

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Corrective feedback (CF) refers to the correction that is given to learners in response to their oral or written linguistic errors (Hinkel 2011). The role of CF in second language learning has been the interest of many researchers in different disciplines including linguistics (White 1991, Lyster and Ranta 1997) and cognitive science (Truscott 1999, Dekeyser 2001). Both oral and written CF have provoked a lot of theoretical discussions and studies in the last few decades regarding their relationship with L2 development (e.g. Krashen 1983, Schmidt 1990, Long 1996).

Since the 1970s, many researchers have investigated the types of oral CF that the teachers use to correct learners' erroneous utterances (Chaudron 1977, Lyster and Ranta 1997). Models and taxonomies of oral CF have been developed to describe feedback types in terms of their explicitness/implicitness and provision/elicitation of L2 target form (Carroll and Swain 1993, Ellis et al. 2006). Although many studies confirm the effectiveness of explicit feedback types which overtly indicate an error has been made and elicit from learners the TL form (Russell and Spada 2006, Carroll and Swain 1993, Yang and Lyster 2010), there is still no consensus on which type of oral CF is more effective in the language classroom. The lack of unanimity in research findings is due to the diversity of factors investigated by researchers as contributing to the effectiveness of CF including the type of feedback (e.g. implicit or explicit) (Ellis et al. 2006, Adams et al 2011), the instructional setting (i.e. ESL or EFL) (Sheen 2004), the learners' linguistic level (Gitsaki and Althobaiti 2010) and the choice of the corrector (i.e. teacher or peer) (Hedge 2000).

To determine the effectiveness of different types of oral CF, successful learners' uptake, which refers to their reformulated utterances in response to feedback, as well as improvement in L2 performance have been investigated. Increased successful uptake is found by many researchers to follow feedback that elicits student-generated correction because it draws the learners' attention to their errors and makes them produce the target-like form which facilitates its acquisition (Sahin 2006, Ridder 2007). However,

other researchers (Mc Donough and Mackey 2006, Lightbown and Spada 2013) argue that successful uptake does not indicate that an item has been acquired as it could be mere repetition of the teacher's correction and that significantly increased test scores are indicative of L2 acquisition. As a result, experimental studies have been carried out to check the effect of feedback types on L2 learning targeting specific L2 items and structures (Nassaji 2009, Lyster and Izquierdo 2010). Grammatical structures, in particular, have been the focus of some of these studies (e.g. English articles and regular past tense studied by Vartanian, 2011) which have reported differential effects of feedback types.

1.2. Significance of the Study

Several experimental studies have been conducted on the effect of feedback types on the acquisition of grammatical structures (Ammar and Spada 2006, Rivera 2011). All of these studies have taken place in ESL/EFL classrooms in non-Arab countries. Doubts on generalizing the effectiveness of an isolated feedback type to a natural classroom setting accompany the results of these studies. On the other hand, observational studies which have looked at feedback types in naturalistic settings measured the effectiveness of feedback in relation to learners' uptake in which its relationship with second language learning is still controversial. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no research has been conducted in the UAE to investigate the effect of feedback types used by teachers in public secondary schools on the acquisition of regular and irregular English past tense.

Apart from being unique in its context, the present study employs different research tools to triangulate its results and to bridge the gap in literature. A mixed-methods approach is adopted in which classroom observations are made to collect qualitative data on feedback types and learners' uptake and are followed by interviews with few participants. At the same time, a written test is given to students prior to receiving feedback on the targeted structure to get baseline data on their past tense knowledge which is then compared to their results in written tests immediately as well as one month after finishing their lessons. Such quantitative data is believed to solidify the qualitative data and confirms, or possibly refutes, the effectiveness of feedback on L2 grammar acquisition.

A third unique feature of this study is the grammatical structure that it targets. Although few studies have focused on the acquisition of English regular past tense (Ellis et al. 2006, Gholami and Talebi 2012), very limited research has investigated the effect of feedback on acquiring rule-based and exemplar-based items (Yang 2008). Regular past tense verbs are considered to be rule-based because they are formed by adding – *ed* to the base form of the verb, whereas irregular verbs are exemplar-based items because there is no clear rule to follow when forming their past tense forms (Ellis et al. 2006). Comparing the effect of feedback types on acquiring these two different forms might yield beneficial results for SLA researchers and educators. Furthermore, many students in secondary schools in the UAE lack grammatical accuracy that they need to be able to proceed with their academic studies at the university level. The English past tense is one of the grammatical structures they have difficulty mastering because there are no regular and irregular verbs in Arabic (Mourssi 2012, p.150).

1.3. Research Questions

The purpose of this study is two-fold: a) to look at the distribution and frequency of feedback types addressing English past tense errors in secondary classrooms in the UAE and the learners' uptake, and b) to investigate the effectiveness of feedback on the acquisition of regular and irregular past tense forms. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the types of corrective feedback that teachers use to correct English past tense errors of female Arab students in a secondary school in the UAE?
2. What is the effect of feedback on students' uptake and acquisition of English past tense?
3. Are there differential effects of feedback on the acquisition of regular and irregular past tense forms?

In an attempt to answer these questions, the present study employs a mixed methods approach in which 48 grade 11 female students in a secondary public school are observed in their English classes and are tested on their use of the English past tense. It is hoped that the research findings shed light on the most effective feedback type that triggers successful uptake of Arab female students and leads to L2 development. The study is expected to raise the awareness of teachers about different ways to correct

English past tense errors which they can incorporate in their teaching. Additionally, it may help teachers improve their students' regular and irregular past tense accuracy. Comparing the effect of feedback types on acquiring regular and irregular past tense might yield beneficial results for SLA researchers and educators. Further research in the same context might also follow this study.

1.4. Dissertation Outline

This dissertation is organized in six chapters. Chapter one presents background information about the research topic, the significance and the aim of this study in addition to the research questions. Chapter 2 reviews different SLA theories related to the role of oral feedback in SLA. A discussion of the different feedback types, as identified in SL literature, is presented following this review. In the last section of chapter two a critical review of studies on feedback is provided. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology adopted in this study starting with the design and procedure of the research, followed by a description of its context and the instruments used in data collection. Finally, it describes the methods employed in analyzing data.

Chapter 4 presents the findings and the results of quantitative and qualitative data collected during the two-month duration period of the study. It is divided into three sections: classroom feedback episodes, interviews, and test results. Chapter 5 discusses these findings in relation to the research questions while taking into account those of previous research on oral CF. It also points out the limitations of this research. Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes the results of the present study. It also provides the pedagogical implications and gives recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

In the literature on second language learning, two types of input have been identified: negative and positive evidence. As described by Gass (2003), positive evidence “comprises the set of well-formed sentences to which learners are exposed,” (p.225). This is sometimes termed as models of TL from which learners form their linguistic hypotheses. Such evidence is considered a sine qua non for L2 learning. On the other hand, negative evidence refers to the information given to learners relating to the faultiness of an utterance (i.e. feedback). Although the significance of positive evidence in language acquisition is well-documented (Sahin 2006), a debate on the effectiveness of negative evidence has been taking place for the last three decades and has given the rise to many SLA theories and hypotheses.

This chapter reviews different SLA theories related to the role of oral feedback in SLA. A discussion of the different feedback types as identified in SL literature is presented following this review. Finally, a critical review of studies on feedback is provided.

2.1 Theoretical Background

The following section sheds light on few SLA hypotheses which either emphasize or refute the effectiveness of negative evidence in L2 acquisition.

2.1.1 SLA Hypotheses

2.1.1.1 Input Hypothesis

One of the theorists who reject the role of negative evidence in language learning is Krashen who has put forward the Input Hypothesis. According to Krashen (1981), for acquisition to take place, learners have to be exposed to sufficient comprehensible input which he explains as “structures that are just beyond the acquirer’s current level of competence” (p.103). Moreover, Krashen claims that negative evidence (NE) should not be used in classroom because it raises the “affective filter” of learners which he believes

impedes SLA. In this sense, Krashen places primacy on natural and spontaneous use of L2 to promote acquisition and dismisses the use of NE.

In accordance with Krashen's hypothesis, Schwartz (1993) questions the extent to which feedback affects the underlying competence. She argues that NE is not the appropriate type of input required for L2 grammar acquisition and that only Primary Linguistic Data (PLD), which is the linguistic input necessary for acquisition, can contribute to developing that knowledge.

In contrast, other researchers emphasize the role of NE in L2 learning (Chaudron 1988, White 1987, Schmidt 1990, Spada 1997) because it draws the learners' attention to the inadequacy of their interlanguage system and encourages them to rectify their error utterances. White (1987) argues that positive evidence is not sufficient for SLA and that without NE the gap between learners' interlanguage and L2 acquisition will never be bridged.

Although intensive exposure to L2 is of paramount importance, it is not sufficient if native-like proficiency is the aim because many studies have found that grammatical competence cannot be achieved without negative evidence. In his case study, Schmidt (1983) has found that an adult Japanese learner of English had difficulties in achieving grammatical accuracy after being exposed to intensive English for three years. His findings, coupled by his experience in learning a second language, have paved the way for the formulation of his Noticing Hypothesis.

2.1.1.2 Noticing Hypothesis

Schmidt's (1990) influential Noticing Hypothesis is considered a counterbalance to Krashen's comprehensive input. In his theory, Schmidt asserts that learning only occurs when learners consciously notice the grammatical features of the TL and that instruction is important because it draws the learners' attention to the salient grammatical features of the language. According to Schmidt, in order for learners to notice the specific features of L2, feedback is important because it "juxtaposes the learner's form (i) with a target language form (i+1) and the learner is put in an ideal position to notice the gap" (Schmidt and Frota 1986, p.313).

This theoretical viewpoint on the crucial role of attention in SLA has also been adopted by Smith (1991) in his Input Enhancement theory in which he places similar importance to feedback. On the other hand, this theory has been criticized by Truscott (1998) who claims that attention develops learners' knowledge but not their metalinguistic competence.

In addition to form-focused instruction and feedback which draw the learners' attention to certain grammatical structures, the interaction between the teacher and the students has been argued to have the same function. Long (1996), in his Interaction Hypothesis, suggests that encouraging students to interact helps learners notice L2 forms.

2.1.1.3 Interaction Hypothesis

Much research asserts that interactional conversation is a primary means for L2 development (Long 1981, 1983, Doughty and Pica 1986, Gass and Varonis 1994). The Interaction Hypothesis by Long (1996) has evolved from Krashen's (1985) claims that comprehensible input is necessary for SLA. Long argues that negotiation of meaning between the interlocutor and learners to make input comprehensible facilitates linguistic modifications and draws the learners' attention to form and meaning simultaneously. He also assigns a facilitative role to corrective feedback, especially recasts, in L2 development because it "juxtapose[s] the learner's incorrect rendition and the teacher or native speaker's reformulations" (cited in Ammar 2008, p.183) and this juxtaposition draws the learner's attention to discrepancies in form while keeping the meaning constant.

However, other researchers subscribe to the idea that conversational interaction facilitates comprehension and learning rather than being a primary means for L2 development (Ellis 1997, Lyster 2004, Gass 1997). For example, Ellis (1997) assigns negative attributes to interaction, which sometimes, overwhelms learners and makes input more complicated (pp. 47–48).

2.1.1.4. Output Hypothesis

As opposed to advocates of input and interaction hypotheses, Swain (1995) and other researchers (Gass 1997, Swain and Lapkin 1998) accord paramount importance to

“comprehensible output” in L2 development. They argue that only through production learners are pushed to use L2 structures for their utterances, which in turn, leads to SLA. As stated by Swain (1995, cited in Gass 2003) output “stimulate[s] learners to move from the semantic, open-ended nondeterministic, strategic processing prevalent in comprehension to the complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production” (p.128). Furthermore, Swain argues that when forced to produce and through feedback, learners notice the gap between what they want to say and what they are able to say drawing their attention to the forms they need to acquire, which allows them to internalize language.

The output hypothesis assumes that learners make adjustments to their output which Krashen (2003) argues against because he asserts that these modifications rarely occur. He further claims that humans can be L2 proficient without any language output. Another opponent of this hypothesis is Young (1990) who criticizes the idea of pushing learners to produce because this makes them uncomfortable and, thus, hampers acquisition.

2.1.2 Theoretical viewpoints on the role of feedback in SLA

Several researchers (Krashen 1994, Schwartz 1993, Truscott 1999, 2007) argue against the effectiveness of feedback in SLA claiming that only positive evidence provided through comprehensible input is sufficient. As previously mentioned, Krashen (1994, 2003) argues that error correction is ‘anxiety-provoking’ which makes learners unable to process the input and acquire the language. He also claims that giving negative feedback endangers the flow of communication. Similarly, Truscott (1999) expresses his concerns about the negative effect of feedback explaining that it “will produce embarrassment, anger, inhibition, feeling of inferiority, and a generally negative attitude toward the class” (p.441).

On the other hand, researchers who argue for the effectiveness of CF have justified their viewpoints from a different perspective. Abukhadrah (2012) investigated Arab male students’ preference for oral feedback and found that they have positive attitude towards error correction which match the results of previous studies (Cathcart and Olsen 1976, Schulz 1996, 2001, Ferris 2002). This indicates that students expect to be corrected and that there is a possibility of decreasing their motivation if feedback is not given. Others

(Swain 1985, Gass 1997, Long 2007) highlight the importance of CF in helping learners notice the gap between production and the target-like form. In addition, several researchers (Loewen 2005, Sheen 2006) attribute the significance of CF to increasing learners' uptake which is crucial for SLA. Furthermore, the fear that unaddressed persistent errors in the learners' interlanguage might be fossilized (i.e. to be part of their L2) has driven other scholars to propose corrective feedback as a solution to this problem (Doughty and William 1998, Lightbown, 1998).

