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THE EFFECT OF EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT TEACHER FEEDBACK ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' IMMEDIATE AND DELAYED PRONUNCIATION

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ABSTRACT

Helping L2 learners to master oral language and its subskills including pronunciation has recently been studied by some educators. Corrective feedback, as a teaching and practicing tool, is welcomed by many educators. To examine the effect of explicit/implicit teacher feedback on Iranian EFL learners' immediate and delayed pronunciation, the researchers asked 45 randomly selected male/female participants in three homogeneous groups of 15 to read a text while the learners' pronunciation of some already-specified words was corrected in two groups. However, in the control group no correction was offered. Then they were required to read the passage immediately and two weeks after the treatment while checking and scoring them on their pronunciation. The statistical analysis of the results showed that although, irrespective of the type of CF, both explicit and implicit CF are effective in eradicating pronunciation errors, the effect of explicit correction in both immediate and delayed tests was the same as the effect of implicit correction.

Keywords: *Explicit Corrective Feedback, Implicit Corrective Feedback, Pronunciation*

INTRODUCTION

With the swing of pendulum towards rather communicatively-oriented teaching in recent years, the field of language education has brought up learners who can express their meanings or understand the gist of the messages they hear, yet they are not able to use language accurately in terms of grammar and pronunciation. In other words although such learners are able to get their meanings across and make themselves understood, an analysis of the samples of their language shows that their pronunciation does not meet the requirements of accurate language use. Therefore, some scholars adhered to an approach in which focus on meaning and form go together. One of the tools for meaningful focus on form is through the provision of corrective feedback (CF) in appropriate ways. On the other hand the Iranian EFL learners conventionally and traditionally rely on their teachers as the main source of CF (Wilson & Wilson, 1987; Khodadust & Mirhassani, 1999), and Iranian EFL learners consider their teachers as 'Mr. Know-alls' who have the answer for all their questions, and are legitimate sources for providing them with corrections whenever needed.

However, the degree of explicitness or implicitness is likely to affect the degree of learning from CF. Explicit CF directly signals a problem and either offers the correction or leaves the chance open for the learner to correct himself/herself, but implicit CF uses indirect ways of correcting the mistakes. Khodadust (2014) already postulated that implicit CF is less noticeable by the Iranian EFL learners in both short run and long run and recommended explicit CF in FonF activities involving correcting some tense errors. The present study aims to determine whether the same can be true about correcting pronunciation mistakes. In other words, the present study tries to test the empirical validity of the following hypotheses:

1. There are significant differences among the medical students who have received teacher explicit CF (TEF) and teacher implicit CF (TIF), those who have not received any CF regarding their pronunciation in the short run.
2. There are significant differences among the medical students who have received teacher explicit CF (TEF) and teacher implicit CF (TIF) and those who have not received any CF regarding their pronunciation in the long run

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methodology

Participants

The participants in the study included 45 Iranian male/female medical students who were learning English as their foreign language. They were selected out of a total number of 90 students who took a TOEFL IBT test. The participants whose scores fell between 1 standard deviation above and below the mean were selected for the study. The selected 45 participants were then put in three groups one of which received teacher explicit feedback; another group received teacher implicit feedback while the third group didn't receive any feedback and acted as the control group.

Instruments and Materials

The instruments used in the present study included a TOEFL IBT proficiency test with its subtests, a pronunciation test devised by the researcher, and a recording system for recording the oral interactions, especially CF moves, for later closer analysis.

Procedure

First, the original population of 90 students was asked to participate in a TOEFL IBT test. The answers were recorded and cross validated by three experts; The inter-rater reliability coefficient turned out to be .96 which is an acceptable value. The participants' scores were compared and those who fell one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected. Then the participants in each group were required to read the pronunciation test while providing CF on the pronunciation specific words. A mark was given to the learners if they could successfully reformulated the incorrectly-pronounced word. This served as the short term test. Two weeks later after the whole treatment had ended they were required to take the same test while checking their pronunciation of the specified words. The teacher gave a score for their pronunciation for this second reading or delayed pronunciation as well. The scores of the learners were tallied and were fed into SPSS 20; two paired samples t-test and one independent samples t-test were conducted for data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Testing the First Null Hypothesis

To test the first null hypothesis, first a one-way ANOVA was conducted the results of which are given in Table 1.

