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Original Article

A Critical Overview of Second Language Acquisition Research on Corrective Feedback

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a critical overview of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research on corrective feedback (CF), laying the groundwork for a clear foundation. To this end, it has scrutinised different CF techniques, drawing upon influential taxonomies by Allwright and Bailey (1991), Lyster and Ranta (1997) and Ellis (2009), clarifying the distinction between errors and mistakes to ensure a comprehensive understanding. This review rigorously analysed SLA research on CF through the lens of ongoing controversies surrounding its role and practical application by reviewing around 97 sources. Adopting a comparison of early and recent studies as an insightful criterion, the overview established a timeline and compared methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and findings. Applying Hendrickson's (1978) framework, commonly employed in EC and SLA research, the paper addresses key controversial questions. Accordingly, it is critical to review whether CF is effective in SLA or not (should errors be corrected), what type of CF is the most effective, who should do the correction, which errors to correct, and the ideal timing for providing CF. Hence, the analysis focused on providing a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted and often questioned role of CF in SLA. The overview reveals that a clear understanding of the existence and role of errors, along with a positive attitude toward EC, enables teachers to recognise CF as an essential component of SLA, particularly in teaching English as a foreign language. It also shows that recently, researchers are making a shift of focus from dealing with whether CF works to investigating which CF works best.

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INTRODUCTION

In the process of SLA, it is normally apparent to observe individuals experiencing errors or mistakes for various reasons. The former is regarded as a lack of proficiency (Ellis, 1994) while the latter is a performance phenomenon (Ellis, 1994 & Feltsen, 2009). For Corder (1999), "errors are caused by ignorance of the appropriate rule or structure in a foreign language" and "mistake is a problem not of knowing but of application." This implies that errors are deficiencies that learners cannot correct unless they learn to correct, but mistakes can be corrected at once, for the knowledge is already learnt. Corder (1967) distinguished "errors" and "mistakes" as errors take place due to a lack of knowledge (i.e., it represents a gap in competence). A mistake is a performance phenomenon, reflecting processing failures that arise as a result of competing plans, memory limitations, and lack of automaticity.

What is Corrective Feedback?

According to Ellis (2006), CF refers to "responses to learner utterances containing an error." These responses indicate that an error has been committed, the provision of the correct target language form, or metalinguistic information about the nature of the error. Similarly, Chaudron (1977) defined CF as any response which clearly changes or requires improvement of the learner's utterance. Yet, CF is "a reactive pedagogical strategy that emerges when the teacher identifies an error" (Campillo, 2004, p. 209).

More comprehensively, Long (1996) categorised CF as positive evidence (grammatical models) and negative evidence (information about unacceptability). While Schachter (1991) notes that CF (language instruction), negative evidence (language acquisition), and negative feedback (psychology) are often used interchangeably (Tatawy, 2002), CF is the primary term used in second language teaching and learning to denote language input indicating erroneous output (Robinson, 1998).

Types of Corrective Feedback

Just to highlight the meanings of the strategies with practical examples, first, explicit correction manifests when the teacher explicitly provides the learner with the correct form with an indication that his/her interpretation was incorrect (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). For example, [S: The dog run fastly.] [T: "Fastly" doesn't exist. "Fast" does not take –ly.] [You should say "quickly"].

Metalinguistic feedback - "contains either comments, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of the student's utterance, without explicitly providing the correct form" (Lyster & Ranta, 1997, p. 47). This technique indicates the presence of an error and generally provides information about its place and nature through metalinguistic clues [S: *we look at the people yesterday.], [T: What's the ending we put on verbs when we talk about the past?], [S: /e-d/].

Elicitation refers to the use of many strategies teachers adopt to *elicit* the correct form from the students; for instance, through *pausing* ("It's a …"), *asking questions* ("How do we call X in English?"), *and asking learners to reformulate their utterances.*

Again, *recasts* - refer to "the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance, minus the error." For example, [Why you don't come? Vs. Why don't you come?] Clarification requests indicate to the students that either their utterance has been misunderstood or is incorrect in some way and that a repetition or a reformulation is needed.

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Repetition is a teacher's repetition of the learner's incorrect utterance, generally with a change in intonation. In CF strategies, input providing (e.g. recast and explicit corrections are regarded as supplied by teachers), but output-prompting (e.g. clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback elicitation and repetition are supplied by students).

