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The Counterbalance Approach to L2 Error Correction in the Classroom Setting

Abstract: Research on classroom interaction has recently gained prominence in the field of foreign language learning and teaching. The significance of the role assigned to corrective feedback varied with the disciplinary orientation of researchers, either depreciating its role and influence on the SLA process (e.g. Krashen 1982) or emphasizing the effectiveness of the procedure (e.g. Long 1991). The article examines both the traditional and new approaches of feedback understood as any kind of the teacher's reaction that refers to and demands improvement of the learner utterance (Chaudron 1977). The main purpose of the study is to investigate the effectiveness of the error correction procedure based on the principles of The Counterbalance Hypothesis (Lyster and Mori 2006) in relation to the acquisition of the English articles system. The hypothesis assumes that a learner's ability to notice the gap between the ill-formed utterances produced in their interlanguage and the target linguistic form is enhanced by the shift in their attentional focus from meaning to form in a meaning-focused context and from form to meaning in a form-oriented setting. The hypothesis proved effective which resulted in significantly better results in experimental groups. Thus, instructional activities such as corrective feedback should act as a counterbalance to a classroom's predominant orientation, which represents a usual type of formal instruction used to present the teaching material, and is predicted to be more effective than interactional feedback, which is congruent with the predominant FL teaching methodology.

Keywords: corrective feedback, error correction, counterbalance hypothesis

1. Introduction

The importance of corrective feedback (CF) has been a much debated and widely researched topic in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) for more than two decades. A number of definitions of the phenomenon have appeared in the literature on SLA and in the field of foreign language teaching (FLT). Chaudron (1977: 31), for example describes CF as “any reaction of the teacher which clearly transforms, disapprovingly refers to, or demands improvement of the learner utterance.” Such a reaction was not only limited to verbal behaviour but it also involved

any kind of reaction to indicate an incorrect form thus forcing the learner to respond. Lightbown and Spada (1999: 171–172) expanded the former definition and distinguished between explicit versus implicit feedback. They described CF as:

... any indication to a learner that his or her use of the target language is incorrect. This includes a variety of responses that a language learner receives. When a language learner says, “He go to school every day,” corrective feedback can be explicit, for example, “No, you should say goes, not go” or implicit “Yes, he goes to school every day,” and may or may not include meta-linguistic information, for example, “Don’t forget to make the verb agree with the subject.”

Ellis et al. (2006: 28) define corrective feedback as “the form of response to a learner’s utterance containing an error.” Therefore, it gives an ideal opportunity for students to revise their interlanguage. The aforementioned definitions indicate that corrective feedback can assist learning and offers a genuine opportunity for teachers to enhance both oral and written linguistic accuracy.

Corrective feedback has been considered from different perspectives including linguistic theories and cognitive psychology. It was not only considered significant by teachers and methodologists, but proved to be important to pedagogy and language teaching since it is seen as a crucial factor employed for encouraging and consolidating learning (Anderson 1982). The importance of corrective feedback has been seen from many angles that were reflected in the theories of L1/L2 acquisition. In the 1950s and 1960s under the influence of behaviourists views, which stressed the fact that human learning was mostly concerned with habit formation, corrective feedback was perceived as detrimental to the language learning process; whereas errors were considered damaging to learning and therefore were to be eliminated. Nativists in the 1970s and 1980s advocated the complete abandonment of correction techniques concentrating on the positive evidence that was supposed to facilitate acquisition. Only after the interactionist approach to language learning emerged were errors seen to be more treatable by means of corrective feedback (Long 1996) According to The Interaction Hypothesis, L2 acquisition is facilitated by interactions that involve focus on form and negotiation of meaning. In view of the hypothesis, implicit corrective feedback seems to be most beneficial concentrating on focus-on-form approach during meaning oriented tasks. On the other hand, sociocultural theory did not concentrate on the one and most recommended type of corrective feedback postulating the need for adjustment to students’ individual preferences during the direct interaction. Similarly, other theories of SLA such as The Output Hypothesis (Swain 1995) and The Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt 2001) maintained that CF helped learners to notice a gap between interlanguage (IL) forms and target language forms (TL) and then enabled learners to correct their own errors. The counterbalance hypothesis proposed by Lyster and Mori in 2006 predicted that students’ greater attention to their erroneous utterances and any corrective feedback that follows can be drawn by means of the change of attentional focus that orients learners in the direction opposite to that which their target language learning environment has accustomed them to.