Table 1: One way ANOVA test results for scores comparison of four groups in the short run

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	ANOVA	
				f	P value
Explicit	15	40.47	7.99	2.71	0.043
Implicit	15	37.00	9.31		
Control	15	31.80	7.78		

The one-way ANOVA results in Table 1 show that with $f = 2.71$, and p value of .04 ($f = 2.71, p = .04 < .05$), the difference between the means of the groups in the short run is statistically significant implying the rejection of hypothesis 1. This implies that TEF, TIF, and CG groups have had different effects on the learners' performance in terms of the pronunciation. Moreover, an LSD post hoc study was conducted the results of which are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Multiple Comparisons Lsd for four groups in the short run

(I) G1	(J) G2	Mean Difference (I-J)	P value	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Explicit	implicit	3.47	0.26	-2.69	9.62
Explicit	control	8.66	0.01	2.51	14.82
Implicit	control	5.20	0.045	-0.95	11.35

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As the binary results in Table 2 indicate, the scores in explicit and implicit groups are significantly higher than the control group. The scores of explicit group is almost the same as the implicit group. This indicates that both explicit and implicit CF are equally effective in improving the Iranian EFL students' immediate pronunciation of the English words.

Testing the Second Null hypothesis

To test the second hypothesis, first a one-way ANOVA was conducted the results of which are given in Table 3.

Table 3: One way ANOVA test results for scores comparison of four groups in the long run

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	ANOVA	
				f	P value
Explicit	15	43.13	6.98	5.9	0.001
Implicit	15	38.67	8.11		
Control	15	31.60	7.27		

The one-way ANOVA results in Table 3 show that with $f = 5.9$, and p value of $.001$ ($f = 5.9, p = .001 < .05$), the difference between the means of the groups in the long run is statistically significant implying the rejection of hypothesis 2. This implies that TEF, TIF and CG groups have had different effects on the learners' performance. Moreover, an LSD post hoc study was conducted the results of which are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Multiple Comparisons Lsd for four groups in the long run

(I) G	(J) G2	Mean Difference (I-J)	P value	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
explicit	implicit	4.47	0.11	-1.10	10.03
explicit	control	11.53333*	0.00	5.97	17.10
implicit	control	7.06667*	0.01	1.50	12.63

As the binary results in Table 4 indicate, the scores in explicit and implicit groups is significantly higher than the control group, but it is almost the same as the implicit group. In other words, the p value for explicit-implicit pair is $.11$ which is more than $.05$ implying that there is not a significant difference between the groups receiving teacher explicit and implicit feedback. However, the p value for explicit-control and implicit-control pairs is 0.00 and $.01$ respectively implying the rejection of the null hypothesis. In other words, although TEF and TIF both outweigh CG, they are both equally useful in improving the Iranian EFL learners' delayed pronunciation.

To sum up, the results of the present study showed that both TEF and TIF are helpful in eradicating pronunciation errors. This confirms the interventionist views of language education which states that CF is absolutely useful in improving learners' language proficiency (e.g., Long, 1996; Amir Ghassemi, 2013; Ellis & Shintani, 2013; Mackey, 2012; Nassaji, 2009; Russel, 2009). However, it comes counter to some recent findings who have found that in Iranian context, explicit CF works better than implicit CF (e.g., Khodadust, 2014). Moreover, strangely enough there was no difference between the effect of TEF and TIF on immediate and delayed pronunciation of the items on which correction was focused since, because of the limited memory span and lack of previous practice or training, it seems more justified that CF would be likely to improve immediate pronunciation rather than the delayed one.

Conclusion

The present study was launched with the aim of determining whether CF really improves Iranian EFL learners' pronunciation as well as deciding whether explicit teacher feedback (TEF) or implicit teacher feedback (TIF) improves the Iranian English learners' immediate and delayed pronunciation. Data analysis indicated that generally both TEF and TIF improve the learners' pronunciation and eradicates

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their errors. Both TEF and TIF work equally good for the eradication of pronunciation errors in both short run and long run. Therefore, although previous studies have indicated the learners' preferences for explicit CF, the present study did not come up with the same result, and both explicit and implicit CF were equally effective in the context of the present study.

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