Ellis (2009: 8) Ellis's Taxonomy of CF Strategies

	Implicit	Explicit
Input-providing	Recast	Explicit correction
Output-prompting	Repetition Clarification request	Metalinguistic explanation Elicitation Paralinguistic signal

Uptake

In SLA, researchers give the concept 'uptake' in two ways. For Allwright (1984), uptake is what learners claim to have learned from a particular lesson. It is also defined as "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" (Lyster & Ranta, 1997, p. 49). Uptake can be in the form of *repair (successful repair),* which indicates that a student produces a sentence which shows the feedback has been heard and results in a correct sentence. Or else, it could be in the form of *needs repair,* here, it means there is an indication that the student has noticed the teacher's feedback, but the error is not yet corrected. Whereas, in case of *no uptake*, the conversation continues with no indication that the student has noticed the feedback. Hence, uptake assumes that when students correct their initial utterance using supplied CF, they demonstrate an understanding of the difference between their inaccurate language and the teacher's correction. Zhao (2009) defines successful uptake as the learner's realisation of the linguistic structure or modification of the error.

METHODOLOGY

Review Design and Methods

This critical overview used *a narrative literature review design* to offer a comprehensive and critical overview of research on corrective feedback (CF) in second language acquisition (SLA). The method undertakes a systematic search of databases, critical evaluation of studies based on methodological rigour and relevance, and helps synthesise findings qualitatively to offer a narrative account of CF as it relates to SLA. "Critical literature reviews provide current opinions of key authors in their subject area, show up-to-date conceptual understanding, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of previous work, and allow others to follow up on the work you cite, use correct and detailed references" (Jesson & Laccey, 2006, p. 145). Adopting a comparison of early and recent studies as an insightful criterion, the overview established a timeline and compared methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and findings. Accordingly, the review rigorously analysed around 97 SLA studies on CF through the lens of ongoing controversies surrounding its role and practical application.

Data Collection Schemes

In the process of data assortment, systematic exploration of databases, including ERIC, PsycINFO, and LLIA, was conducted by making use of keywords related to CF. More importantly, key words, such as corrective feedback, error correction, expect feedback, implicit feedback, recast, uptake, error, mistake, metalinguistic explanation, elicitation, paralinguistic signal, repetition, clarification request, input-providing, output-prompting) were used to search for pertinent data. Besides, keywords that pertain to SLA, for example, second language acquisition, language

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learning, ESL and EFL, were also considered for the assessment and inclusion of relevant materials. The extraction of data included study designs, participant characteristics, the type of topics investigated as it relates to CF, outcome measures and key findings.

Data Analysis

A qualitative synthesis was performed to identify major themes, methodological trends, unresolved debates, and gaps in the current understanding of CF effectiveness across diverse learner populations and instructional contexts. Hence, it has scrutinised different CF techniques, drawing upon influential taxonomies by Allwright and Bailey (1991), Lyster and Ranta (1997) and Ellis (2009), clarifying the distinction between errors and mistakes to ensure an inclusive understanding. Adopting Hendrickson's (1978) framework, commonly employed in EC and SLA research, the paper addresses key controversial questions. Accordingly, the paper reviewed whether CF is effective in SLA or not (should errors be corrected), what type of CF is the most effective, who should do the correction, which errors to correct, and the ideal timing for providing CF.

Controversies Pertaining to Corrective Feedback

SLA research remains contradictory regarding CF, particularly in addressing five critical questions used here as a working frame for this overview. The questions mainly focus on *whether CF is effective in facilitating SLA- the question of 'should errors be corrected? Which errors should be corrected? Who should do the correction? Which type of CF is the most effective? When to correct errors?* These arguments are seen from pedagogical as well as theoretical literature, along with the consideration of productive skills (written and oral CF). In some cases, findings from empirical research were incorporated.

Theoretical and Empirical Overviews on the Effectiveness of CF in SLA

For decades, SLA researchers have debated the significance of error and its correction. Some argue that errors hinder SLA, while others believe they contribute to target language proficiency. These debating points are discussed below.