As aforementioned, several scholars and theorists have proved that positive effects of feedback on SLA outweigh its negative impact. However, before proceeding to the discussion of studies on feedback, a description of the types of feedback has first to be made.

2.2 Types of CF

The debate over the effectiveness of feedback has not been the sole concern of SLA researchers. A lot of discussion has also taken place on the types of feedback used in classrooms and their effectiveness. Since the 1970s, SLA researchers have described different classroom discourse models of error correction and have developed different taxonomies of CF used in classrooms.

2.2.1 Models of CF

Among these models, Chaudron (1977) and Lyster and Ranta's (1997) are the most known and widely used. Chaudron's model is very detailed and intricate because it includes 31 acts which Chaudron argues explain "every type of possible reaction that an instructor could give to a student's error" (1977 cited in Sahin 2006, p.16). Examples of these reactions include acceptance; negation; and repetition with no change (Refer to Mishra 2005 for a detailed description).

However, Sabbagh (1998) argues against the use of this model because it does not include a description of students' reaction to feedback which renders the measurement of the effectiveness of feedback types unachievable. The findings of Erten's (1993) study, which adapted Chaudron's (1977) model, supports Sabbagh's claim because they

are merely descriptive of the number of errors corrected and most frequently used feedback types without dealing with their impact on students' learning.

On other hand, Lyster and Ranta (1997) delineate in their corrective discourse model three moves for error treatment: the error, feedback, and uptake (See Figure 2.1). They classify feedback into six categories: explicit correction; metalinguistic feedback; recast; repetition; clarification request; and elicitation. Two types of uptake are identified in this model: successful uptake and needs repair in which students in the former repair the error but fail to correct it in the latter. Although Lyster and Ranta's model has been widely employed in many studies (Mori 2002, Sahin 2006, Gitsaki and Althobaiti 2010), it is criticized by few scholars (Long 2006, Ohta 2000, Margolis 2011). Ohta (2000), for instance, argues that the positive effect of feedback on auditors is not taken into account in this model, whereas Long (2006) criticizes the contradictory nature of "uptake" which comprises right and wrong responses as well as their absence.

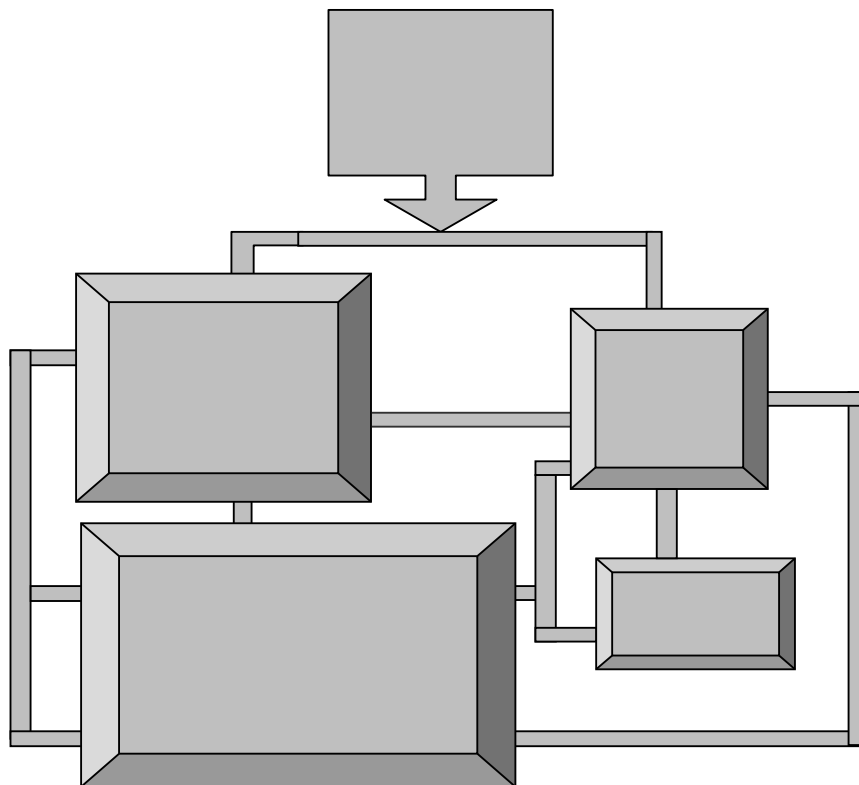


Figure 2.1 Lyster and Ranta's (1997) error treatment model (cited in Sahin 2006, p.33)

2.2.2 Taxonomies of CF

Researchers have recently classified oral feedback types according to (a) their explicitness/implicitness in indicating the occurrence of an error (Carroll and Swain 1993) and (b) their provision/elicitation of L2 target form through input/output (Ellis 2009) (See Table 2.1).

| | <i>Implicit</i> | <i>Explicit</i> |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Input-providing | Recast | Explicit correction |
| Output-prompting | Repetition Clarification request | Metalinguistic explanation Elicitation |

Table 2.1 A taxonomy of CF strategies (adapted from Ellis 2009, p.8)

With regard to implicit feedback types, “there is no correct indicator that an error has been committed whereas in explicit feedback types, there is” (Ellis et al. 2006, pp.340-341). Recasts have often been identified as an implicit type of feedback because the teacher reformulates the learner’s non-target like structure without indicating there is an error (Long 2007). As shown in the above table, feedback has also been classified into “output-provoking” and “input-providing”. Indeed, recasts and explicit correction are input-providing moves because they provide the learners with L2 forms whereas the other feedback types are output-provoking moves because they push learners to produce the correct L2 form.

However, several researchers criticize this distinction (Ellis and Sheen 2006, Loewen and Nabei 2007) and describe it as being “crude” because “it fails to acknowledge the variation that can occur in the performance of single feedback type” (Ellis 2009, p.8). For example, if recasts are performed with prosodic emphasis on the corrected form, they become explicit rather than implicit. To address this problem of having a clear-cut distinction, Loewen and Nabei (2007) suggest a continuum to address the varying explicitness/implicitness of feedback. Moreover, Sheen and Ellis (2011) have recently provided a more detailed taxonomy of CF strategies with definitions and conditions accompanying each type of feedback (Refer to Hinkel 2011 for a detailed description).

2.2.3 Viewpoints on the efficacy of feedback types

Researchers hold different viewpoints on the efficacy of one feedback type over the others in SLA. According to Long (1996) and Doughty (2001), explicit feedback strategies impede the flow of communication and result in L2 explicit knowledge as opposed to implicit feedback which enables learners to produce L2 forms in discourse contexts which is required for implicit L2 learning . In contrast, other scholars (Carroll 2001, Ellis 2005) do not agree on the effectiveness of implicit feedback because it does not enable the learner to locate the error. They lend support to explicit feedback strategies because as described by Ellis et al. (2006):

[they] not only make the corrective force clear to the learners but also give clue to the exact location of the error. As such, they might be more likely to induce learners to carry out the cognitive comparison between their error and the target form which is believed to foster acquisition (p.342).

Supporters of output-provoking feedback types have used Long's interaction hypothesis and Swain's hypothesis to support their viewpoint whereas advocates of input-providing feedback have resorted to the significance of comprehensible input to uphold their position. To investigate the effectiveness of one feedback type over the other, several empirical studies have been conducted to conclude this controversial debate. The results of some of these studies are discussed in the following section.

2.3 Empirical studies on CF

Several studies have been carried out in different settings (classrooms or laboratories) and with different research methods (experimental or observational). A summary of these studies is mentioned below drawing on the results in relation to the types of feedback and the targeted L2 form observed in this study.

2.3.1 Observational Studies

In the late 1970s, several observational studies investigated CF in L2 classrooms spawning different CF models (Chaudron 1977, Fanselow 1977). The overall findings show that teachers do not correct learners' errors in communicative activities as much as in form-focused ones, errors are most likely to be corrected only if they interfere with

communication and, surprisingly, the most persistent errors are the least to be corrected (Lightbown and Spada 2013). Chaudron's (1997) descriptive study in French immersion classes reveals that students are less likely to respond correctly to different types of teachers' repetition and that only repetition that includes emphatic stress results in learners' repair. This study has drawn the attention to the need for precise definitions of CF types and how they are operationalized in classrooms, which was later developed by Lyster and Ranta (1997).

In Lyster and Ranta's (1997) study, results show that recasts were frequently used by teachers in French immersion classes (55% of all corrective moves). Yet, they were the least likely to provoke uptake (18%) in comparison with prompts (elicitation, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, and repetition). As argued by Lyster and Ranta (*ibid*), recasts are usually unnoticed because they are perceived by learners in content-based classrooms as confirmation of meaning (p.57). Furthermore, the reason that the other four types of feedback are more effective may be because they engage the learners on a deeper level of processing to produce the correct form themselves as opposed to recasts and explicit correction which simply provide the learners with the correct form.

Similar results to Lyster and Ranta's are reported by Lyster (2001) and Panova and Lyster (2002). In Lyster's study, recasts and explicit correction were used by teachers in more than half of their correction moves. Additionally, these feedback types were used to correct phonological and grammatical errors as opposed to prompts which followed lexical errors. Similarly, Panova and Lyster have found that recasts were the most frequently used feedback type in Canadian communicative classrooms; however, they were followed by a lower rate of successful uptake (15%) in contrast to the higher repair rate that followed prompts (100%).

On the other hand, Lochtman (2002), who observed EFL classrooms, has found that prompts were used by teachers in 56% of the feedback. In his study, metalinguistic feedback and elicitation were followed by 46.8% and 47% of successful uptake as opposed to recasts and explicit correction which resulted in less student-generated repair. Dissimilar findings with reference to uptake are reported by Ellis, Basturkman and Loewen (2001) in which a higher learner repair rate followed the provision of recasts. This data was obtained from observing ESL classrooms in New Zealand where

the focus of instruction was both on form and meaning. Similarly, in Suzuki's (2004) study recasts and explicit correction led to high percentage of successful uptake (65% and 100% respectively). Although, these studies used the same model for data collection, they have yielded different results. This inconsistency may be due to differences in instructional contexts since Canadian classrooms are content-based which is not the case in Ellis et al. or Suzuki's studies and is also different from the EFL setting in Lochtman's.

Subsequent studies confirm the effect of classroom setting on feedback and uptake (Sheen 2004, Lyster and Mori 2006). Sheen (2004) has found that in form-oriented classrooms, recasts are just as effective as prompts in generating learners' repair compared to its unnoticed role in content-orientated classrooms. Similar findings are reported by Lyster and Mori (2006) in their comparative study. A larger proportion of repair following recasts has been detected in Japanese immersion classrooms which are analytic-oriented. In a recent study (Gitsaki and Althobaiti 2010) which has yielded closely similar results, ESL students in form-focused classrooms in Australia successfully repaired 70% of recasts which constituted 16% of feedback given by teachers. However, in Ridder's (2007) study, recasts were followed by the least repair in EFL classrooms in Germany. These different findings raise the need for more research on the effect of context on feedback and uptake.

Overall, in all descriptive studies of CF, learners respond at varying degrees to different feedback types and this confirms the immediate impact of feedback on L2 production. However, the long term effect of recasts or prompts on L2 learning cannot be concluded based on these descriptive research findings. The need for clear-cut findings on the effectiveness of CF on L2 learning has led to a burst of experimental studies since the 1990s.

2.3.2 Experimental Studies

Most of the experimental studies investigating the efficiency of CF have targeted grammatical structures with focus on implicit versus explicit feedback types. However, there are fewer experimental studies conducted in classrooms than in laboratories.

2.3.2.1 Classroom Studies

All classroom studies have reached similar conclusions regarding the beneficial role of explicit feedback. In Lyster's (2004) study, focus-on-form instruction and prompts are found to be more effective than instruction combined with recasts in the acquisition of French grammatical gender. Also, both groups, who received feedback (prompts or recasts), performed better than the no feedback group.

In a quasi experimental study, Ammar and Spada (2006) investigated the role of recasts and prompts on acquiring English possessive determiners for French students in an ESL context. As in Lyster's, their findings confirm the effectiveness of feedback on L2 learning with the two experimental groups outperforming the control group. Furthermore, their study also reveals the superiority of prompts over recasts and that the proficiency level of learners has an influence on noticing feedback. That is, students with low proficiency levels benefit more from prompts because of their explicitness whereas high proficiency learners are able to notice and benefit from both types of feedback.

In another study, which looked at the effect of different types of feedback on 207 learners at different ages and proficiency levels, Havranek (2002) has found prompts to be the most effective in improving students' scores and that recasts, which are not followed by learners' uptake, are the least effective feedback type. His study also shows that not only do learners who are involved in the feedback benefit from the correction but also their peers who get the chance to test their hypothesis by comparing their silent responses to the teacher's L2 target form benefit as well. One of the limitations of this study is that no pretest was done prior to the treatment to establish baseline data and there was no control group. This threatens the internal validity of Havranek's research since factors other than feedback could have led to its findings.

On the other hand, Loewen and Nabei's (2007) results are different from the above-mentioned studies. In their study, there was no difference between the performance of the three feedback groups (clarification requests, metalinguistic, and recasts). This could be explained due to the context of the study that is characterized by being highly analytic since Japanese learners are usually attentive to all forms of feedback targeting errors in L2 form. Another explanation, as proposed by Yang (2008), includes the lack of delayed posttest which might have yielded significant results, the brevity of the time

of the study, and the disproportionate amount of feedback received among the three groups.

2.3.2.2 Laboratory Studies

Although most of the classroom experimental studies have proved the effectiveness of prompts or metalinguistic feedback over recasts, laboratory studies have yielded mixed results.

