analyses of chi-square were run to compare the university graduates' and TCELTs' stated beliefs and practices towards corrective feedback strategies, that is to say, the research question was divided into eight minor categories. Four analyses of chi-square were run to compare university graduates' and TCELTs' stated beliefs towards recast, repetition, metalinguistic and explicit strategy of error correction. The results of the analyses indicated that the university graduates held a higher stated belief towards the aforementioned strategies of error correction than TCELTs.

TABLE 3.
OBSERVED, EXPECTED AND RESIDUAL VALUES; STATED BELIEF TOWARDS GROUPS

		Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Recast	TCELTs	83	92.2	-9.2
	University graduates	109	99.8	9.2
	Total	192		
Repetition	TCELTs	98	116.6	-18.6
	University graduates	145	126.4	18.6
	Total	243		
Metalinguistic	TCELTs	143	162.2	-16.2
	University graduates	192	175.8	16.2
	Total	338		
Explicit	TCELTs	149	179.0	-30.0
	University graduates	224	194.0	30.0
	Total	373		

Four analyses of chi-square were also run to compare the university graduates and TCELTs' practices of recast, repetition, metalinguistic and explicit strategy of error correction. Based on the results, the TCELTs made more use of the recast and repetition strategies than the university graduates, while university-graduated teachers made more use of the metalinguistic and explicit strategies of error correction than the TCELTs.

TABLE 4.
OBSERVED, EXPECTED AND RESIDUAL VALUES; PRACTICES OF STRATEGIES BY GROUPS

		Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Recast	TCELTs	320	273.6	46.4
	University graduates	250	296.4	-46.4
	Total	570		
Repetition	TCELTs	132	118.1	13.9
	University graduates	114	127.9	-13.9
	Total	246		
Metalinguistic	TCELTs	164	191.5	-27.5
	University graduates	235	207.5	27.5
	Total	399		
Explicit	TCELTs	277	349.0	-72.0
	University graduates	450	378.0	72.0
	Total	727		

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the present study suggested that both the university graduates and the TCELTs held opposite views concerning their beliefs in relation to practices of error correction strategies. It can be concluded that both the university graduates and the TCELTs have little know-how of the techniques applied in the class in general and error correction strategies in particular, that is to say, most of the strategies applied in their classes are contrary to their beliefs. Thus, they have failed to obtain in-depth practical knowledge of applying classroom strategies which are claimed to be laid with regard to error correction. The research also proposed that the university graduates held a more positive view towards different types of error correction strategies than the TCELTs. Therefore, university graduates tended to be more meticulous about students' errors due in part to their academic study which emphasizes upon correcting errors to avoid fossilization. The discrepancy suggested that the university graduates were stricter on the mistakes and tended to not tolerate the errors but the TCELTs were less sensitive to the ill-formed sentences probably at a cost of communication flow and so they preferred to ignore some of their students' errors. Implementing different error correction strategies by these two kinds of teachers can be a good indicator of their educational backgrounds which have shaped their practices.

The TCELTs made more positive use of implicit corrections, whereas, university graduates tended to correct their students' ill-formed sentences explicitly. Although there is no general agreement on the efficacy and appropriateness of either of the error correction strategies, the implicit corrections can be less intrusive and possibly can cause less embarrassment in learners. As most of teachers experience explicit error corrections during their school time, it can be inferred that language teaching certificate courses have changed the trainees' practice to a certain extent. However, university graduates showed a marked preference to give feedback to the ill-formed sentences based on traditional strategies, namely, metalinguistic feedback and explicit correction. Showing such a strong tendency can mean to imply that college courses are not strong and practical enough to modify prospective teachers' behaviors. Therefore, university courses need to be re-designed to enable potential teachers to gain practical experience and also teaching practice should be held practically.

Interviews with the teachers conducted after their classes revealed that some of the on-the-spot decisions made by teachers were made intuitively with no rationale behind and some were due to some situational constraints such as time

pressure, the instructors' viewpoint on speech flow, and external factors like mental and physical fatigue. Also, Some teachers claimed that they responded to the errors based on their students' preferences.