Early Perspectives on the Efficacy of CF

There exists significant debate about the role of error and CF in SLA theories. Chen, Lin, and Jiang (2016) note that early behavioural theorists considered errors a "sinful act" to be eliminated, and Skinner (1957) argues that uncorrected errors lead to fossilisation (Touchie, 1986), necessitating immediate correction to prevent bad habits. Conversely, early studies also supported the role of error and CF; Corder (1967) affirmed that errors signal progress, arguing they are pertinent "in and of themselves" and "indispensable" for learners as a learning mechanism. Similarly, Selinker (1972) highlighted errors as a natural part of interlanguage development.

The value assigned to CF in language pedagogy differs as per the principle of different methods (Ellis, 2009). For example, the Oral Approach or Situational Language Teaching Method entails that "errors need to be eliminated at all costs" (Pittman, 1963 as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Errors are also claimed to be a natural and pertinent part of language acquisition and the aim behind giving CF is to offer support and enhance learning (Ur, 1996). In the case of skill-theory, Johnson (1995) highlighted that for successful acquisition of skill, the learner needs feedback on how well he/she is doing. This implies that behaviourists' language teaching pedagogy suggests as CF, is effective in the facilitation of SLA.

Conversely, from the Nativists' side, Chomsky (1975) claimed that instruction, including negative evidence, has no role to play in SLA; they would rather consider that Universal Grammar (UG) takes the role to make language acquisition possible

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(Schwartz, 1993). As to Schwartz (1986), negative evidence merely contributes to explicit awareness, and no means can 'translate' this into input of the type required by UG. Hence, Schwartz stressed that language is fundamentally learned without the supply of negative feedback. This notion seems to share the pedagogical view, for example, in audio-lingualism, "negative assessment is to be avoided as far as possible since it functions as 'punishment' and may inhibit or discourage learning" (Ur, 1996, p. 243).

Yet, some took a strict position to rule out the role of error and its correction in SLA (Krashen, 1985). As to Krashen, the two types of knowledge ('acquisition' and learning') embedded in the acquisition-learning hypothesis, which respectively is intuitive knowledge and conscious knowledge, are mutually exclusive. As a result, he suggested that no role can be assigned for both explicit instructions and CF. In case of monitor hypothesis, he further claimed that the learned aspects help as a monitor to remedy the output of the acquired system, thus implies a limited role of CF for learning. However, for Krashen, exposure to comprehensible input alone contributes to language acquisition, which means there is no need for CF or form-focused instruction. As to followers of Krashen's theory, CF may hinder second language development as it is normally thought to strike learners' confidence and provoke the affective filter.

In support of this notion, some early empirical studies report that CF hardly contributes to SLA, while others still have a strong position. Choi (2013) summarised why Truscott (1996) neglected CF. Firstly, CF lacks effectiveness if it does not fit students' developmental sequence. Secondly, even if it is effective, it is likely to be beneficial only to the development of explicit or metalinguistic knowledge, and it is unlikely to affect students' implicit knowledge or procedural knowledge. Thirdly, the language learning process is not a linear information transfer from teacher to students, but it is a gradual and complex process. Fourth, Truscott believes that in practice, it is not possible to ascertain that teachers provide sufficient and reliable feedback, and it is not assured whether students are able or willing to use such feedback effectively in their learning process (Truscott, 1999). In support of this, Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) maintain that due to the universal order of acquisition theory through learners' developmental stages, teaching inclusive of EC cannot change the order of acquisition of L2 form. According to their argument, EC can be viewed as a waste of time. Thus, Krashen (1981) argued that CF is needless and might even be harmful.

Contemporary Perspectives on the Efficacy of CF

Recently, language instructional pedagogy has placed an emphasis mainly on interactional hypothesis and socio-cultural paradigm in language teaching and learning. In CLT, for example, "assessment should be positive or non-judgmental" to enhance "a positive self-image" of the student, as an individual and language learner (Ur, 1996). Thus, interactional hypothesis accounts for language learning via input, output and CF, all of which occur during interaction (Mackey & Gass, 2006). Thus, advocates of these theories consider the role of CF from nearly the same perspectives. The interactionists' hypothesis (Long, 1996) posits that interaction which pushes learners to modify their output in response to CF may facilitate L2 learning, as this type of interaction brings together CF, learner competence, and learner output.