Nassaji (2009), who compared the effects of recasts and elicitations on the performance of 42 adult learners of English, employed two forms for each feedback type: implicit and explicit. Results show that both recasts and elicitations have led to corrections, with the highest number of correction done by groups receiving explicit types of feedback. However, the lack of differential effects between recasts and elicitations can be explained due to the laboratory setting which is more controlled and makes implicit CF more salient (Lightbown and Spada 2013). In addition, the nature of dyadic interactions in this study enhances the saliency of recasts. The same could be used to explain the lack of differential effects between groups receiving recasts and prompts in Lyster and Izquierdo's (2010) study.

Other studies that compared recasts to other types of feedback and revealed different results include Carroll and Swain's (1993) which compared recasts, two forms of prompts (explicit rejection and clarification requests) and explicit correction. In their study, the explicit correction group performed the best with regards to acquiring English dative alternation. On the other hand, recasts with salience are found by Leeman (2003) to be more effective than recasts and explicit rejection of erroneous utterances in acquiring the target grammatical structure. Leeman's finding partially contradicts other studies possibly because the group receiving negative evidence was neither prompted to produce the corrected L2 form nor provided with it. In fact, the primacy of recasts with saliency over recasts seems to be keeping in line with other studies describing the explicitness of feedback as an important factor in its effectiveness.

Experimental studies targeting various grammatical structures show that different factors affect the efficiency of corrective feedback including the operationalization of

different types of feedback and readiness of learners. The following section focuses on studies investigating the effectiveness of feedback on acquiring English past tense.

2.3.3 Studies on feedback in relation to past tense

There have been relatively few studies that looked at the effect of feedback on the acquisition of English past tense *-ed* (Ellis et al. 2006, Yang 2008, Vartanian 2011). The following is a summary of the findings of these studies.

In an experimental study, Ellis et al. (2006) investigated the effects of recasts (implicit feedback) and metalinguistic explanation (explicit feedback) given to low-intermediate ESL students in New Zealand. Acquisition was measured by three different tests: oral imitation, grammaticality judgment and explicit knowledge. Posttest results show that explicit feedback is more effective than implicit feedback and that the former benefit the learners' explicit as well as implicit knowledge.

In a furtherance of the previous study, Gholami and Talebi (2012) reexamined the differential effects of the same types of feedback in an EFL context. Oral imitation and metalinguistic tests were only used to measure acquisition. In contrast to Ellis et al.'s findings, there was no significant difference between the performance of Iranian EFL learners who received recasts and those who received metalinguistic feedback. The discrepancy in the results of these studies is probably due to their different contexts. Nevertheless, more studies investigating the influence of context on the impact of feedback have to be carried out to solidify these conclusions.

In another experimental study which compared recasts to prompts in an EFL context, Yang (2008) used oral and written tests to measure the acquisition of regular as well as irregular past tense forms by Chinese learners. His results show significant improvement in the written production of the prompt group who outperformed the other two groups (recast and control). Although these findings are different from Gholami and Talebi's (2012), making comparisons between the two studies is void for several reasons: first, the tests employed for measuring acquisition are different; second, the targeted grammatical form in Yang's study included irregular past tense which is more complicated than regular past tense *-ed*; and finally, the EFL contexts in both studies are different.

In addition to the effect of context, Ellis (2007) also adds the difficulty of the grammatical structure as an influential factor affecting feedback. His study about past tense *-ed* and comparative *-er* forms is one of the very few studies that have looked at the effect of different types of feedback on two grammatical structures. His findings show that the metalinguistic group improved only in the comparative form, yet, there was no significant difference between the recast and metalinguistic groups. According to Ellis, this might be due to the learners' previous knowledge of past tense.

Furthermore, in a recent study that has focused on past tense and articles (Vartanian 2011), the results show an advantage for explicit (prompts) over implicit feedback (recasts). In contrast to previous research findings (e.g. Ammar and Spada 2006), Vartanian argues that the developmental readiness of learners does not play a significant role in L2 development as much as the explicitness of feedback does. All the above emphasizes the need for more research on the factors affecting effectiveness of feedback.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the literature of oral corrective feedback. It presented SLA hypotheses which support or reject error correction. It also discussed different models and taxonomies of feedback types. Studies on the effectiveness of feedback types on L2 development have been reviewed.

As can be seen in this chapter, there are conflicting results with regards to the effect of feedback types on L2 acquisition due to factors including context, type of feedback, level and age of learners, and targeted L2 forms. Neither of the studies that investigated oral feedback in natural classroom setting studied its impact on Arab learners. As a result, the present study is designed to investigate the effectiveness of different feedback types on the acquisition of past tense for Arab learners. The design and the research method employed in this study are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

In spite of the abundance of the experimental studies conducted on the effect of feedback on L2 development in general and the acquisition of certain grammatical structures in particular (Leeman 2003, Ammar and Spada 2006), there has been a paucity of studies that have investigated the beneficial role of feedback on acquiring the regular and irregular past tense forms in English (Yang 2008, Lyster and Yang 2010). Furthermore, none of the observational studies that looked at feedback in the natural classroom settings has focused on a specific grammatical structure (Sahin 2006, Ridder 2007). Thus, the purpose of this study is to bridge that gap in research and to further investigate the effect of teachers' corrective feedback on the acquisition of past tense in the UAE.

This chapter outlines the methodology used by the researcher starting with the design and procedure of the research. This is followed by a description of the context in which the study took place, the participants, the target grammatical structure and testing material. Finally, it describes the methods employed in analyzing data.

3.1 Research design and procedure

As discussed in chapter 2, a substantial number of studies using different research designs (descriptive or experimental) have focused on the role of CF in L2 learning. However, few weaknesses have been identified with each research design. On the one hand, opponents of descriptive studies criticize them for their mere description of feedback types used in classrooms and learners' uptake and that no conclusions about the effect of feedback on L2 acquisition could be drawn (Lightbown and Spada 2013). Additionally, Mc Donough and Mackey (2006) claim that students' immediate repair that follows corrective feedback does not necessarily indicate learning. In contrast, Ellis (2009) reports that inconclusive results have been reached in all experimental studies of feedback types for various factors including the research design and procedure followed in each study (pp.10-11). Furthermore, experimental studies have been criticized for looking at the effect of few feedback types in a controlled and unnatural environment

and that their results cannot be generalized to learning in natural classroom settings where teachers' feedback is usually imprecise and inconsistent (ibid). This study overcomes the weaknesses in previous research by looking at both uptake and acquisition in natural classroom setting.

3.1.1 Research Design

In order to investigate the effectiveness of feedback types given in secondary classrooms in L2 grammar acquisition, a mixed methods approach was chosen in this study. It looked at feedback in a natural classroom setting and measured its effectiveness on uptake as well as acquisition by means of qualitative and quantitative methods. As mentioned by Gay et al. (2009), one of the advantages of this approach is that:

[it] build(s) on the synergy and strength that exists between quantitative and qualitative research methods to understand a phenomenon more fully than is possible using either quantitative or qualitative methods alone (p.462).

The present study used an exploratory mixed methods design, also known as the QUAL-QUAN Model, in which qualitative data is first gathered then followed by quantitative data collection to build on the data gathered in the first phase (ibid). Quantitative data collection in this study included video recording of lessons and conducting stimulated-recall interviews. This was pursued by a quantitative phase in which students did written tests. Figure 3.1 illustrates the research design and summarizes its stages.

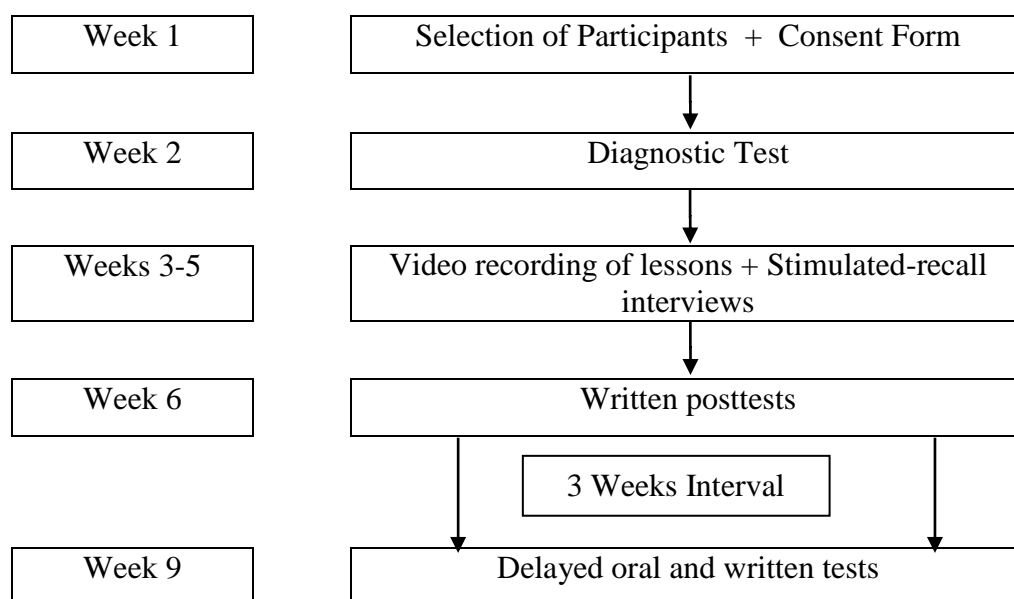


Figure 3.1 Research design

3.1.2 Instruments

Video recordings, stimulated-recall interviews as well as written tests were used in this study to gather data on the effect of feedback on the acquisition of English past tense. Video recording for the purpose of observing error correction in classrooms provides objective information about the teachers' behavior and gives the opportunity to study feedback in a natural setting (Creswell 2012). In addition, video recording has the advantage of providing accurate data and the possibility to review recordings (Johnson and Christensen 2010). It is also argued by Sahin (2006) that video recording does not disrupt class interaction and keeps the authenticity of lessons.

To check students' understanding and noticing of feedback moves in the recorded lessons, individual stimulated-recall interviews using few recorded feedback episodes as a stimulus were conducted. As described by Yoshida (2010), 'stimulated recall is a retrospective method to recall learners' thought process during a past activity by using a stimulus' (p.299). Such interviews were used by Mackey (2006) to determine whether feedback promoted learners' noticing of the target structure. They were also conducted by other researchers (Büyükbak 2007, Yoshida 2010) to elicit the students' and teachers' perception of feedback, and to avoid relying solely on the observed data.

To build on the gathered qualitative data and to investigate the effectiveness of feedback on grammar acquisition, written tests were administered to measure the learners' explicit and implicit knowledge after the instruction. Written tests were also used in several studies to measure the effect of feedback on L2 development (Ellis 2005, Yang 2008, Rivera 2011). Similar to previous research (Ellis et al. 2006), delayed tests were used in this study to measure students' retention of information and the effect of feedback on acquisition. A detailed description of the procedure of this research is provided in the next section.

3.1.3 Procedure

After identifying the research problem, the researcher sought the approval of the principal of the chosen school in October 2012. This was followed by a meeting with the participating teachers to explain the nature of the study. However, to ensure that their teaching behavior was not altered, teachers were not told that their error correction

in particular would be observed. Informed consent was obtained from teachers who were also assured confidentiality of details (Appendix A). The researcher then visited the classes of these teachers and orally informed the students of the general purpose of the research to get their consent.

As seen in Figure 3.1, a pilot study was conducted in Week 2 to choose which classes to observe and to ensure the feasibility of identifying and analyzing feedback episodes. Three lessons in three grade 11 classes (Science and Arts) were recorded. Due to the various feedback types in used in the Science sections compared to that given in the Arts section which would provide richer data for the current research, two science classes (Sc-1 and Sc-3) were chosen for this study. After the selection of the two classes, teachers were asked to administer a diagnostic test.

During the following three weeks, classes were recorded and feedback episodes were coded and then used in the interviews with students and teachers. In the first week of December, students had their written test. After three weeks, students were asked to do the delayed written tests. Qualitative and quantitative results were then analyzed and compared against the results of the diagnostic test to measure acquisition of the target grammatical structure.

3.2 Research Context

The study was carried out at in two grade 11 classes in a public secondary school for girls in the emirate of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates. All subjects are taught in this school in Arabic except for English which is practiced mainly inside the classroom during English lessons. An educational reform programme from the ministry has been set in the school to raise the students' attainment in English. Although the program is skill-based and aims at improving the students' language through task-based activities, there are grammar lessons in which the focus is on form and grammar rules are explicitly taught. During the period in which the study was taking place, the target grammatical structure was given in grades 10 and 11 and this made the selection of teachers and students restricted to these grade levels.

3.2.1 Teachers

Grade 10 and 11 English teachers were asked to participate in this research since English past tense was taught in their classes. Only two grade 11 teachers accepted to participate. Table 3.1 displays the participating teachers' profile in terms of their education, professional development and teaching experience. Both teachers were native speakers of Arabic and majored in English Language teaching. However, Teacher 1 had more teaching experience and received more in-service training than the Teacher 2. Both studied English as a foreign language in their home countries where there was emphasis on learning grammatical rules. For ethical considerations, codes were given to teachers instead of their real names.

| Teacher Code | Age | Education | Teaching Experience | Years in Education Reform Programmes |
|--------------|-----|-----------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Teacher 1 | 37 | BA | 10 | 4 |
| Teacher 2 | 31 | BA | 4 | 1 |

Table 3.1 Profile of participating teachers

3.2.2 Students

As shown in table 3.2, 48 students, in two intact grade 11 classes, participated in this study. They have been studying English for an average of 9 years. Based on the school diagnostic test results, the majority of students were at the pre-intermediate level (62%) with few elementary and intermediate (19% each). Although the number of students in Sc-3 was larger than that in the other class, attendance in both classes varied from day to day and the number of students available during the video recording was not constant.

| Classes | No. of students | Proficiency level/ No. of students | Average Age | Average years of English learning |
|--------------|-----------------|---|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| 11 Science 1 | 23 | Elementary 5 Pre-intermediate 14 Intermediate 4 | 16 | 9 |
| 11 Science 3 | 25 | Elementary 4 Pre-intermediate 16 Intermediate 5 | 16 | 9 |

Table 3.2 Profile of participating students

3.2.3 Target Grammatical Structure

The current study investigates the effect of corrective feedback on the acquisition of regular and irregular past tense forms in English. The past tense was chosen as the target grammatical structure because students in this study still make mistakes in using the correct past tense form of verbs even though they were introduced to it in previous years. It is also one of the grammatical structures that intermediate and even advanced learners have difficulty mastering (Ellis et al. 2006) and “one of the most difficult problems facing ALEs (Arab Learners of English) while learning English Grammar” (Mourssi 2012, p.140).