2. Spoken CF in SLA research

Corrective feedback itself cannot be treated as a tool to master language proficiency. There are certain conditions to be met to affect the learning process. Gass (1991) claimed that in order to internalize the input a learner must find it comprehensible and spot the difference between his interlanguage and the input he receives. According to Gass, “nothing in the target language is available for intake into a language learner’s existing system unless it is consciously noticed” (136). From this perspective, corrective feedback is regarded as an attention getting device. Ohta (2001), conversely, perceives corrective feedback as the L2 development facilitator. Learners presented with corrective feedback are prone to compare their interlanguage with an input. What is more, they are more eager to reformulate their utterances by means of hypothesis testing. By the same token, the process in question fails to be successful and “depend(s) on the learners’ readiness for and attention to the information available in feedback” (Chaudron 1988: 134). A learner will not be able to assimilate the information that is far beyond his proficiency level. The efficiency of corrective feedback can be found in Lydia White’s (1991) considerable body of research where the group of French students were able to internalize grammatical features by means of correction. Similarly, the experiment carried out by Carroll and Swain (1993) on native speakers of English learning French confirmed the efficacy of corrective feedback.

3. A typology of oral CF

Although the literature on the subject offers many classifications, seven basic types of corrective feedback can be distinguished: recast, translation, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, explicit correction and repetition (Panova and Lyster 2002; Sheen 2004).

Explicit correction — a learner is provided with the correct form as a reaction to his erroneous utterance. The error indication is evident and an error is pinpointed (Sheen 2004).

Example 1

S: and three pear. (sounds like beer)

S2: three beer

T: not beer. Pear.

Recast is “an implicit corrective feedback move that reformulates or expands an ill-formed or incomplete utterance in an unobtrusive way, similar to the type of recast provided by primary caregivers in child L1 acquisition” (Long 1996 in Panova and Lyster 2002).

Example 2

S: Any person who is very great poet, I would be.

T: Oh, okay. All right. A great poet? You would be a great poet? (recast)

Clarification requests — represent any kind of signal directed at a learner to inform about his ill-formed, incomprehensible utterance (Panova and Lyster 2002).

Example 3

S: I want to practice today, today.

T: I'm sorry? (clarification request)

Metalinguistic feedback — a learner is provided with technical information about an error without any explicit correction.

Example 4

S: Nouvelle Ecosse ... (L1)

T: Oh, but that's in French (metalinguistic feedback)

Elicitation — Lyster and Ranta (1997) distinguished three techniques for eliciting the correct form from the students: (a) “elicit completion” moves such as “It is a ...”; (b) elicitive questions, such as “How do we say X in French?,” (c) reformulation requests, such as “Can you say it another way?”

Example 5

T: In fast food restaurant, how much do you tip?

S: No money.

T: What's the word? (elicitation)

S: Five ... four ...

Repetition — a teacher without any correction repeats the ill-formed utterance.

Example 6

S: Oh my God, it is too expensive, I pay only 10 dollars.

T: I pay? (repetition)

Translation is often used when a learner turns to his L1 in his utterance (Panova and Lyster 2002).

Example 7

T: All right, now, which place is near the water?

S: Non, j'ai pas fini. (L1)

T: You haven't finished? Okay, Bernard, have you finished? (translation)

Multiple feedback — Sheen (2004) also mentions multiple feedback as a combination of more than one feedback.

According to Ellis et al. (2006), negotiation strategies fall into two further categories: implicit and explicit strategies. Long (1996) argues that explicit corrective feedback consists in the direct error correction often with the assistance of metalinguistic explanation. Implicit corrective feedback, as opposed to the former one, aims at inducing the learner to notice the disparity between his interlanguage and the target form. In this case, indirect error correction and the target form is never delivered to a learner. Therefore, recasts, confirmation checks, clarification requests, repetitions and even paralinguistic signs are classified as a form of implicit correction.

4. Reaction to oral CF

The correction process is not limited only to a response to a learner's utterance containing an error, "corrective feedback episodes are comprised of a trigger, the feedback move and (optionally) uptake" (Ellis 2009: 4). In Lyster and Ranta (49) uptake is defined as:

Uptake in our model refers to a student's utterance that immediately follows the teacher's feedback and that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher's intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student's initial utterance.

The further distinction of uptake into repair and need-repair is dependent on the learner's success in further communication.