The mismatches found in the study could be an indicator of a fact that the teachers could not implement what they believed is right when dealing with errors. To narrow the existing gap between teachers' stated beliefs and their performances, one effective way is to coordinate workshops handled by experienced teachers in a pure practical way as well as regular class observations to monitor the behavior modifications which occurred after taking such courses and therefore to reduce such inconsistencies between their beliefs and practices. In a nutshell, if teachers are actively and practically involved in a task, they are more likely to get the most effective spontaneous decisions and this way, they will be able to reach practical maturity and quick decision-making strategies which help them deal with particular situations happening in their classrooms.

The findings of this study are restricted to a comparison between the stated beliefs and practices of university graduates and TCELTs in respect to their students' spoken errors. Future studies can be conducted to explore the discrepancies between university graduates and TCELTs in respect to their mastery of skills and how their skills can be honed. Also, the effects of years of experience in teaching, and sex in teachers with different educational backgrounds can be a subject area of research.

APPENDIX. QUESTIONNAIRE

Brief Teaching Experience:

Academic or Institutional Affiliated Degrees:.....

Gender:.....

Please tick your favorite option and provide reasons for the following corrections.

1. ST: I get to Shiraz last year in year.

T: Ok, well, you got there in New Year.

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

2. ST: It is our contributions that we will hopefully build up its greatness.

T: Ok by our contribution we can make it perfect, what else?

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

3. ST: Next year this time, I will have studied at university.

T: Congratulations, next year this time, you'll be studying at university.

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

4. ST: He is a rich man. He has lots of moneys.

T: Yes, he drives a Lamborghini and he has lots of money.

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

5. ST: I wrote my homework last night.

T: Good job, you did your homework last night.

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

6. T: What sports do you like?

ST: I love Karate. I play Karate on odd days.

T: You **play Karate**? So you're an athlete.

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

7. T: What are you going to do next week?

ST: In the next week, I'm going to play soccer.

T: You are going to play soccer **in the** next week?

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

8. T: What does Ali look like?

ST: He is tall and he has a short hair.

T: A short hair?

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

.....

9. ST: I like to buy a big home in the future.

T: Buy a **big home**?

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

.....

10. ST: The rest room was full.

T: The rest room was **full**?

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

.....

11. ST: I am agree with you.

T: "Agree" is a verb so it is not correct to use "am" before it.

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

.....

12. ST: I watched that film and it was so bored.

T: Did you forget that we talked about the present participles.

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

.....

13. ST: I will finish university by two years.

T: Remember we talked about the future perfect.

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

.....

14. ST: Since I joined the yoga gym I am more happier.

T: Do you remember something about comparatives?

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

.....

15. ST: I try to speak clear.

T: At the beginning of the class we reviewed the adverbs, remember?

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

.....

16. ST: The nurse got my temperature.

T: Be careful, the collocation for your phrase is "took my temperature".

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

.....

17. ST: I am interested to literature.

T: The preposition used for interested is "in".

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

.....

18. ST: There were a few bread left.

T: You must say a little bread, because bread is an uncountable noun.

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

.....

19. ST: I always practice English, so it has been developed recently.

T: For a positive change concerning language learning, you must say improved.

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

.....
 20. ST: It depends to many different factors.

T: You know the word "depend" is collocated with "on".

I strongly agree I agree No comment I disagree I strongly disagree

Justify your reasons:

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Manoochehr Jafarigohar is an associate professor and the head of the English department in Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran. He holds Ph.D. and M.A. degrees in TEFL and a B.A. in English translation. He teaches research and Second Language Acquisition at post-graduate level. His research interests include foreign language teaching, language testing and learning foreign languages at a distance. He has been the author of numerous textbooks and has published papers in various national and international journals.

Saeed Kheiri is a Ph.D candidate in TEFL at Payame Noor University of Tehran, Iran. He received a B.A. in English language and literature from Semnan University and a master degree in TEFL from Payame Noor University. His research interests are teacher education and language testing. He has written a book on idioms and an article on the relationship between teachers' job satisfaction and students' achievements. He is presently teaching translation, essay writing and grammar at Karaj and Shahriar Universities.