In terms of interlanguage development, Lighbown and Spada (2006) argue that second language learners acquire irregular past tense forms before they apply the *-ed* rule for regular verbs. In a recent study, Mourssi (2012) lists seven interlanguage stages that Arab learners of English (ALE) go through in their acquisition of the English past tense form. Mourssi also argues that explicit feedback can help Arab learners of English pass these stages quickly by juxtaposing their non-target like forms with the target forms (p.154).

3.3 Data Collection

The following section explains how data was collected in this study starting with qualitative data including video recordings and interviews. This is followed by a description of the testing materials and their administration.

3.3.1 Qualitative Data

Qualitative data collection comprised two phases: recording lessons and conducting stimulated-recall interviews. Video recording of lessons started in the second week of November and lasted for three weeks with an average of two lessons observed in each class per week. This was followed by interviews with four participants from each class in addition to interviewing the participating teachers.

3.3.1.1 Video recordings

In total, 14 lessons (7 for each participating teacher) were videotaped to see whether and how the teachers corrected the students' past tense errors and whether and how students responded to correction. Also, two extra lessons had to be recorded due to technical problems that occurred with few video recordings. Only feedback episodes that included the target grammatical structure were transcribed, coded and analyzed.

The researcher did not attend the classes while recording to avoid distracting the classroom interaction and harassing the authenticity of the lesson. Being a supervisor in the school, the presence of the researcher was believed to affect the performance of the participants which would have yielded invalid data that do not represent the class in its typical behavior.

3.3.1.2 Stimulated-recall interviews

In the present study, four students from each section were chosen based on their proficiency levels (two intermediate and two beginners) and their willingness to be interviewed. Individual interviews took place in the English laboratory without the presence of other students to avoid distraction and to obtain reliable data. Interviewees were asked to watch and comment on three to four feedback episodes from the videotaped lessons. Students from the same class watched the same feedback episodes to enable the researcher to compare their answers and to check to what extent peers benefited from the feedback given.

The same interview technique was followed with the two participating teachers to gather information about the correction techniques they used and the reasons behind choosing them. Another reason for interviewing the teachers was that several feedback episodes, which were observed during group or individual work, were inaudible and the researcher needed to ask about the type of feedback used and how students reacted to them.

3.3.2 Quantitative Data

As described by Ellis (2005), in tests that measure implicit knowledge, learners should use their language spontaneously without the need to refer to their metalinguistic knowledge and are restricted to finish in real time. On the contrary, tests of explicit knowledge encourage learners to draw on their metalinguistic knowledge and L2 rules

and to focus on form without being pressured by certain time limit. Although in the written test the students were assessed on their use of the correct past tense forms, they were given more time to revise their narrative and check the accuracy of their language. Thus, they were expected to use both types of knowledge to perform the written task (Ellis et al. 2006, Yang 2008).

Three testing sessions were administered for the written test (pretest, posttest and delayed test). Since students were taught and tested on how to write narratives and recounts during which the study took place, it was more feasible to use the school end-of-unit and end-of-trimester writing tests and to design only a diagnostic test to collect baseline data on the students' level with regards to the target grammatical structure. Additionally, the limited number of lessons that teachers could spare for giving extra tests as well as the observational nature of this study restricted the designing of additional tests. The decision of using schools tests was also made after checking the appropriateness of these tests and confirming that their results will not threaten the internal validity of the research.

In each test, the students were asked to write a narrative about a different topic. The topic chosen in the pretest test was 'Eid Holiday' because it was given after their holidays and all students could easily relate to it. In the second test, students were asked to describe an unforgettable experience. In the third test, the topic was 'Student of the month' in which they had to narrate the story of a student who was chosen as an ideal one because of his good actions inside and outside the school (Appendix B). Students were instructed in the tests to use the simple past. The testing sessions took about 20 minutes each except for the first one which lasted for 15 minutes.

3.4. Data Analysis

Only data pertaining to the target grammatical structure (i.e. past tense) was coded and analyzed. The procedure followed in analyzing qualitative and quantitative data is detailed in the following sections.

3.4.1 Feedback episodes

Adapting Ridder's (2007) Coding- Sequence, learners' past tense errors were first identified in the video recording followed by coding the teacher's feedback and the

students' response (See figure 3.2). Unlike Ridder, the learners' errors, which did not trigger correction, were also transcribed and coded because such data would give more information about the teachers' correcting behavior and whether the avoidance of correction was done intentionally or, as contended by Ellis (2009), because of inconsistency. Moreover, the teachers' correction as well as its absence has its impact on students' behavior who might perceive the latter as confirmation of ill-formed utterances (Chandrasekhar 1999).

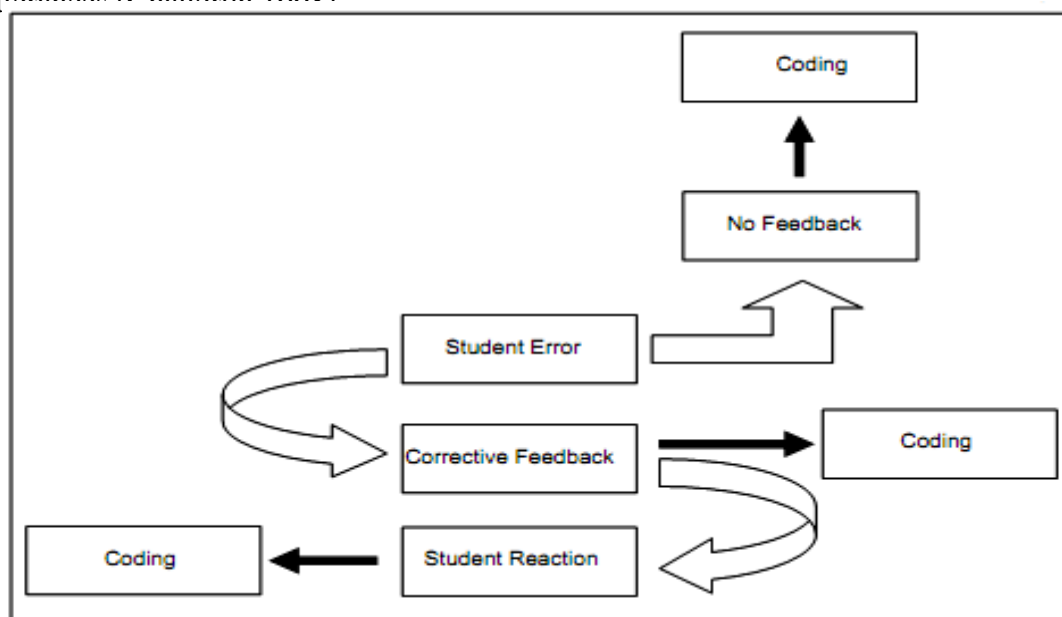


Figure 3.2 Coding-Sequence (adapted from Ridder 2007, p.7)

For identifying the types of feedback given by teachers, Lyster and Ranta's (1997) feedback model was adopted. This model was used in many observational studies (Sahin 2006, Ridder 2007) and is commended for incorporating the learners' responses to feedback types. Ranta's six feedback types were operationalized and exemplified in this study as follows:

1. *Recasts* were the reformulations of students' erroneous utterances without changing their original meaning (Sheen 2007). Similar to Yang's (2008) study, recasts were either partial or full in which a word or phrase is reformulated in the former as opposed to reformulating the whole utterance in the latter.

2. The teacher's provision of the non-target like item after rejecting the erroneous utterance was considered *explicit correction* (Büyübak 2007).

Example 3.1: Recast

S: He is nervous....eh...

T: He was nervous and ...

Example 3.2: Explicit correction

S: Kim and Jim was at McDonalds and when they was there

T: (interrupts)No. They were

3. *Metalinguistic feedback* included the teacher's comments or questions regarding the well formedness of an utterance without providing the correct L2 form (Ellis et al. 2006). On the other hand, questions that invited students to produce the correct past tense form without referring to the rule were considered *elicitations* along with other teacher's attempts to elicit the target-like form, such as, pausing for students to complete an utterance.

Example 3.3: Metalinguistic feedback

S: We turn out the bag

T: What tense should we use here? (Yang 2008, p.160)

Example 3.4: Elicitation

S: Once upon a time, there lives a poor girl

T: Once upon a time there

S: There lived a girl

Example 3.5: Repetition

S: Mrs. Jones travel a lot last year

T: Mrs. Jones *travel* a lot last year?

S: Mrs. Jones travelled a lot last year.

Example 3.6: Clarification request

S: Why does he fly to Korea last year?

T: Pardon?

S: Why did he fly to Korea last year? (ibid, p. 93)

4. As seen in example 3.5, *repetitions* were the moves when the teacher repeated an erroneous utterance with an emphatic stress or change in intonation. Finally, the teacher's questions to clarify an utterance to provoke self-repair (see example 3.6) were identified as *clarification requests* (Loewen and Nabei 2007)

3.4.2 Written tests

Acquisition of English past tense was measured through the ability of learners to use the correct regular and irregular past tense form in the proper context. Since the context in the written test was past narratives which required the use of past simple, the students' suppliance of the correct verb forms was considered an indicator of acquisition. According to Mackey and Gass (2005), this method of measurement in SLA research is known as "Suppliance in Obligatory context" (p232).

The above mentioned criterion was used in marking the written data. That is, the student was granted '1' next to the correct past tense form of the verb. For example, '1' mark was given when the student wrote "I went to visit my family in Al Eid". On the other hand, if the student used the wrong past tense form or another tense or aspect (e.g. past progressive, present perfect) where only past simple should be used, the rater marked '0' next to that verb on the scoring sheet.

As argued by Mourssi (2012), there are seven interlanguage stages which Arab learners pass through in acquiring English past tense. Based on that developmental ladder of acquisition, the researcher postulated that a stage 6 error in the delayed test would still reflect L2 development if the same student was at stage '1' in the test prior to instruction, even though both errors would be marked '0' on the scoring sheet. Accordingly, a table adapted from Mourssi's (ibid) developmental stages was developed to identify the types of students' errors (See Table 3.3) and errors were coded as follows:

- a) Stage 1: The simple present form or the root of the verb was used (e.g. ‘they didn’t feel happy when they see us’)
- b) Stage 2: The – ed rule was overgeneralized to irregular verbs (e.g. ‘the driver seed the accident’)
- c) Stage 3: The verb in simple past was preceded by verb to be (e.g. ‘we were went there at night’)
- d) Stage 4: Subject- verb agreement errors (e.g. ‘we was ready to the trip’)
- e) Stage 5: The past tense form of the verb was used after ‘to’ and ‘not’ (e.g. ‘My dad called the ambulance to came’)
- f) Stage 6: A sub-rule of irregular simple past was overgeneralized (e.g. ‘Her mother brang the food’)

It is worth noting that Mourssi’s (2012) second stage, in which student used misspelled written form (e.g. *cold* instead of *called*), was not used in this research for three reasons. First, the researcher found that students who did this mistake were at a more advanced stage than those who made stage 3 or 4 errors. Second, oral errors in this stage could not be identified. Finally, there was no direct instruction given in classes on the simple past spelling rules during the period of investigation.

| Student | No. of correct past tense forms | No. of wrong past tense forms | | | | | | Total | | Final | % |
|---------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|-------------|-------|---|
| | | Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Stage 3 | Stage 4 | Stage 5 | Stage 6 | Correct forms | Wrong forms | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 3.3 Scoring-Coding Sheet

When scoring the oral and written data, all the verbs that should be in the past simple were underlined. Next, the verbs were marked as previously mentioned and Table 3.3 was used to classify different verb forms. Then, the students' final score was given based on the number of correct items. Finally, the percentage of the final score was calculated (total correct forms/ Total verb forms) to be able to statistically analyze and compare the quantitative data.

3.5 Inter-rater reliability

While coding oral and written data, decisions had to be made regarding how to classify certain pieces of data. To increase the reliability of the coded data, a second rater was asked to code 10% of the oral and written data. As agreed by Mackey (2005), establishing this reliability is crucial regardless of the coding methods used in any research. The second rater had over 16 years of teaching experience with a native-like fluency of English.

Before having the data coded by the second rater, it was necessary to familiarize her with the coding procedures. To this end, a training session was conducted on how to code data. The results of the second raters' coding were then compared to the researcher's and the percentage of agreement was 90%. This is considered ideal according to Potney and Walkins (1993) who argue that 'anything above 75% may be considered 'good', although percentages over 90% are ideal' (cited in Yang 2008, p.116).

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the methodology used in the present study. The study used an exploratory mixed methods design to investigate the effect of feedback on Arab female students' uptake and acquisition of past tense forms. Fourteen hours of classroom interaction were video recorded and stimulated-recall interviews were conducted with eight participants in addition to conducting three testing sessions. The next chapter presents the results of quantitative and qualitative data collection.

Chapter Four

Findings and Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to look into the different corrective feedback types that teachers use in secondary classrooms to correct female Arab students' past tense errors and to explore the effect of this feedback on students' modified output and their L2 acquisition of this grammatical structure.

This chapter presents the findings and the results of quantitative and qualitative data collected during the two-month duration period of the study. It is divided into three sections: classroom feedback episodes, interviews, and test results. In the first section, the distribution and frequency of teachers' feedback types and the corresponding students' uptake in both classes are analyzed and compared. Section two summarizes qualitative data from the stimulated-recall interviews with students and teachers. The last section presents the results of written tests administered prior to, after, and three weeks after receiving feedback.