Table 1. Types of uptake following CF (Lyster and Ranta 1997)

<p>A. Repair</p> <p>Repetition (i.e. the student repeats the teacher's feedback).</p> <p>Incorporation (i.e. the student incorporates repetition of the correct form in a longer utterance).</p> <p>Self-repair (i.e. the student corrects the error in response to teacher feedback that did not supply the correct form).</p> <p>Peer-repair (i.e. a student other than the student who produced the error corrects it in response to teacher feedback).</p>
<p>B. Needs- repair</p> <p>Acknowledgement (e.g. a student says "yes" or "no").</p> <p>Same error (i.e. the student produces the same error again).</p> <p>Different error (i.e. the student fails to correct the original error and in addition produces different error).</p> <p>Off target (i.e. the student responds by circumventing the teacher's linguistic focus).</p> <p>Hesitation (i.e. the student hesitates in response to the teacher feedback).</p> <p>Partial repair (i.e. the student partly corrects the initial error).</p>

The research on uptake enabled the measurement of the efficacy of corrective feedback and established the patterns in error correction. Lyster and Ranta (1997) proved that elicitation and clarification were more facilitative and repair provoking than any other form of correction, e.g. recast. By contrast, Sheen (2004) perceives recasts as a means of promoting learner's uptake and immediate repair. According to Doughty (1999), recasting can prove effective when applied to certain linguistic features. Given the fact that the research results differ considerably, no generalization can be made as far as the most effective type of corrective strategy is concerned. Nevertheless, uptake cannot be treated as a form of acquisition since it serves as the trigger of noticing the gap and in the long run, is supposed to bring about substantial changes in learner's IL development (Ellis 2008).

In order to make claims regarding the role of corrective feedback in L2 acquisition, it is important to examine the instructional context in which learning takes place. The findings obtained in Long and Robinson's (1998) studies prove a focus-on-form approach to be most effective as it "often consists of an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features — by the teachers and/or one or more students — triggered by perceived problems with comprehension or production" (Long and Robinson, 23). By contrast, form-focused instruction seems to be effective in the short term (Lightbown 1998) and according to Krashen is "peripheral and fragile" (1982: 409), meaning-focused instruction, on the other hand, may not lead to the development of high-level linguistic competence; however, it "may be very successful in developing fluency and effective discourse skills" (Ellis 2008: 827). The recent research carried out by Williams (2005), Pawlak (2013) and Loewen (2011) significantly broadened the pedagogical perspective of focus-on-form instruction which should be based on the assumption that learners' attention should be focused on "linguistic features as they are engaged in meaning and message conveyance, as is the case with the performance of communicative tasks" (Pawlak 2013: 86). In such a form it stands in opposition to focus-on-forms instruction, which concentrates on the selected structure to be taught and hence the communicative goal is hardly achieved by students. Therefore, corrective feedback can serve as the tool to apply a focus-on-form approach by means of communicative activities.

The following table represents macro-distinction that has appeared recently in corrective feedback research, i.e. focus on form versus focus on forms.

Table 2. Focus-on-forms and focus-on-form types of instruction (Ellis 2008: 871)

Macro-option	Focus-on-forms	Focus-on-form
Input-based	An input based option can be used; learners are directed to pay attention to the target form.	Any input-based option that centres on form-meaning mapping; learners are not told what the target form is so any attention to it is incidental.

Explicit instruction	Typically direct explicit instruction but also indirect instruction by means of consciousness-rising tasks.	No explicit instruction of any kind is provided.
Output-based	A variety of text-manipulation and text creation options. Also, both error-avoiding and error-inducing options are possible.	Only text creation options with no attempt made to either avoid or induce errors.
Corrective feedback	Typically explicit types of feedback.	Typically implicit types of feedback.

5. Empirical study

This section provides a description of the research design and the data gathered. The research presented below represents a part of a larger-scale empirical project of the role of corrective feedback in the acquisition of L2 English in classroom setting. For this reason it represents a pilot study.

5.1. The aim of the research

The study focuses on the comparative analysis of teacher–student interactions in two instructional settings at the pre-intermediate level. The research examined two types of oral CF and its effect on the acquisition of English articles by adult intermediate EFL learners who were native speakers of Polish. The articles were chosen as the target grammar feature for the current study because they constitute a structure where students commonly make errors and are not frequently corrected due to their non-salience and the complicated rule explanations involved in their use. The articles represent a non-salient grammar feature because their misuse rarely leads to communication breakdowns (Master 2002). The study is theoretically based on Counterbalance Hypothesis which states that “instructional activities and interactional feedback that act as a counterbalance to a classroom’s predominant communicative orientation are likely to prove more effective than instructional activities and interactional feedback that are congruent with its predominant communicative orientation” (Lyster and Mori 2006: 294). The following hypotheses are put forth in the study:

Students are more prone to notice the difference between their erroneous utterance and the target linguistic form due to the shift in learner’s attentional focus from meaning to form in a meaning-focused context and from form to meaning in a form-oriented settings (Lyster and Mori 2006).