Again, Vygotsky (1981) viewed CF from the perspective that language learning occurs through the mediation of social interaction between learners and more proficient ones (teachers or peers), which he referred to as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In this conjecture, CF will possibly inform its effectiveness to L2 learning provided that it aligns with learners' ZDP. The language learning methodologies rooted in this theory direct learners who are engaged in either writing activities or oral interaction to learn by doing, together with one

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hand. They provide peer feedback on one another so that they can develop their language proficiency from one another. Lantolf and Thorne (2007) suggest that learners, with the assistance of other guidance within ZPD (including scaffolding or CF), can eventually able to use the L2 autonomously.

Empirical Research on the Effectiveness of CF

In SLA studies, CF has been given a huge attention since the 1970s. Here, most of the previous research regarding CF were descriptive and simply focused on describing the features of CF, for example, works of Allwright (1975) and Gass & Varonis (1994). As time goes on, the investigators switched rigorous experimental design with an intention of exploring the relative efficacy of various aspects of CF strategies on SLA. For example, Hendrickson (1978), Truscott (1996; 1999; 2007) experimented to examine the effectiveness of CF, though their findings do not support the idea that CF is beneficial in helping learners at SLA. Here, Ferris (2007) have actively rebutted with this finding, acknowledging Truscott's idea he argues that (1) it is premature to establish any conclusion since the research base is not complete or conclusive; (2) there is some positive research evidence on the effectiveness of CF on L2 writings; and (3) students have a strong desire to get CF from teachers.

The findings of research conducted considering the idea of the cognitive-interactionist approach to SLA indicate that students show major improvements in accuracy if communication tasks are accompanied by negative feedback and other types of focus on form. Lightbown and Spada (1990) examined the effects of CF and form-focused instruction on SLA in the context of intensive ESL programs. The study investigated relationships between instruction, interaction, and acquisition, considering (N=100) native speakers of French enrolled in five-month intensive ESL courses in either grades five or six in Quebec. The findings showed that overall language skills are best developed through meaning-based instruction in which form-focused activities and CF are provided.

Similarly, White (1991) experimented on the effectiveness of form-focused instruction, including positive and negative evidence, in assisting L2 learners in arriving at the appropriate properties of the target language. The linguistic focus of this study was concerned with one of the potential learnability problems for L1 French speakers acquiring English, verb-raising, in particular, English adverb placement. The participants were (N=164), consisting of 11 and 12-year-old Francophone learners of English. The finding showed that explicit evidence, both negative and positive, is more effective in assisting L2 learners to acquire the properties of the target language than positive evidence alone.

Local Studies on the Effectiveness of CF

There are a few local studies, particularly on the role of CF, SLA in focus. Mesfin (2011), for example, qualitatively assessed the practice of teachers' feedback provision on the students' writing, focusing on thirty-eight grade 12 purposively chosen participants (30 students and 8 teachers). Data from document analysis and interviews revealed that teachers mostly use the EC techniques and error identification, which locate the place and type of error made. According to Mesfin, teachers seem to have a positive attitude and understanding that CF has a role to play, provided that the teachers take into account the nature of the learning process, students' needs and objectives of the lesson when responding to students' writing.

Again, Agizew's (2012) study focuses on "A descriptive Analysis of Process and Pattern of giving written CF considering grade 10 students." he also conducted interviews, questionnaires and document analysis to collect data from a sample (N=100 students and N = 6 teachers). Agizew concluded that learners and teachers confirmed that there is effectiveness in providing feedback, although the practice of giving written feedback is narrow in scope.

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What Type of CF is the Most Effective?

As summarised by Ellis (2009), pedagogists and SLA investigators found various strategies of EC. The works of Lyster and Ranta (1997), for example, contributed to the formulation of these strategies. And these CF methods are hierarchically categorised by many SLA researchers in accordance with whether they are used for written CF or Oral CF. Direct, indirect, as well as metalinguistic types of correction are regarded as written CF (Ellis, 2009). Regarding this, SLA researchers have shown that indirect written correction stimulates learners' independence when it comes to written production. However, direct correction helps in the internalisation of the correct pattern (Chandler, 2003) and can be advantageous for beginners (Ferris, 2002). Yet, oral CF strategies could be proposed as being explicit or implicit (Carroll & Swain, 1993; Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994), and secondly, they are identified as being either input-providing or output-prompting (Ellis, 2006, 2009).

The difference between these strategies is that CF that provides the learners with the correct target form is considered to be input-providing, but feedback strategies which push learners to self-correct their own are labelled as output-prompting. These strategies can either be implicit, in which the corrective force remains covert, or explicit, where the corrective force is made clear to the learners (Ellis, 2013). According to Ellis, Loewen, and Erlam (2006), both implicit and explicit assist acquisition; however, explicit CF is largely more effective than implicit correction.