4.1 Classroom feedback episodes

This section presents the analysis of transcribed feedback episodes that were found in fourteen videotaped lessons (50 minutes each) in two intact grade 11 classrooms. The reason for presenting these results is to explore the teacher's correction behavior and the corresponding repair moves in both classes.

4.1.1 Feedback types

With regard to the oral corrective feedback that NNS teachers give in an Arab EFL context, the results show that the participating teachers corrected more than two thirds of the students' past tense errors using a variety of feedback types. Table 4.1 shows the distribution of corrective feedback types found in both classrooms.

| Students' Errors | | | Teacher's Feedback Types | | | | | |
|------------------|---------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| | No. of errors | No. of corrected errors | Metalinguistic Feedback | Elicitation | Recast | Explicit correction | Repetition | Clarification request |
| T1 | 51 | 26 | 8 (27.6%) | 3 (10.3%) | 12 (41.4%) | 5 (17.2%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (3.5%) |
| T2 | 46 | 44 | 26 (59.1%) | 14 (31.8%) | 2 (4.5%) | 1 (2.3%) | 1 (2.3%) | 0 (0%) |
| Total | 97 | 70 (72%) | 34 (46.6%) | 17 (23.3%) | 14 (19.1%) | 6 (8.2%) | 1 (1.4%) | 1 (1.4%) |

Table 4.1 Identification and distribution of errors and feedback types

As shown in the above table, in 250 minutes of classroom recordings, students erred 97 times and 72% of these errors were corrected. Also, the number of errors that students made in each class was comparable. However, T1 attempted to correct only half of these erroneous utterances (50.9%) whereas 95.6% of students' errors in the other class were corrected by T2. This could possibly be due to the fact that most of the activities that took place in T1's lessons focused on students' oral production and the teacher might not have wanted to interrupt unless needed. On the other hand, even though she had the same lesson plans, T2 gave more time for writing activities, listening to students reading their written work and correcting their errors which was at the expense of oral production. It is worth mentioning that 70% of T2's corrective feedback moves were given to groups or individuals and not heard by the other students. This will be further discussed in [4.2] where teachers commented in the interviews on their correction techniques and why they chose to ignore some errors.

As for the teachers' feedback moves, 73 moves were identified. This number is slightly higher than the number of corrected errors (n=70) because, in some cases, the teachers needed to give more than one type of feedback to help students repair the same error. The three most frequently used corrective feedback types by the participating teachers were metalinguistic feedback (46.6%), elicitation (23.3%), and recasts (19.1%). These feedback types actually accounted for 89% of the total feedback moves. The percentages of the other three feedback types (i.e. explicit correction, repetition, and

clarification request) in the database were 8.2%, 1.4%, and 1.4% respectively. The above mentioned feedback types will be discussed in detail in the following subsections.

4.1.1.1 Metalinguistic Feedback

In 46.6% of the corrective feedback moves, the teachers gave comments or asked questions related to the well-formedness of an utterance. They tried to raise the students' metalinguistic awareness by drawing their attention to the nature of the error. As shown in Extract 1, the teacher waited until the student finished the summary of her story and then commented on the use of wrong past tense forms before listening to another student.

Extract 1:

- | | | |
|------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| S1: | ...Suzanne then take the baby to the station and leave him to bring a ticket | |
| T: | Take care of your tense...Past tense verbs | Metalinguistic Feedback |
| T: | (to another student) What about you? | No Uptake, Topic continuation |

Asking peers questions about students' erroneous utterances such as 'what is wrong with this sentence?' or 'Who can tell me what the mistake here is?' was another form of metalinguistic feedback that indicated an error was made and encouraged students to identify and correct it as can be seen in Extract 2.

Extract 2:

- | | | |
|------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| S1: | He ran after him and then catch the thief... | |
| T: | (to the whole class) Any mistake in Zainab's story? | Metalinguistic Feedback |
| S2: | She should say 'caught' not 'catch' | Successful Uptake, Peer Repair |
| T: | Yes | |

Although metalinguistic feedback came on top of the list of feedback types used in classes, it was more frequently used by T2 (59% of her total feedback moves) than by T1 (27.6%) whose recasts topped her list with 41.4% of feedback moves. Furthermore, T1 used metalinguistic feedback only in grammar lessons while giving feedback on

students' written work whereas T2 used it extensively in all of her lessons. Figure 4.1 visualizes this contrast in the distribution of metalinguistic feedback as well as other feedback types in T1 and T2's classes.

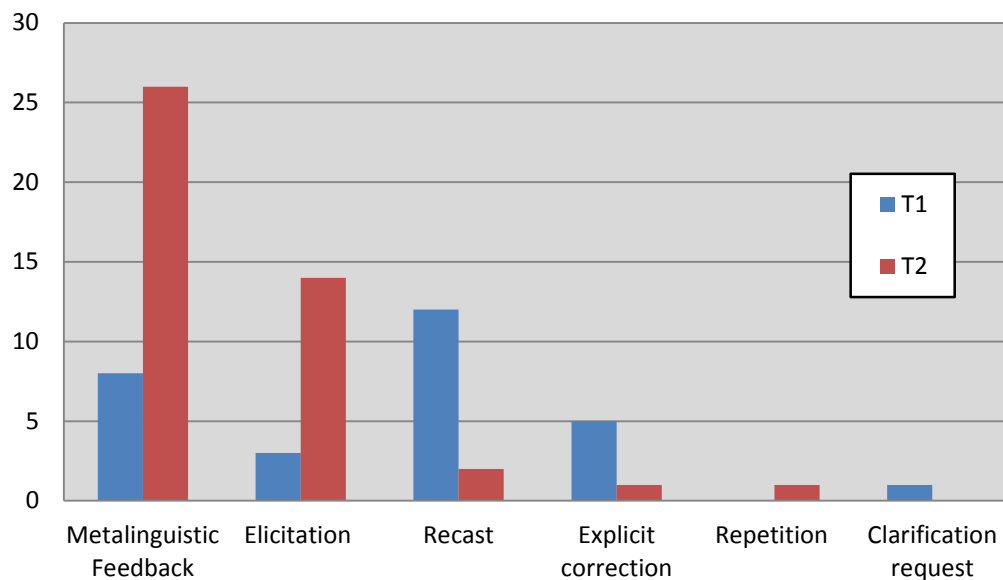


Figure 4.1 Distribution of feedback types in T1 and T2 classes

4.1.1.2 Elicitation

Elicitations (23.3%) were found to be the second frequently used feedback type in which teachers tried to elicit the correct response from students. Similar to metalinguistic feedback, most of the elicitations were observed in T2's class (82.3% of total elicitations). Extract 3 demonstrates an example of elicitation in which the teacher repeated the student's utterance and paused with a rising intonation before the error to allow that student to correct the past tense error. Eliciting self-correction also took the form of questions in which the teacher indirectly asked students to reformulate their utterances as seen in Extract 4.

Extract 3:

- S:** This thief was going to stole the paint.
T: Ah! So he was a thief and wanted to...
S: Stole
T: Steal

Elicitation
Unsuccessful Uptake, Same error
Explicit Correction

Extract 4:

- S:** The police send message on twitter and people see the car.
- T:** The police sent a message on Facebook and twitter and then what happened? **Recast**
Elicitation
- S:** He saved the baby **No Uptake, Topic Continuation**

4.1.1.3 Recasts

In 19.1% of the corrective feedback moves, teachers reformulated students' erroneous utterances without changing their original meaning and without explicitly indicating there was an error. For instance, as seen in Extract 5, the student used the base form of the verb 'take' and then the teacher repeated the utterance after using the correct past tense form 'took'. Extract 6 is an example of a partial recast in which the teacher repeated a couple of words in an attempt to make the recast more obvious.

Extract 5:

- S:** Then the police came and take the baby.
- T:** The police took the baby to his parents.. **Recast**
- S:** This is the last event **No Uptake, Topic Continuation**

Extract 6:

- S:** Sheikh Zayed help the peope
- T:** He helped **Recast (Partial)**
- S:** Many countries **No Uptake, Topic Continuation**

In addition to partial recasts, there were also two instances in which teachers used paralinguistic features (e.g. emphatic stress, rising intonation or gestures) to draw the attention of students to the reformulated non-target-like items. Interestingly, only those enhanced recasts were the ones followed by successful uptake (See Extract 7).

Extract 7:

- S: Jim and Kim was at McDonalds and while they was there
- T: (interrupts) they **were** **Recast** (with emphatic stress and gesture)
- S: They were there, the juice fell... **Successful Uptake, Repetition**

Indeed, there is a discrepancy between the number of recasts used by T1 and T2 in which the former used 12 recasts whereas the latter had only 2 recast feedback moves. The reason for that difference can be, as previously mentioned, due to the nature of activities in which the teachers gave feedback.

4.1.1.4 Explicit correction

The fourth most frequently used feedback type is explicit correction which was found in 6 feedback episodes. In few episodes, explicit correction followed metalinguistic feedback in which the teacher provided the correct L2 form after explaining the nature of the error. However, in Extract 8, the teacher drew the students' attention to the error she made by repeating it before giving her the correct verb tense form. Similar to previous types of feedback, the participating teachers did not use equal number of explicit correction. T2 avoided to use that feedback type except once.

Extract 8:

- S: We were walking when we discovered we are lost in the mountain
- T: Very nice story but you said 'we are'. It **Explicit Correction**
should be 'we were'.
- S: (nods) **Unsuccessful Uptake, Acknowledgement**

4.1.1.5 Clarification request

A clarification request was used only once (1.4%) in this study by T1. Unlike other feedback types, this feedback was used when the teacher had comprehensibility problems. In Extract 9, the student's utterance was incomprehensible so the teacher asked the student to repeat it which she did without repair.

Extract 9:

- S: He makes X things.
 T: Again please.
 S: He makes many things
 T: He **made**

Clarification Request
Unsuccessful Uptake, Same error
Recast

4.1.1.6 Repetition

Similar to clarification requests, repetition occurred only once in one of T2's lessons. In its only occurrence, as illustrated in Extract 10, the teacher repeated the student's wrong past tense form and then gave a metalinguistic clue in which she reminded the student of the rule written on the board.

Extract 10:

- S: She dance in the party.
 T: She dance! Look at the board (points to the rule) **Repetition, Metalinguistic Feedback**
 S: (looked at the board)____ **Unsuccessful Uptake, Hesitation**
 T: When we have a verb, the past form of the verb will be... **Metalinguistic Feedback**
 S: danced **Successful Uptake, Self-Repair**

4.1.2 Student uptake

Three types of learners' reaction in response to teachers' corrective feedback were identified in this study: successful uptake, unsuccessful uptake, and no uptake. The distribution of these different types of uptake in both classes is presented in Table 4.2.

| | Teacher Feedback | Student Uptake | | |
|--------------|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| | No. of corrective moves | Successful Uptake | Unsuccessful Uptake | No Uptake |
| T1 | 29 | 11 (38%) | 5 (17.2%) | 13 (44.8%) |
| T2 | 44 | 21 (47.7%) | 19 (43.2%) | 4 (9.1%) |
| Total | 73 | 32 (43.8%) | 24 (32.9%) | 17 (23.3%) |

Table 4.2 Distribution of uptake types following corrective feedback

As shown in the above table, the students reacted to 56 out of 73 corrective moves in which they tried to repair their errors. In over half of these students' turns ($n=32$), errors were successfully repaired by the student who erred or one of her peers; yet, failure to correct errors by repeating the same error, hesitating, or correcting another item constituted 32.9% of students' uptake. The remaining 17 turns (23.3%) showed no signs of uptake, just topic continuation initiated by either the teacher or the students.

4.1.3 Feedback-uptake relationship

Studying the distribution of the aforementioned uptake moves in relation to the six feedback types to which they responded yielded significant results with regard to the impact of each feedback type on triggering learner uptake (See Figure 4.2).

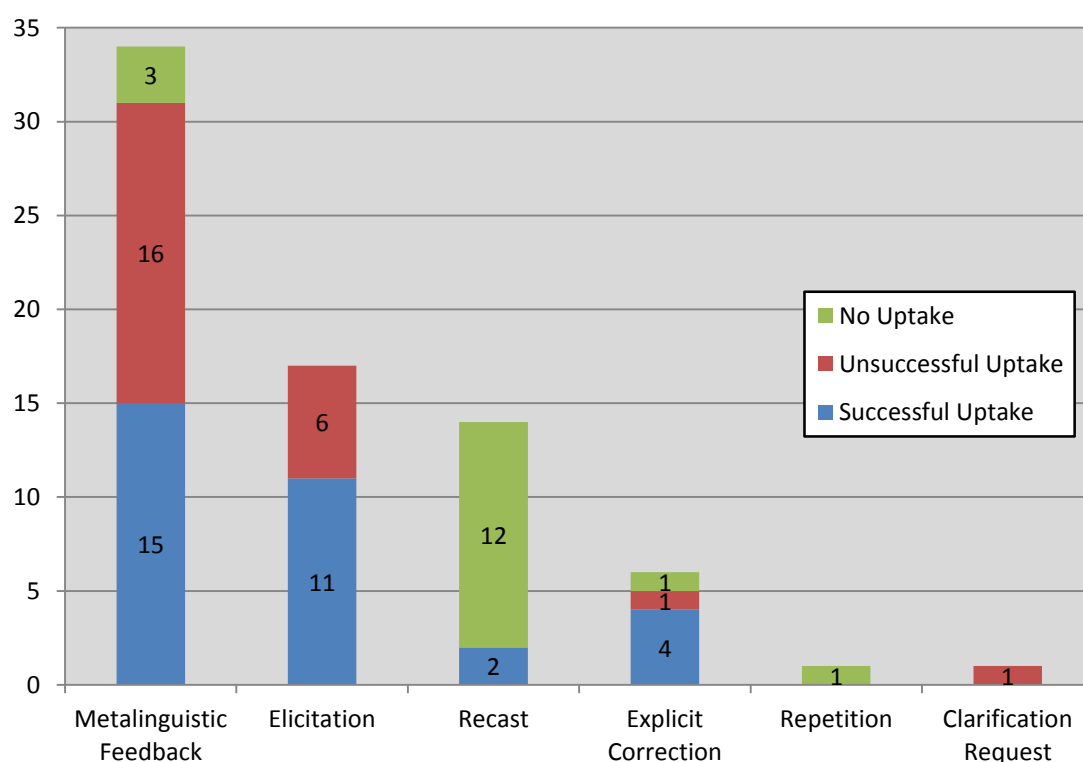


Figure 4.2 Distribution of uptake moves to different feedback types

The feedback type that was the least noticed by learners is *Recast*. Out of 14 recasts, students successfully repaired only 2 of their errors and unnoticed the remaining 12 corrective feedback moves. It is worth mentioning that the *Successful Uptake* moves followed only recasts which were enhanced by intonation and/or gestures and that none

of the other normal recasts provoked learner modified output (Refer to Extract 7). The opposite was observed with *Elicitation* in which students reacted all the time by either correcting or failing to repair errors with their successful moves (64.7%) outnumbering the unsuccessful attempts (35.3%). A slightly similar percentage of *Successful Uptake* moves (66.6%) was also achieved by *Explicit Correction* which had only one *Unsuccessful* and another *No Uptake* move.