Effectiveness of any type of instructional feedback in a given instructional context is proportional to the extent to which it differs from the classroom overall communication preference.

The study was designed to find out whether the experimental group (taught and corrected according to the principles of The Counterbalance Hypothesis) would perform better than the control group taught and corrected in the same manner either explicitly or implicitly, on the immediate oral production.

5.2. Participants and procedures

This comparative study analyses interactional feedback and uptake that occurred during 20 hours of classroom interaction. The participants of the study were 57 Polish learners of L2 English aged 18–19. The study was conducted in one of the upper secondary schools in the Lower Silesia in Poland. The school curriculum offered 4 hours of English language course weekly, 45 minutes each. For the purpose of the study four groups were formed. The experimental group, which consisted of the two subgroups, received implicit feedback in contrast to explicit form-focused instruction or explicit feedback in a meaning-focused environment. The two control subgroups received explicit feedback that corresponded with explicit grammar-based language teaching or implicit feedback in a meaning-focused teaching environment. The analysis of the data, especially the study of the corrective moves such as recasts, prompts and explicit corrections in relation to diversified types of instruction leads to some conclusions about the effectiveness of this type of corrective feedback. The arrangements of the study groups are presented below.

Table 3. The group arrangements in the study

Group Total <i>n</i> = 57	Instruction	Feedback
Group 1 (experimental <i>n</i> = 14)	explicit	implicit
Group 2 (experimental <i>n</i> = 15)	implicit	explicit
Group 3 (control <i>n</i> = 15)	explicit	explicit
Group 4 (control <i>n</i> = 13)	implicit	implicit

The students received 4 hours of formal instruction on articles in English delivered by one teacher, the author of the present article, who was also responsible for delivering corrective feedback and audio recording sessions. During the next 4 weeks students participated in an abundance of oral assignments and were exposed to a large amount of spoken English. The assignments were mainly based on the participants' coursebook *Gateway* (Spencer 2014) from which oral exercises and tasks had been selected by the teacher. The obligatory coursebook was chosen by the teacher from the list of books recommended by the Polish Ministry of Education as the basis for the final school leaving examination in English (*Matura*) on the basic and extended levels. The design of the study is presented in the table below.

Table 4. The design of the study

Week	Experimental groups	Control groups
1	formal instruction on article system	formal instruction on article system
2–5	corrective feedback based on the counterbalance hypothesis	corrective feedback in accordance with a classroom predominant orientation
6	recording session	recording session

The tasks in each group involved pair work, discussion, telling a story, dialogues and short monologues. The participants had the opportunity to listen to audio and to watch video recordings. Both groups taught explicitly and implicitly were taught from the same teaching materials. However, in the explicit group the teaching material containing grammar rules was presented by means of deductive methods. The explicit rule was presented which was followed by a great number of examples and later formal practice that involved the participation in many oral assignments. The explicitly taught group received formal instruction and received pedagogical explanation on the use of articles. On the other hand, the group taught implicitly were exposed to the examples of article usage, not having direct access to the grammatical rules. They were expected to arrive at the rule by inferring it from the given exemplary material.

The explicitly taught group was presented with the theoretical explanation of English article system based on Butler (2002).

Table 5. Article system used in the study (Butler 2002)

Type 1. Generics and unspecifiable ('zero', 'a', 'the')	A cat likes mice
Type 2. Referential definites ('the')	Pass me the pen.
Type 3. Referential indefinites, first mention ('a')	I saw a strange man standing at the gate.
Type 4. Nonreferentials ('a')	I'm going to buy a new bicycle.
Type 5. Idioms and other conventional uses ('a', 'the')	All of a sudden, he woke up from his coma in the 1960s.