Yet, various CF strategies have attracted attention from different SLA researchers, although researchers have been reporting that not all aspects of CF are equally effective and it's mainly the researchers' duty to realise which works best (Ellis, 2013). For instance, in the case of the relative effectiveness of recast, a debate continues to emerge among SLA researchers as a result of shortcomings that arise from the nature of the strategy (Rezaei, Mozaffari & Hatef, 2011). Though studies by Long (2006) and Doughty (2001), for example, regarded recasts as an effective technique, other researchers, Panova & Lyster (2002), hardly see merits in the role of a recast to facilitate interlanguage development, as students skip recasts unnoticed.

Lyster (2004) also considered recasts as ambiguous and learners had difficulty in determining when recasts were corrective and when recasts were not. Putting other words, Loewen and Philp (2006) stated that learners might be simply provided with the correct form without being pushed to modify their interlanguage since recasts don't elicit repair. That is why researchers prefer to recommend output-prompting strategies rather than recast, since output-prompting permits learners to increase control over linguistic forms that they have partially acquired. Studies by Ellis et al. (2006) on the effects of recasts and metalinguistic explanation on the acquisition of past tense (-ed) presented a conclusion that metalinguistic explanation showed more effectiveness. Conversely, Doughty (2001) and Long (2007) argued that recasts, as an input-providing technique, are considered more effective than prompts or elicitations because they provide both positive and negative feedback.

Who Should Do the Correction?

Yet, the choice of 'who to make the correction' also varies according to the tenets of different language teaching methods or SLA theories. For example, teachers led by the behaviourists' view take the lion's share to actively provide CF; consequently, students are strictly limited to copying or listening to teachers' corrections. This notion leads us to distinguish the dichotomies between direct and indirect CF in terms of students' involvement in CF provision; as to Van Beuningen (2011) where the former refers to an indication of the error and the corresponding correct linguistic form by the teacher, while the later only signify that an error has been made and just left for the students to correct.

As part and parcel of CF, the efficacy of direct and indirect feedback also varies. For example, the

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supporters of direct CF stressed the merit that the more complicated aspects of language forms could be covered by the teacher. In other words, Chandler (2003) claimed that indirect CF provides learners with insufficient information to resolve complex errors; syntactic errors are good instances. Chandler continues to have a position that direct CF enables learners to instantly internalise the correct form as provided by their teacher. Bitchener and Knoch (2010b) further noted that only direct CF offers learners the kind of explicit information that is needed for testing hypotheses about the target language.

Conversely, Ferris (2006) noted that there is evidence to suggest that urging the learner to self-correct is effective in promoting acquisition. Lalande (1982), for example, advocated that students achieve more in indirect CF because they have to be engaged in a more profound form of language processing when they are self-editing their writing. Yet, the effectiveness of indirect CF "requires pupils to engage in guided learning and problem solving; as a result, it promotes the type of reflection that is more likely to foster long-term acquisition" (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008, p. 415). In line with this, recent language teaching pedagogies, however, grant learners either to self-correct or to peer-correct each other, provided that they are capable of effectively making the accurate correction; otherwise, the teacher will take the role. As to Hyland and Hyland (2006), unlike direct CF, the indirect CF might be less beneficial for students with lower proficiency in L2, since they lack the level of meta-linguistic awareness that is necessary to self-correct their errors.

Empirical Studies on Who Should Do the Correction

Traditionally, teachers were seen as responsible for correcting students' errors. However, with the rise of the socio-cultural/interactionist perspective, there has been a shift towards peer and self-correction as alternatives to direct teacher feedback. Cabal (2015) argues that interaction-based activities, such as group or pair work, should be the central strategy in language teaching, allowing students to correct each other. For example, Morris and Tarone (2003) found that paired EC disrupted CF efficacy due to proficiency imbalances, with less proficient learners failing to recognise corrections, leading to defensiveness and frustration. Their study highlights how interpersonal dynamics can impede effective feedback. Similarly, Mackey (2002) found that students only noticed a minority of errors when correcting each other. Mackey also found that native speakers successfully prompted learner noticing in over a third of corrections, underscoring the importance of expertise in providing effective CF. These studies demonstrate that successful CF depends on the nature of the interaction and participants' proficiency level.