Metalinguistic Feedback, as the most frequently used feedback type, triggered almost equal number of student successful and unsuccessful moves (See Figure 4.2) and very few topic continuation moves (8.8%). Finally, *Repetition* and *Clarification Requests* failed to trigger any error repair.

After transcribing the feedback episodes and analyzing the distribution of feedback types and the corresponding students' uptake, responses of participants in the stimulated-recall interviews were analyzed to further investigate the effect of feedback on L2 learning.

4.2 Individual stimulated-recall interviews

Interviews were conducted with four high achieving students and another four low achievers to study the effectiveness of corrective feedback on different learners. Teachers (T1 and T2) were also interviewed to seek interpretation of their corrective behavior in class and their preference for which feedback type.

4.2.1 Students' interviews

During the interviews, the students were asked to watch and comment on three to four feedback episodes. The purpose of these questions was to check the learners' noticing of corrective feedback whether as recipients or auditors and their introspection about the role of feedback on their learning. In some cases, the researcher had to ask students more questions to direct their attention to the correction taking place.

4.2.1.1 T1 students

Since T1 used recasts more than any other type of feedback, students in her class were first asked to comment on corrective episodes with that feedback type. Even though

they were at different proficiency levels, the four students failed to notice the gap between the student's erroneous utterance and the teacher's reformulated response from the first time. One of the more able students watched the video recording more than once before she discovered the correction made (Appendix C: Students A interview).

After watching the first episode several times, the low achievers' responses were focused on the content of the utterances (e.g. 'the teacher said he got the paint') rather than the corrected form (i.e. 'got' instead of 'get') (Appendix C: Student B Interview). Moreover, Student C, who was the weakest in the class, was not able to locate the error even after being told that there was one and her response was off-target ('eating' instead of 'they was'). Thus, she was not shown other recasts because of her difficulty to identify them. However, after directing their attention to the teacher's corrective behavior, the other three students were able to identify recasts in the second episode from the first time (See Extract 11).

Extract 11

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Interviewer | (Plays lesson2- Episode2) and here? |
| Student B | Asma say 'he don't see the money' and Ms Nazhat she correct she say 'he didn't see the money' |
| Interviewer | How did she correct her? |
| Student B | Only told her |
| Interviewer | She told her this is a mistake? |
| Student B | No, she only correct by saying it again |

As for the other corrective feedback moves, Students A, B and D were able to identify them and explain their nature. For example, Student A described *metalinguistic feedback* as "giv[ing] attention to the tense they have to use" whereas Student B said it was when "the teacher explained the mistake...then she gave the rule". Student D was even able to recognize the difference between *recasts* and *explicit correction* where "in the second one she pointed by her hand to tell that there [was] a mistake". Student C, who only watched recasts and metalinguistic feedback, was able to identify the latter from the first time describing it in her L1 as "giving information about the simple past".

Furthermore, they unanimously agreed on the importance of oral correction on their learning. Student B further explained this saying that “if we make a mistake and no one corrects us we will always make this mistake”. As for their preference for a particular type of feedback, neither of them favored recasts. Student A explicitly showed her resentment of that feedback type stating that she did not like “repeating because maybe the girl will not know”. At the same time, her favoritism to explicit feedback was clear when she emphasized that the teacher “had to tell [her] if it is ok or not, and then she has to tell [her] the right answer”. Extract 12 shows one student’s justification for preferring metalinguistic feedback.

Extract 12

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Student B | When she writes the rule on the board because like this I learn more. If she says for us only this time we will know but when she writes on the board we will write in our notebook and learn more. |
|------------------|---|

The responses of T1’s students confirm the results of the analysis of observed data in which recasts were the least feedback type to be followed by repair since their corrective nature was ambiguous for them as can be seen in their interviews. In contrast, prompts, which were easily identified and favored by the interviewees, were the feedback types that provoked higher repair in the classroom.

4.2.1.2 T2 students

The interviews with T2’s students yielded different results from those with T1’s with regards to noticing the frequently used feedback type in class. All of T2’s students were able to identify the corrective nature of the teacher’s metalinguistic cues from the first time. They also had no difficulty recognizing elicitation or explicit correction. Student E was even able to identify the purpose of elicitation mentioning that the teacher “asked...a question and this question will lead [the student] to check her answer” (Appendix C: Student E Interview). On the other hand, recasts were unnoticed by both low and high achievers whether as auditors or recipients of feedback. As seen in Extract 13, the high achiever had to watch the Episode twice and was asked questions to direct

her attention to the type of feedback given to her peer. The same was found with Student F who was the recipient of recast (Appendix C: Student F Interview).

Extract 13

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Interviewer | (plays an Episode with recast) And here? |
| Student E | She just say 'go on' to continue her answer. |
| Interviewer | Did she correct anything? |
| Student E | No |
| Interviewer | She repeated it in the same way? |
| Student E | Yes |
| Student E | (listens again) Ah..I didn't hear her.. so the teacher correct for her |

Similar to T1's students, T2's interviewees expected the teacher to correct their mistakes. They also disliked receiving recasts because, as explained by Student E, the teacher was "just repeating without saying it was wrong and may be [students] will not listen" which made it difficult for them to notice the errors. They all favored elicitations in the form of asking questions explaining that this technique made them "think what the right answer [was]".

In conclusion, T1 and T2's interviewed students noticed explicit rather than implicit feedback (frequently used in the form of recasts). Such noticing of the teachers' corrective moves might justify the increased student-generated repair that followed those feedback types. In the next section, the teachers' explanation of their corrective behaviour will be discussed.

4.2.2 Teachers' interviews

With regards to their correction techniques, both teachers mentioned that they varied according to the level of their students (Appendix D). T1 reported that with high achievers "giving a note [was] enough" (T1 interview, lines 16-17) which she further explained by asking questions like "didn't you forget something?" (line 21). When they failed to correct their erroneous utterances, she would then explicitly correct the error. However, with low achievers, T1 usually "explain[ed] the rule again" and in some cases

she elicited the correct answer “by showing them a correct example and ask[ing] them to compare it with their wrong sentence” (lines 27-28). Similarly, T2 mentioned the need to draw the low achievers’ attention to the rule which she usually did before eliciting the answer by “giving them the choice” between two forms (T2 interview, lines 7-8).

With regards to recasts, T1 grounded her frequent use of this feedback type on several reasons: first, the level of students; that is, high achievers knew the correct answer and did not need to be reminded of the rule; second, the aim of the task and whether fluency or accuracy was targeted; and finally, the focus in the lesson since recasts were used in speaking and writing lessons whereas in grammar and writing lessons the rule was mentioned. On the other hand, T2 mentioned that she erroneously used this feedback type and that she did not like it because students were not involved in the learning process (See Extract 14). As for her use of explicit correction, T2 explained that it was due to the lack of time and not to interrupt the student while presenting her story.

Extract 14

| | |
|-----------|--|
| T2 | No. I don’t like this way of correction (recasts) and if I used it here with one low achiever it was by mistake because even weak students have to be involved and apply the rule because in the exam no one will help them. |
|-----------|--|

As aforementioned, T2 favored getting the students involved in the correction while T1 believed that the learning situation stipulated which feedback type to be used. It is clear that the difference found in the distribution of feedback types between the two classrooms is due to the different beliefs both teachers had about error correction.

4.3 Analysis of quantitative data

This section discusses the analysis of test results with regards to the use of simple past tense forms (regular and irregular) of each class in the written test across testing times (i.e. pre-test, post test, and delayed test). It also descriptively analyzes the differences in each class interlanguage stages of past tense acquisition from one test to the other.

4.3.1 Results of the written tests

In analyzing the written test results, one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to see whether the students' scores differed significantly across testing times. The ANOVA results are presented in the following order: first, the overall use of past tense forms; and second, the use of regular and irregular past tense forms. Descriptive as well as inferential statistics from the post hoc tests are also mentioned.

4.3.1.1 Overall past tense forms

The descriptive statistics, which include the mean and standard deviation of each group's scores in the three tests, are displayed in Table 4.3. The table shows that the scores of each group in the posttest and delayed test were better than those in the pretest; yet, the mean of the posttest results was higher than the delayed test in both classes.

| Classes | Pretest | | Posttest | | Delayed Test | |
|-----------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
| T1 class (n=25) | 65.29 | 15.00 | 77.65 | 16.19 | 69.50 | 14.23 |
| T2 class (n=23) | 57.00 | 35.25 | 74.45 | 21.59 | 59.22 | 26.06 |

Table 4.3 Class means and standard deviations on the use of past tense forms

In addition to the improvement in scores compared to the pretest, T1's class results were further analyzed by ANOVA which showed a statistically significant difference between their scores in the three tests ($F(2,60)=3.522$, $p<.05$). Post hoc Scheffe multiple comparisons indicated that only the results in the posttest significantly differed from those in the pretest ($p<.05$). On the other hand, ANOVA analysis revealed no significant difference between the means of T2's class scores across time ($F(2,52)=2.217$, $p>.05$) (See Table E1 and Table E2 in Appendix E).

Figure 4.3 also graphically presents the means of test results for each group at different times. As shown in this graph, T1's class outperformed T2's class in the pretest. Such

difference in performance can still be seen in the posttest as well as in the delayed test where T1's class performed better. However, no statistically significant difference was found between the two classes in any of the three tests.

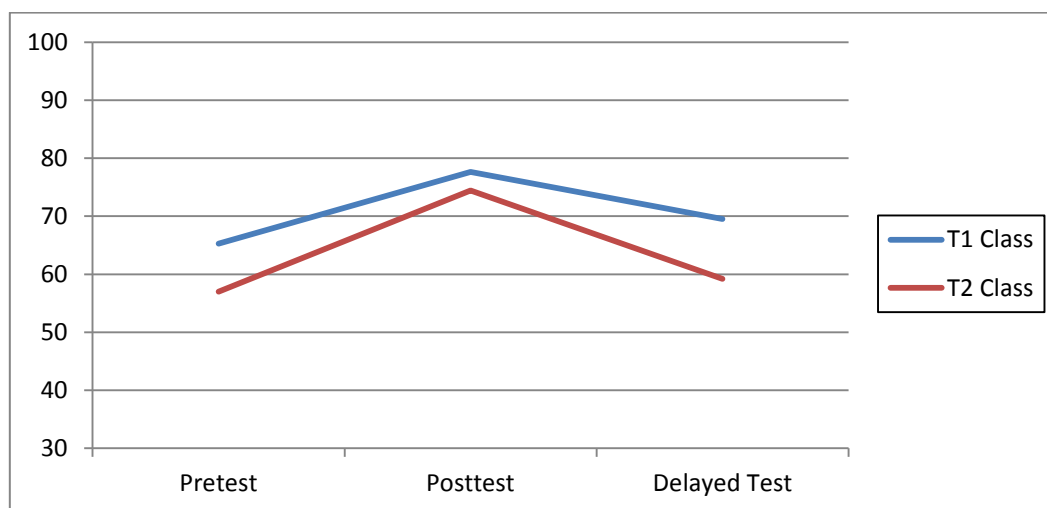


Figure 4.3 Class means on the use of past tense forms

4.3.1.2 Regular past tense forms

As shown in Table 4.4 and Figure 4.4, the students' accuracy rate in using regular past tense forms increased from the pretest to the posttest and from the posttest to the delayed test. It can be seen that even though T1 class outperformed T2 class in the pretest, the latter's performance improved dramatically in the posttest surpassing the former's performance. Although T2 class accuracy rate slightly improved in the delayed test, it was still higher than T1 class.

| Classes | Pretest | | Posttest | | Delayed Test | |
|------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
| T1 class (n=25) | 16.61 | 14.83 | 22.41 | 17.06 | 26.82 | 13.14 |
| T2 class (n=23) | 10.38 | 15.31 | 25.21 | 16.08 | 25.81 | 19.48 |

Table 4.4 Class means and standard deviations on the use of regular past tense forms

Additionally, ANOVA results confirmed that there was a statistically significant difference between T2 class scores in the three tests ($F(2,60)=5.004$, $p<.05$). Post hoc

Scheffe multiple comparisons indicated that there was a significant difference between the pretest and posttest ($p < .05$) and the pretest and the delayed test ($p < .05$). However, there was no significant difference between the posttest and the delayed test ($p > .05$). As for T1's class, ANOVA analysis revealed no significant difference between the class means across time ($F(2,65)=2.501$, $p > .05$) (See Table E3 and Table E4 in Appendix E).