5.3. Instruments

During the treatment session, students were confronted with a narrative stimulus for the purpose of eliciting errors in the article use. The first narrative task involved telling the story referring to the past experience of the participants. The second task required from the students was to describe and compare pictures, along with answering the questions referring to the pictures. Both types of the task were based on the final school leaving examination in English (Matura) requirements

and represented the part of the teaching material included in the compulsory coursebook. The tasks were considered suitable for the intermediate level students and they were expected to induce article errors. The correction methods were based on the following corrective feedback types, applied in accordance with The Counterbalance Hypothesis. Corrective feedback took the form of responses to learner utterances containing an error. The responses were teacher initiated repairs and consisted of: an indication that an error has been committed, provision of the correct target language form, metalinguistic information about the nature of the error or any combination of these. As far as explicit correction moves were concerned, the teacher used the following techniques: explicit correction, elicitation and metalinguistic feedback. On the contrary, clarification request, elicitation and metalinguistic feedback represented the implicit types of correction. The teacher immediately corrected the students during the recording session that lasted for 2 hours in each group. The choice of correction technique within either explicit or implicit framework was dependent on the context and the preference of the corrector. Nevertheless, by constant hearing the same noun phrases that were parts of a picture description, the teacher became familiar with the most common expressions. The key issue was to choose the most effective error correction technique and provide learners with the appropriate feedback information type depending on the group.

5.4. Results analysis

The objective of the study was also to apply the diversified form of correction within a correction mode, i.e. explicit versus implicit. Table 6 represents the distribution of the types of CF used in error correction session.

Table 6. The number and percentage of feedback types used in oral production tasks

Group	Clarification request	Confirmation check	Recast	Repetition	Metalinguistic feedback	Elicitation	Explicit correction	Total
1 (E/I)	24 (19%)	9 (7%)	63 (51%)	28 (23%)				124
2 (I/E)					23 (48%)	18 (37.5%)	7 (14.5%)	48
3 (E/E)					29 (49%)	19 (32%)	11 (19%)	59
4 (I/I)	28 (23%)	12 (10%)	71 (58%)	12 (9%)				123
All groups	52 (15%)	21 (6%)	134 (38%)	40 (11%)	52 (15%)	37 (10%)	18 (5%)	354

The analysis of the data above, gathered by the teacher during recording sessions, showed that the teacher broadly used three types of correction, i.e. recasts, clarification request and metalinguistic feedback. These three types have a different degree of salience in the input for the language learners. Explicit corrections (e.g. metalinguistic feedback) represent a very salient type of CF and the learners easily notice this type of correction. When we analyse the frequency of corrective feedback moves, recasts represent the highest percentage in both groups corrected implicitly. This finding corresponds with the other studies conducted by Lyster and Ranta (1997). According to the results, recasts represent the most frequent correction type used by the teachers. Similar results were obtained by Panova and Lyster (2002) in their study carried out in adult ESL classroom in Canada. The extensive usage of recasts in the study can be attributed to the desire of the teacher to save time and not to lead to any communication breakdown between students. In groups corrected by means of implicit correction we can observe the greatest number of the teacher's correction moves — 124 and 123, respectively — which can be explained by the nature of implicit feedback which may not have been quite as effective because it was less obvious to the learners. Therefore the teacher employed various feedback types when the error appeared. The table also shows that explicit correction and confirmation check represent the two least used types of oral correction.

Table 7 displays the number and percentage of learner uptake moves following feedback in both groups.

Table 7. Types of learners' uptake in response to CF

Group	Repair	Needs repair	Total
1 (E/I)	89 (67%)	44 (33%)	133
2 (I/E)	66 (76.7%)	20 (23.3%)	86
3 (E/E)	30 (50.8%)	29 (49.2%)	59
4(I/I)	42 (55.2%)	34 (44.8%)	76

The first interesting finding that might be noticed is the total amount of uptake following feedback that was the highest in experimental group. The results show that students' repairs represented 67 per cent of attempts in the first experimental subgroup and 76.7 per cent in the second experimental subgroup. The results were in accordance with the predictions formulated by The Counterbalance Hypothesis that proves the effectiveness of error correction in opposition to the predominant style of teaching. An interesting fact to be observed is a relatively high percentage of corrections in group two. As regards instruction and correction method, implicit formal instruction and explicit type of corrective feedback leads to the highest number of repair. We may assume that the best

group benefited from the direct type of CF that seemed much more encouraging and distinctive. On the contrary, a more explicit type of instruction followed by explicit correction results in the lowest percentage of repairs — 50.8 per cent. This may be due to a relatively weak involvement of participants who were given ready-made rules and corrections that failed to lead to a shift in their attentional focus.