Another researcher, Yoshida (2008) investigated teachers' CF choices and learners' preferences and findings show that teachers favoured recasts due to time constraints and students' cognitive styles. Teachers also employed elicitation and metalinguistic feedback when they believed students could self-correct. Yoshida explored that both teachers and learners perceive self-correction as more effective than direct teacher correction, highlighting a preference for strategies that promote learner autonomy. In line with this, early researchers, Hendrickson (1978) and James (1998) emphasised the benefits of self-correction, particularly for maintaining learners' motivation and emotional well-being.

Local Studies on the Choice of the Corrector

Solomon (1995) investigated the effectiveness of self-correction of written errors in EFL classrooms, employing a pre-test/post-test experimental design. The study found that self-correction strategies were more effective in improving student writing performance than direct CF, leading to the recommendation that teachers should regularly provide feedback opportunities for students to self-correct their writing inaccuracies. Meki (2013) also investigated student participation in peer feedback

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activities during paragraph writing, identifying factors hindering implementation, including students' lack of motivation, inadequate concentration, and limited prior experience with feedback.

Solomon (1995), in his review of local studies (Getnet, 1993; Mihretu, 1994), affirmed widespread use of direct EC by university and high school EFL teachers. As part of his study, Emana (1995) assessed student involvement in correcting their errors, reporting that teachers favoured CF strategies that limit student participation, despite students' preference for self-correction. Similarly, Animaw (2011) reviewed Samson's (2007) research, which, like Emana (1995), explored CF types and student involvement, revealing that teachers favoured CF approaches that limited active learner engagement in error treatment.

Implications for Language Teaching and SLA Research

Self-correction and peer feedback offer pedagogical opportunities for autonomous or collaborative learning, shifting away from traditional teacher-centred instruction. Self-correction fosters "learning to learn" (Dickinson, 1988, as cited in Solomon, 1995), promoting risk-taking and self-reliance (Green & Hecht, 1993, as cited in Solomon, 1995). EFL teachers can create opportunities for self-correction and peer feedback before teacher intervention, while SLA researchers can examine the relative efficacy of teacher-driven feedback versus student-led correction strategies using experimental research designs.

Which Errors to Correct

Despite the absence of definitive guidelines in language teaching pedagogy and SLA theories regarding error selection, some researchers have offered proposals. It remains challenging to determine whether CF should focus on selective errors or be unfocused to address various errors (Van Beuningen, 2011). Corder (1967) advocates for correcting errors which reveal gaps in learners' interlanguage, rather than mistakes. Burt (1975) suggests prioritising "global" errors affecting sentence organisation over "local" errors that don't impede meaning, a viewpoint echoed by Hendrickson (1978).

While some argue against any role for CF in L2 acquisition (Krashen, 1982), restricting it to simple features like the third-person-s in English, others propose more nuanced perspectives. Truscott (2007) suggests CF has limited value for grammatical competence and can only address simple, discrete errors. Ellis (2009) suggests that CF should focus on salient grammatical structures that learners struggle with. As with the teaching experience, however, deciding which errors to address in writing, given the complexity of language and the range of structural errors, remains a debatable issue.

Empirical Studies on the Choice of Errors to Correct

Contemporary research has explored the effects of focused CF (Kao, 2013; Afraz & Ghaemi, 2012). Kao (2013) found that focused feedback on specific errors, like English articles, leads to greater long-term acquisition. Other investigators, for example, Bitchener and Knoch (2009, 2010b) and Sheen (2007), similarly found that focused CF targeting consistently difficult features, while ignoring other inaccuracies, yields positive results. In general, these experimental studies demonstrate the efficacy of a focused approach to feedback provision.

Conversely, few studies have explored unfocused feedback, although Van Beuningen, De Jong, and Kuiken (2008) reported its benefits. While the efficacy of focused versus unfocused CF is less researched (Van Beuningen, 2010), Ellis et al. (2008) found no significant difference in accuracy between the two approaches, despite focused learners receiving more corrections on the target feature. However, Sheen, Wright, and Moldawa (2009) concluded that focused CF is more beneficial, as the unsystematic nature of unfocused

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correction, where some errors are ignored, can confuse learners.