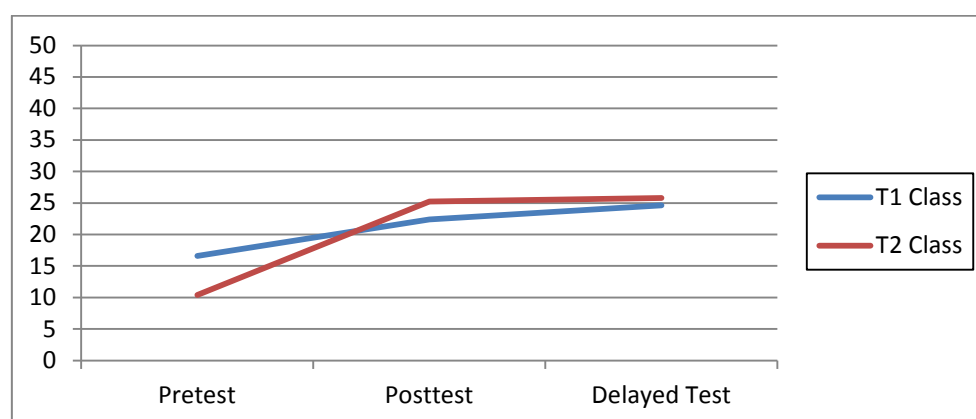


Figure 4.4 Class means on the use of regular past tense forms

4.3.1.3 Irregular past tense forms

Table 4.5 shows the mean and standard deviation of the two classes' scores in the use of irregular past tense verbs in the three tests. Similar to the regular verb results, both classes improved their performance from the pretest to the posttest. Nevertheless, this improvement was less substantial compared to their regular verb results. Moreover, the two classes failed to maintain this gain in the delayed test. These results were further substantiated by the ANOVA analysis which showed no significant difference between the three test scores of T1 class ($F(2,64)=.264$, $p > .05$) and T2 class ($F(2,60)=.086$, $p > .05$).

| Classes | Pretest | | Posttest | | Delayed Test | |
|-----------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
| T1 class (n=25) | 50.18 | 25.12 | 54.08 | 18.67 | 50.90 | 12.02 |
| T2 class (n=23) | 38.66 | 33.38 | 41.75 | 18.06 | 40.63 | 17.42 |

Table 4.5 Class means and standard deviations on the use of irregular past tense forms

The pattern of the performance of the two classes in the use of irregular past tense forms is also graphically presented in Figure 4.5. The graph shows that T1 class outperformed T2 class in the pretest and maintained this increase in results in the posttest. Interestingly, the decrease in T1 class mean scores in the delayed test was higher than that in T2 class as can be seen in the graph in which the decrease in the latter is demonstrated by almost a flat line.

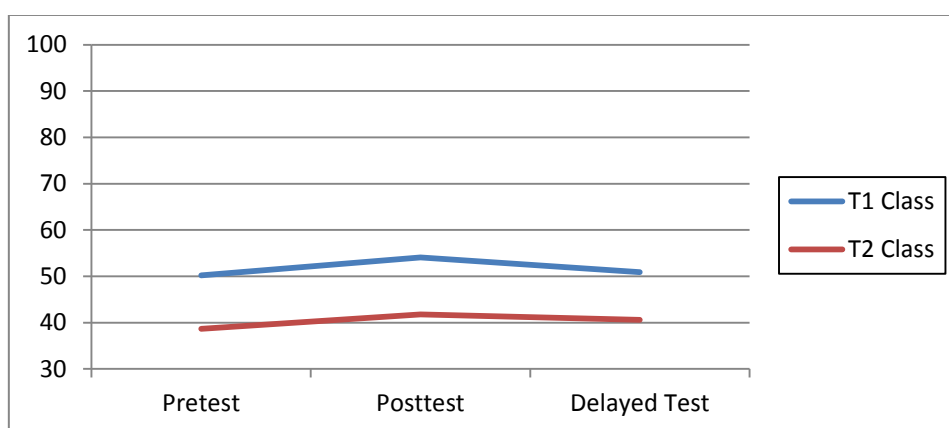


Figure 4.5 Class means on the use of irregular past tense forms

4.3.2 Past tense interlanguage stages

The descriptive analysis of the written test incorporated the categorization of students' past tense errors into six stages which were adapted from Mourssi's (2012) interlanguage stages of past tense acquisition for Arab learners (Refer to [3.2.4] for a detailed description).

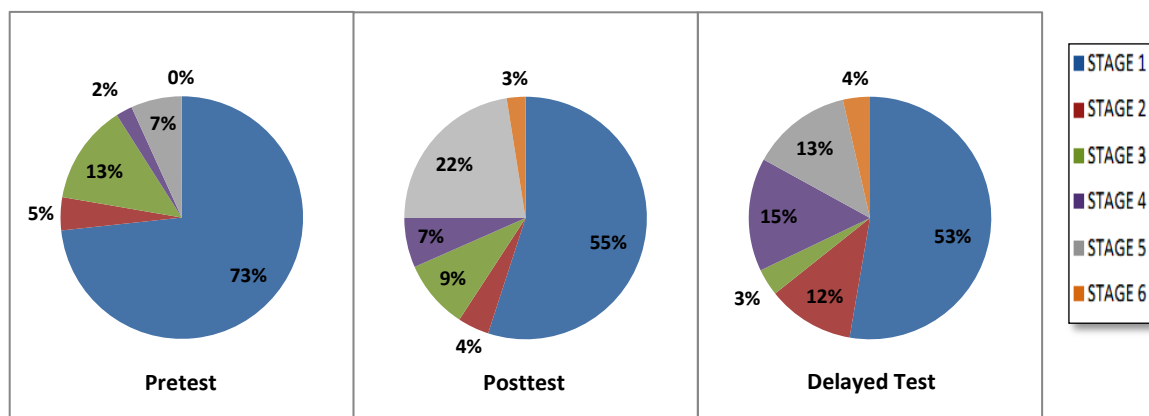


Figure 4.6 T1 Class past tense interlanguage stages across testing times

As can be seen in Figure 4.6, the majority of students' errors in T1's class (73%) in the pretest were in the first stage in which they used the root or the present form of the verb. However, this percentage decreased in the posttest to 55%. A slight decrease was also observed in the delayed test (53%). With regard to stage 2 errors, they reduced from 5% in the pretest to 4% in the posttest and then increased to 12% in the delayed test. Moreover, the students' errors in stage 3 reduced across different timings (13%, 9%, and 3% respectively). As for the other interlanguage stages (i.e. stages 4, 5 and 6), a substantial increase can be seen in the posttest, especially in stage 5, which decreased from 22% to 13% in the delayed test. However, more errors were identified in stages 4 and 6 in the delayed test compared to their counterpart in the posttest.

Similar to the development that T1's class showed with regards to the reduction of stage 1 errors across testing times, the percentage of these errors reduced in T2's class from 83% in the pretest to 67% in the posttest and 57% in the delayed test. Similar findings to T1's class were also seen in stage 2 errors that reduced from 7% in the pretest to 5% in the posttest and then increased to 10% in the third test. The number of errors in the other late stages considerably increased in the posttest in comparison to the pretest and continued to rise in the delayed test with the exception of stage 5 and 6 errors which slightly decreased in the last test.

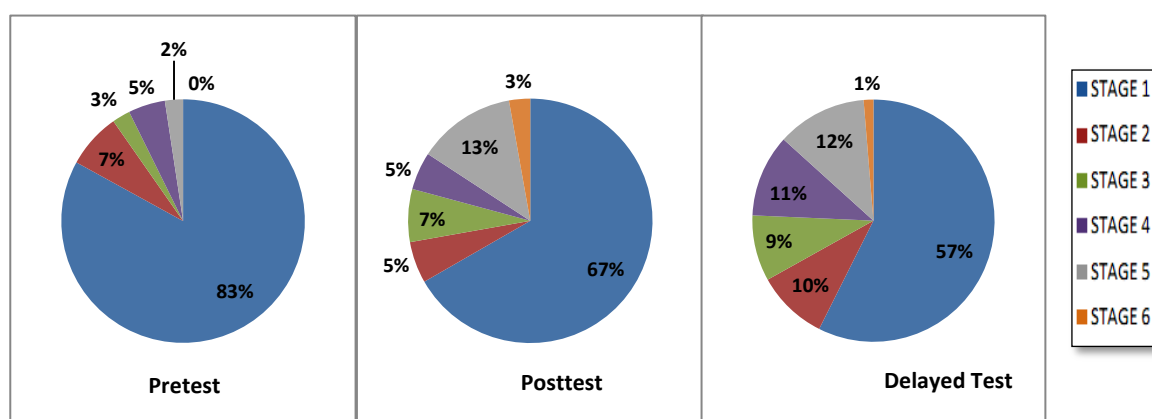


Figure 4.7 T2 Class past tense interlanguage stages across testing times

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the present study from three different perspectives: video recorded lessons, students and teachers' interviews and written tests. The overall results show that a higher rate of successful uptake followed prompts and that students' test scores and accuracy in the use of regular and irregular past tense increased after receiving feedback. The next chapter discusses the above results in light of previous research findings and identifies the limitations of this study.

Chapter Five

Discussion

Introduction

The previous chapter presented an analysis of qualitative and quantitative data collected in the present study. This chapter discusses these findings in relation to the research questions while taking into account the findings of previous research on oral corrective feedback. It also points out the limitations of this research.

5.1 Findings in relation to research questions

5.1.1 Feedback types

Research Question 1: What are the types of corrective feedback that teachers use to correct English past tense errors of Arab female students in a secondary school?

The first aim of this study was to look at the types of corrective feedback moves that teachers use in a secondary school in the UAE to correct female students' past tense errors. Although some of its findings are consistent with those of other studies (Sahin 2006, Ridder 2007), the number of corrective moves identified in this study are relatively small ($n=73$) compared to others because of factors, such as, the duration of the study, the number and length of recorded lessons, and the focus in each lesson. In Sahin's (2006) study, 190 feedback turns addressing grammatical errors were identified in grammar lessons in which the focus was on form whereas in the present study feedback was observed in form-focused as well as meaning-oriented lessons. Nevertheless, teachers in this study corrected a large number of students' errors (72%) compared to 62% of corrected errors in Lyster and Ranta's (1997). This can also be due to the difference in contextual setting where meaning-oriented French immersion classes were observed in the latter and less focus was given to accuracy.

With regards to the distribution and frequency of feedback types, the data in the present study shows that, in both classes, prompts including metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, repetition and clarification requests (72.2%) outnumber recasts and explicit correction (27.3%). Similar findings are reported by Ridder (2007) who has found that teachers

preferred encouraging student-generated repair in 77% of their corrective turns. Moreover, using recasts infrequently with intermediate students is consistent with the findings of Gitsaki and Althobaiti's (2010) in which recasting was the third frequently used feedback type as opposed to previous studies in which recasting topped the list of feedback types used in ESL/EFL classrooms (Lyster and Ranta 1997, Suzuki 2004, Tsang 2004, Sahin 2006). In addition, explicit correction was among the least used feedback types by both teachers which substantiates other research findings (Panova and Lyster 2002, Suzuki 2004, Sahin 2006). In contrast, Gitsaki and Althobaiti (2010) have revealed that explicit correction was the most frequently used feedback in ESL classrooms in Australia. The difference in classroom setting (ESL versus EFL) and the participants' age (Year 11 students versus adults) between Gitsaki's study and the present study calls for more studies to investigate the effect of these factors on the occurrence of feedback types. A comparison of the distribution of feedback types in different studies including the present research can be seen in Table 5.1.

The teachers' perception of learners, as mentioned in their interviews, was an influential factor that affected their choice of feedback types since they both used more explicit feedback including metalinguistic feedback with low achievers as opposed to implicit feedback, such as, recasting with the high achievers, a finding that is similar to Yoshida's (2008). However, inconsistent results are still found with regard to the frequency of feedback types used in both classes. As it was observed, T1 used recasts more than prompts which she explained in the interview because of the different focus in each lesson. In her reading and speaking lessons the focus was on fluency as opposed to the other three writing and grammar lessons which targeted accuracy of form. This is consistent with Long's (2007) claim that recasts are used more when the focus is on meaning. The influential effect of the learning situation on the use of feedback types is also paralleled in Ellis et al.'s (2006). Moreover, T1's distinguishing between spoken and written errors, in which the latter received primacy for correction, is in accordance with Eltantawi's (2012) findings which show that university instructors ignore speaking errors of Arabic speaking students as long as they do not affect their writing. On the other hand, T2's explanation of her extensive use of feedback that triggered students' self-correction because increased students' involvement and her use of recasts because of time constraints are similar to the responses of teachers in Yoshida's (2008). Indeed,

differences in teaching philosophies can be seen as one of the factors affecting the distribution of feedback types in both classes.

| Study | Setting | Participants' Age | Teacher's Feedback Types | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------|--------|---------------------|------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| | | | Metalinguistic Feedback | Elicitation | Recast | Explicit correction | Repetition | Clarification request | Others |
| Lyster & Ranta (1997) | ESL (French Immersion) | 12-13 | 8% | 14% | 55% | 7% | 5% | 11% | |
| Panova & Lyster (2002) | ESL (Montreal) | 17-55 | 5% | 4% | 55% | 2% | 1% | 11% | 22% (Translation) |
| Suzuki (2004) | ESL (New York) | 20-50 | 1% | 5% | 60% | 2% | 2% | 30% | |
| Tsang (2004) | EFL (Hong Kong) | 12-17 | 12% | 4% | 48% | 14% | 14% | 9% | |
| Sahin (2006) | EFL (Turkey) | 17-21 | 22% | 24% | 35.7% | 5.2% | 1.5% | 11% | |
| Ridder (2007) | EFL (Germany) | Year 10 | Not observed | 40.3% | 8% | 15.1% | 8% | 28.8% | |
| Gitsaki & Althobati (2010) | ESL (Australia) | 17-39 | 21% | 5% | 16% | 29% | 3% | 21% | 5% (model-ing) |
| The present study | EFL (UAE) | 15-17 | 46.6% | 23.3% | 19.1% | 8.2% | 1.4% | 1.4% | |

Table 5.1 Distribution and frequencies of feedback types in different studies

5.1.2 Effect of feedback on uptake and acquisition

Research Question 2: What is the effect of feedback on students' uptake and acquisition of English past tense?