Table 8 displays the distribution of repair across groups. The goal of the teachers should be to enhance learners to self-correct or to be assisted by another student to correct an error. Such types of repair prove important in language learning because they indicate the involvement in the learning process on the part of the students. In such a situation, students are forced to respond to the CF to repair their incorrect utterance. As regards types of repair, self-repair represents the most common type of repair in all groups (see Table 8). The experiment group taking part in the study employed self-repair as the most frequent type of correction (69.7% and 60%), which at the same time represents the highest level of accuracy in handling English articles. The level of accuracy in the control group was evidently lower. Of overall repair, moves incorporation and peer repair represent only 5.1 and 7.4 per cent respectively. Such a low number of peer correction may be attributed either to their lack of linguistic competence to correct their peers, or that a student corrected by his peer may feel inferior, which may harm a classroom atmosphere (Harmer 2004).

Table 8. Results of the study — repair

Group	Repetition	Incorporation	Self-repair	Peer repair	Total
1 (E/I)	20 (25.3%)	2 (2.5%)	55 (69.7%)	2 (2.5%)	79
2 (I/E)	2 (3%)	3 (4.5 %)	60 (91%)	1 (1.5%)	66
3 (E/E)	10 (33.3%)	2 (6.7%)	14 (46.6%)	4 (13.4%)	30
4 (I/I)	5 (11.9%)	4 (9.5%)	24 (57.1%)	9 (21.5%)	42
All groups	37 (17%)	11(5.1%)	153(70.5%)	16 (7.4%)	217

What should be noted in Table 9 is that the highest percentage of needs repair represents partial repair with 49 per cent for all groups. The best result was observed in experimental subgroups and accounts for about 70 per cent. We may also notice that the efficacy of the implicit type of error correction in implicitly taught learners very often leads to the same type of error. This type of CF apparently did not work well for the control subgroup, possibly because of the lack of any kind of explicit, deductive information directed at the learners as a type of instruction or error correction.

Table 9. Results of the study — needs repair

Group	Acknowledgement	Same error	Different error	Off target	Hesitation	Partial repair	Total
1 (E/I)	1 (2%)	5 (11%)	4 (9%)	0 (0%)	3 (7%)	31 (71%)	44
2 (I/E)	4 (20%)	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	14 (70%)	20
3 (E/E)	5 (17%)	5 (17%)	4 (14%)	2 (7%)	5 (17%)	8 (28%)	29
4 (I/I)	0 (0%)	20 (59%)	3 (9%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	9 (26%)	34
All groups	10 (8%)	31 (24%)	11 (9%)	4 (3%)	9 (7%)	62 (49%)	127

If an utterance needs repair, CF may again be provided by the teacher but also in this situation attempts at repair may appear to be insufficient and inadequate.

6. Conclusion

The research aimed at verifying the Counterbalance Hypothesis proposed by Lyster and Mori (2006) in relation to the acquisition of the English article system by EFL students. Striking differences between control and experimental groups were observed in the rates of uptake and student repair that were more prevalent in the experimental group. The sharpest contrast in the rate of uptake again occurred between the experimental and control groups. In contrast, the teacher's frequent use of recasts which in the experimental group accounted for 51 per cent in contrast to the control group where it comprised roughly 58 per cent and led to different results in terms of repair (79 and 49 per cent respectively). The finding in question lends empirical support to the fact that learners notice their erroneous sentence and the target language form, which justifies promoting diversified type of instruction in relation to the corrective feedback technique.

The data clearly indicates that the Counterbalance Hypothesis proves effective on the acquisition of the English definite and indefinite articles. The results presented in the preceding sections show that the experimental group outperformed the control group. The positive effect of counterbalanced instruction can be explained in terms of Schmidt's (1995) Noticing Hypothesis. According to the theory, noticing represents the important condition for acquisition to take place. Schmidt (2001) pointed noticing as a prerequisite to learning process taking place. Corrective feedback as a negative evidence enables students to notice the gap between an erroneous utterance and the target language. The Counterbalance Hypothesis gives students the opportunity to spot the difference between the type of formal instruction they are delivered and the opposite type of corrective feedback administered by the teacher. Instructional activities such as corrective feedback should act as a

counterbalance to a classroom's predominant orientation and are predicted to be more effective than interactional feedback, which is congruent with the predominant FL teaching methodology.

The conclusions presented above may serve as implications for ESL instruction in a foreign language classroom. Before taking into consideration any correction techniques, a teacher should be aware of students' preferences in terms of correction time, a preferable technique and a status of a corrector. For that reason individual differences, foreign language proficiency level and a context should be taken into account. Since corrective feedback techniques represent a complex phenomenon, it is advisable for students to introduce CF gradually to let them be familiarized with these practices. As a result they are prone to become more responsible for their learning process which may lead to greater language proficiency.

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