Implications for Language Teaching and SLA Research

Language methodologists and SLA researchers recommend a focused approach to EC, targeting a limited number of error types (Ur, 1996; Sheen, 2007; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Ellis et al., 2008). Rebutting the suggestion that written CF is ineffective, they indicated that focused written CF is effective (Lyster, 2004). Ellis (2009) concludes that focused EC is essential in experimental research, requiring researchers to predetermine which errors to correct to create appropriate assessments. Therefore, teachers should not attempt to correct numerous errors simultaneously. SLA researchers can conduct experiments comparing the effects of focused versus unfocused feedback approaches.

What is the Best Time for the Provision of Corrective Feedback?

The optimal timing of EC remains a debated issue with no clear consensus, although both immediate and delayed CF contribute to language learning in different ways (Ellis & Shintani, 2014). Immediate feedback corrects errors as they occur, while delayed CF postpones correction, allowing learners to complete their intended message (Farahani & Salajegheh, 2015). Behaviourists view immediate feedback as a reinforcer for correct responses (Skinner, 1954, as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 1986), aligning with the ALM's emphasis on eliminating errors. Doughty (2001) argues that CF must occur within a "window of opportunity" to impact interlanguage, enabling the simultaneous development of form and meaning that enhances fluency.

In oral CF, teachers must decide whether to correct errors immediately or delay correction to avoid interrupting communication (Hedge, 2000). Delaying correction minimises interference and student anxiety (Ellis, 2013), with Farahani and Salajegheh (2015) emphasising that CF that "break the stream of speech should be avoided" (p. 187), allowing learners to maintain fluency despite inaccuracies. Unlike oral CF, written CF is typically delayed, as teachers provide feedback after students complete their writing (Buffa, 2016). Ellis (2009) supports this delayed approach as it allows teachers to collect and assess written drafts before correcting.

Empirical Studies on the Timeline of CF

Recent studies on corrective feedback (CF) in SLA have focused on the timing of EC, with notable contributions from Kelly (2006), Fagan (2015), and Farahani and Salajegheh (2015). Fagan (2015) emphasised managing language errors in real-time by considering individual errors, task types, and peers' proficiency, revealing that immediate management can enhance learning opportunities. Conversely, Lewis (2005) argued that immediate correction may be detrimental depending on the skill and interaction context, while Hendrickson (1978) noted it could disrupt communication. Farahani and Salajegheh (2015) contended that avoiding communication for corrections is illogical, aligning with Ellis (2005) and Kelly (2006), who recommended delaying CF. Yet, these studies found teachers favoured immediate correction, whereas learners preferred delayed feedback.

Local Studies on the Timeline of CF

There are few locally done studies on the areas of timing or when to correct errors that occur in SLA. However, Animaw (2011) has tried to summarise Bekana (2009) and Abdisa (2008) as sample indications of local research. Animaw summarised in his dissertation that Abdisa shares one of Bekana's objectives in that he examined whether teachers delayed error treatment or interrupted the students to treat the errors students commit. However, these researchers' findings contradicted each other. Abdisa reported that teachers interrupted learners to give correction frequently than delaying the correction, though they thought that they did not interrupt. Whereas Bekana's findings showed that

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the teachers corrected content errors more often than language-related errors, and they delayed treatment more than interrupted.

Implications for Language Teaching and SLA Research

Establishing clear conclusions on CF in language instruction is challenging due to its complexity (Ellis, 2009). However, teachers should address errors based on the target language skill and error type, opting for immediate or delayed correction as needed. For oral CF, teachers can choose to correct errors right away or note them for later correction. Additionally, SLA researchers can investigate the effects of immediate versus delayed feedback on productive skills through rigorous experimental designs with pre-test and post-test assessments.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In summary, a clear understanding of the existence and role of errors, along with a positive attitude toward EC, enables teachers to recognise CF as an essential component of SLA, particularly in teaching English as a foreign language. This understanding allows teachers to tailor their support based on the nature of the target skills, effectively identifying appropriate EC strategies and determining the timing of feedback—either immediate or delayed. Additionally, a positive perspective on errors helps teachers discern which errors they should correct and which ones students should be encouraged to self-correct. This insight also serves as an important implication for SLA research, prompting investigators to evaluate the effectiveness of CF in facilitating second language learning. Hence, according to Ellis (2009), there is promising indication that CF can support language learning, and recently researchers are making a shift of focus from dealing with whether CF works to investigating what CF works best.

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