5.1.2.1 Feedback in relation to uptake

With reference to uptake, the study shows that the feedback type that frequently led to successful uptake was elicitation which is also reported by Sahin (2006) as the feedback that was followed by the highest student repair. However, this feedback led to a higher rate of successful uptake in the present study than in Sahin's (64.7% and 54.7% respectively). This is likely due to the nature of elicitations used in this study because in some of their CF turns

teachers gave students options to choose from, which might have made it easier for them to produce the correct L2 form and, thus, raised the number of correct responses following elicitations. This finding also confirms Kartchava's (2012) claim of the effectiveness of feedback that pushes learners to self-correct and is combined with L2 exemplars. Another feedback type that was successful in pushing students to produce modified output was metalinguistic feedback which was followed by 44% of successful uptake. This finding is in agreement with Lochtmann's (2002) study in which 47% of the metalinguistic feedback resulted in successful uptake.

Consistent with previous research findings (Panova and Lyster 2002, Sahin 2006, Ridder 2007), recasts were not effective in leading to successful uptake. Even though other studies have found the opposite (Sheen 2004, Gitsaki and Althobaiti 2010), the fact that recasts were used by T1 in meaning-based lessons rendered them confirmations of meaning for learners. Another finding that is noteworthy is that successful uptake that followed 14% of recasts in this study was only found with enhanced recasts (i.e. recasts associated with gestures or rising intonation). This sheds light on the significance of saliency of recasts and gives support to the findings of laboratory studies which looked at feedback in controlled settings and acknowledged the role of recasts in L2 development (Leeman 2003, Nassaji 2009, Lyster and Izquierdo 2010). Finally, the fact that recasts were the least noticeable by corrected learners, as well as their peers, and that low achievers had more difficulty noticing recasts substantiates the findings of other studies which described recasts as the least successful feedback type and showed that high achievers, whether as corrected learners or auditors, were better able to notice recasts than low achievers (Havranek 2001, Philp 2003, Trofimovich et al. 2007).

Overall, 77% of the teachers' corrective moves in this study were followed by uptake in which students successfully repaired 43% of the targeted errors. Almost similar findings are reported by Sahin (2006) who also observed feedback in EFL classrooms and found that 74% of the corrective moves resulted in uptake and that students repaired 38.6% of their errors. In contrast, in Gitsaki and Althobaiti's (2010) study, students were able to correct 62.8% of their errors. Even though the ability of students to repair about two thirds of their errors raises many questions about the effectiveness of feedback in EFL classrooms, the fact that in Gitsaki's study different types of errors were targeted (i.e. lexical, phonological and grammatical) and that explicit correction constituted 29% of the feedback given makes the comparison between their study and the present one inappropriate.

5.1.2.2 Feedback in relation to acquisition

The findings confirm that there is an impact of feedback on the acquisition of overall past tense forms as the two classes increased their accuracy scores across time. These findings are in line with Yang's (2008) whose form-focused instruction and feedback has led to a large gain in his participants' past tense (regular and irregular) accuracy scores. However, a significant difference was only found between the pretest and posttest scores of T1's class. The lack of significant difference in T2's class scores can be due to the developmental readiness of participants and the amount of feedback that they received.

With reference to the readiness of learners, although the majority of students in both classes were at an intermediate level, T1's class performance in the pretest was better than T2's which indicates that they were at a higher developmental stage of past tense knowledge. These quantitative results were substantiated by the descriptive analysis of students' past tense interlanguage errors which showed that 83% of T2's class' errors in the pretest were in stage 1 compared to 73% in T1's class. Thus, it can be argued that, in T1's class, the learners' previous knowledge of past tense and their higher developmental interlanguage stage with respect to this grammatical structure increased their benefit from feedback. Similar findings are reported by Gitsaki and Althobaiti (2010) and Lyster and Saito (2010) who found that the effectiveness of feedback varied according to the readiness of learners.

Furthermore, the amount of feedback that the whole class received was much higher in T1's class than in T2's because in the latter 70% of the feedback was given to groups or low achievers and was not heard by the rest of the class. The amount of feedback is also regarded by Havranek (2002) as a factor affecting its impact on L2 development because of the learners' repeated production of target forms which facilitates their acquisition. Additionally, Havranek's claim that not only corrected learners but also their peers benefit from feedback is also confirmed in the present study with the significant improvement shown in T1's class results. Furthermore, the learners who had problems with their past tense forms in T2's class and received individual feedback from their teacher benefited from that feedback. This can be seen in the large decrease in the standard deviation of T2's scores from the pretest to posttest which was not found in T1's class scores. The range of scores was smaller in the posttest which suggests that low proficient students were catching up with the high achievers who managed to keep their scores at the same level. The decrease in standard deviation because of the improvement of low achievers is also found in Ammar's (2003) results.

Even though the impact of feedback is seen in the improved performance of individuals and in the whole class in the posttest, both classes failed to maintain that increase in accuracy scores in

the delayed-test which shows that the influence of feedback on the explicit knowledge of learners decreases over time; this finding is congruous with previous research (Ellis et al. 2006, Yang 2008).

The effectiveness of feedback in the present study is further confirmed by the progress demonstrated in the developmental interlanguage past tense stages of Arab students since their errors in the first three stages reduced over time and more errors in the advanced stages appeared in the analysis of their posttest and delayed test errors. The descriptive analysis also displayed a substantial progress through time in T2's class interlanguage development in which the teacher used prompts in 93% of her corrective turns. It can be concluded that prompts are effective in helping learners move to advanced past tense interlanguage stages; this asset was also attributed to prompts in Ammar's (2008) study in which learners who received that feedback type moved to advanced stages of acquiring possessive determiners.

5.1.3 Feedback and different past tense forms

Research Question 3: Are there differential effects of feedback on the acquisition of regular and irregular past tense forms?

The present study targeted regular and irregular past tense where the former is rule-based and associated with low saliency (Ellis 2005) and the latter is item-based and associated with high saliency (Salaberry 2000). The findings show that both classes gained better results in their use of regular and irregular past tense forms; however, a significant difference was only found between the regular tense test scores of T2's class where the teacher predominantly used prompts. Despite the fact that regular past tense is found in previous research to be less noticeable by learners (Ellis 2005, Mackey 2006), prompts in this study helped T2's students notice the gap between their erroneous forms and the L2 target form and acquire this rule-based form. The effectiveness of prompts in the acquisition of regular past tense is also reported by Yang (2008) and Vartanian (2011) in their experimental studies in which the findings show that prompt groups outperformed recast and no feedback groups in the use of regular past tense.

It was expected in this study that recasts and explicit correction which provided learners with the target form to have an impact on the acquisition of irregular past tense forms as in Yang's (2008) study; however, there was no significant difference between the students' irregular past tense accuracy scores across time. This can be due to the limited number of explicit correction moves and the disproportionate use of recasts in both classes.

5.2. Contributions and Implications

The findings of this research confirm those of previous studies regarding the effectiveness of feedback and negative evidence in SLA (Gass 2003, Ellis 2007). They also refute the claims of feedback opponents (Krashen 1994, 2003, Truscott 1999, 2007) since in none of the observed lessons did feedback cause embarrassment of learners or negatively affected their learning. On the contrary, correction of errors was expected from the teacher and was associated with modified output and increased test scores across time. Additionally, the improved explicit knowledge of learners in the posttest and the delayed test asserts that feedback does not only have an immediate impact on the learners' modified output but it also leads to acquisition. Furthermore, the low successful uptake rate that followed unnoticed recasts contributes to SLA as it affirms Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis and the importance of drawing the learners' attention in their SLL. The effectiveness of prompts which provoked student-generated repair in the acquisition of English past tense also supports Swain's (1995) Output Hypothesis which accords paramount importance to modified output in L2 development.

Hence, the teachers should use feedback in the ESL/EFL classroom in order to help learners notice the gap between their erroneous form and the target form and to acquire the English past tense. Moreover, feedback types that push learners to notice their errors and modify their output are proved to be more effective and, thus, should be used to help learners develop their interlanguage. This does not negate the effectiveness of recasts or reject their use in the language classroom, especially in meaning-oriented lessons, on condition that they are accompanied by paralinguistic features (e.g. gestures, intonation) that make them salient and easy for learners to understand that they are being corrected.

Furthermore, the beneficial role of feedback on the corrected learners as well as their peers draws the teachers' attention to the need to vary the ways in which they correct errors. That is, they can correct students in private or address the whole class to maximize the effectiveness of feedback. However, they need to take into consideration the students' attitude towards feedback and that correction in front of peers might raise the anxiety level of some learners. Finally, a special attention should be given to low

achievers who find it difficult to notice less salient feedback types and need more help to locate their errors and produce the target-like forms. As found in this study, giving low achievers exemplars when eliciting self-repair is a successful strategy.

5.3 Limitations of the study

The present study has certain limitations in exploring the effectiveness of feedback on the acquisition of the English past tense. One of these limitations, which is also found in studies investigating the same topic (Sahin 2006, Büyükbay 2007), is the limited number of participants and this affects the reliability of results and the possibility of generalizing them to the population. In this study, 48 students in two intact classes at the pre-intermediate level and two teachers in a girls' secondary school participated. Although there were three classes at that level in Grade 11 in this school, only two teachers were willing to participate. If more students (male and female) and teachers had participated in this study across schools, more reliable and robust results might have been achieved.

Another limitation is the limited duration of the study and the small number of recorded lessons. The lessons were observed for only three weeks during which the targeted grammatical structure was taught. As argued by Lyster and Saito (2010), the effectiveness of feedback is affected by the length of treatment because long treatments are often better than short or medium treatments. Moreover, only two out of seven English lessons were observed for each class every week. This means that students were also exposed to feedback in the unobserved lessons and its absence from the collected data might have affected the findings of the study. In future studies, recording all the lessons in which participants receive feedback as well as observing groups for a longer period of time would increase the internal validity of the research.

A third and final limitation is the reliance on the participating teachers to know the types of feedback and the corresponding students' uptake in many feedback episodes which were not audible in the video recording. Audio recording every group might have reduced the dependence on the interpretation of teachers for the effectiveness of their feedback which in turn might have increased the validity of findings.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

The impetus of this study was to bridge the gap in research on the effect of feedback in second language acquisition. Much research has been conducted on the types of feedback used in EFL classrooms and the subsequent learners' uptake and L2 development (Sahin 2006, Büyükbay 2007), but none has taken place in Arab countries. Drawing on the established positive effect of feedback on the acquisition of English past tense in many experimental studies (Ellis et al. 2006, Yang 2008, Gholami and Talebi 2012), this study was set out to investigate the effect of feedback in a natural classroom setting on the acquisition of Arab female learners of regular and irregular past tense forms.

To this end, the study incorporated a number of methodological tools including classroom observations, stimulated-recall interviews, and written tests. The research sample consisted of 48 grade 11 Arab female students in a public school in the United Arab Emirates and two English teachers who are native speakers of Arabic.

The findings of this study indicate that a variety of feedback types is used in the EFL classroom with output-provoking ones including metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, clarification request and repetition exceeding the number of feedback types which provide the learners with the L2 target form (i.e. recasts and explicit correction). However, a significant difference in the use of two types of feedback was found between the two participating teachers in which T1 used metalinguistic feedback and recasts in 59% and 4.5% of her corrective moves whereas T2 had them in 27.6% and 41.4% of her moves respectively. Out of 77% of both teachers' corrective moves, the students tried to repair their errors and succeeded to produce the target form after 43% of feedback turns. The study also shows that elicitation is the most successful feedback type to help Arab female students correct their errors. Additionally, feedback has proved to have an effect on increasing the accuracy scores of participants in their use of past tense. Factors, such as, the amount of feedback and the developmental readiness of learners with regards to the targeted grammatical structure are found to be influential on the effectiveness of feedback. Finally, a positive effect of feedback on increasing the accuracy of the use of regular and irregular past tense forms is found with prompts that

have a significant effect on the acquisition of the rule-based form (i.e. regular past tense).

Recommendations and Future Research

It can be noted from the interviews and the observations that the participating teachers have different teaching philosophies with regard to error correction which influences their corrective behaviour in the classroom. Even though the role of recasts in SLA has been established in few previous studies (Lyster and Mori 2006, Nassaji 2009), one of the participating teachers completely rejects its use in her classroom. On the other hand, the other teacher believes in their usefulness; however, her use of recasts is ineffective, as they are the least feedback type in her classroom to trigger uptake. This draws the attention to the need for professional development programs for pre-service and in-service teachers that would update them with recent research findings regarding corrective feedback and equip with strategies on how, when, who, and what to correct.

Although this research sheds light on the importance of feedback in L2 grammar acquisition in the EFL classroom, further studies investigating the same topic in different schools in the UAE are required to solidify its findings. A comparison between the effect of feedback on male and female Arab students at different grade levels might also yield interesting results from which teachers and educators could benefit. A thorough investigation into the role of feedback in interlanguage development is needed as it would positively contribute to SLA. Finally, the acquisition of rule-based versus exemplar-based items should be further investigated through experimental rather than observational studies.

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