

Effect of Oral Corrective Feedback on Iranian EFL Learners' Phonological Uptake and Retention

Amin Naeimi, Ph.D Candidate, Department of English, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University,
Tabriz, Iran

naeimi@iauyazd.ac.ir

Mahnaz Saeidi*, Associate Professor, Department of English, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad
University, Tabriz, Iran

m_saeidi@iaut.ac.ir

Biok Behnam, Associate Professor, Department of English, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad
University, Tabriz, Iran

b.behnam@azaruniv.edu

Abstract

This study investigates the effect of four types of oral corrective feedback, namely, explicit elicitation, implicit elicitation, explicit recast and implicit recast on the most commonly mispronounced phonological features among Iranian EFL learners through immediate uptake and retention. Five classes were randomly categorized into four experimental groups and one control group, each with 18 intermediate-level male learners. The treatment was conducted in the form of a retelling task in nine sessions. During the feedback sessions, the learners' uptake was recorded. The learners' retention was also perused in one immediate and one delayed post-test. The results revealed that those learners who received explicit recast obtained the highest score in terms of correct uptake, and that the groups performed differently across different time periods. The learners' scores enhanced over time; however, the increase then leveled off and even dropped in the delayed post-test in all the experimental groups except for the group which received explicit elicitation, apparently leading to more retention of the target phonological features. The study offers insights to teachers regarding the effect of recast and elicitation in their explicit and implicit form on L2 pronunciation.

Keywords: Corrective feedback, recast, elicitation, uptake, retention

Introduction

Sounds play an important role in communication, and language teachers are required to take due heed of teaching pronunciation in their classrooms. Unless one has sufficient knowledge of the sound patterns of the target language, he can neither encode nor decode the intended message; there are glaring differences among the phonological systems of different languages, lurking to flummox even the advanced learners, hinder the flow of communication and even lead to ineptness, unintelligibility and misunderstanding (Yarmohammadi, 1969; Chu, 2011). Navehebrahim (2012) asserts that many Iranian learners "do not have a fixed idea of English sound system and unfamiliarity with the English phonological rules is one of the factors that affect learners' errors in pronunciation" (p. 524). Therefore, pronunciation instruction is considered to be of great importance and utility for successful oral communication to take place, and many strategies have been developed to enhance this component, including listening and imitation, phonetic training, minimal-pair drills, using visual aids, working on tongue twisters, developmental approximation drills, practice of vowel and stress shifts, reading aloud, recitation

and recording learners' production (Hismanoglu, 2006, Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin, 2010).

When language teachers embark upon the task of providing their students with the opportunity to reflect on their utterance and consider other possibilities, corrective feedback also comes under the spotlight with the chief aim of decimating their errors in language production and perception (Campillo, 2004). Corrective feedback most often refers to the linguistic and verbal response by which an addressee endeavors to correct, or amend the speaker's erroneous utterance, usually consisting of phonological, syntactic, semantic or functional incorrectness. Studies on corrective feedback have focused on its type (planned vs. unplanned), nature (explicit vs. implicit), mode (written vs. spoken), frequency, role and required context in language teaching and learning (Lyster & Saito, 2010; Lyster, Saito, & Sato, 2013; Nassaji, 2009; Panova & Lyster, 2002). A variety of corrective techniques have so far been proposed in the literature, including recast, translation, elicitation, metalinguistic cues, repetition and clarification requests.

Recast has been defined by Long (1996) as a discourse move that rephrases the speaker's erroneous utterance by altering one or two components while at the same time maintaining the central meaning. Lyster and Ranta (1997) have defined recasts as "teacher's reformulations of all or part of a student's utterance, minus the error" (p. 46). Nelson, Carskaddon and Bonvillian (1973) have been claimed to be the first researchers who have applied the term "recast" to refer to responses by adults to children's utterances (cited in Nicholas et al, 2001). Explicit Recast (ER) is defined as a type of feedback that reformulates the pronunciation error and highlights it with added stress and rising intonation (Nassaji, 2009). For example:

Student: And they found out my friend [pronounced as /ferend/] running away.

Teacher: OK, your FRIEND [pronounced as /frend/ with added stress] was running away.

Student: Oh, friend [pronounced as /frend/].

Implicit Recast (IR) is a type of feedback that reformulates the pronunciation error within its larger context with a confirmatory tone and without any additional clue to highlight the error (Nassaji, 2009). For example:

Student: And they found out my friend [pronounced as /ferend/] running away.

Teacher: OK, your friend [pronounced as /frend/] was running away.

Student: Friend [pronounced as /frend/].

Elicitation, as the other major type of corrective feedback, has been defined by Panova and Lyster (2002), as "a correction technique that prompts the learner to self-correct" (p. 584). According to Lyster and Ranta (1997), pausing, asking questions, and asking students to reformulate their own utterances are examples of elicitation. Elicitation has also been described along a spectrum of explicitness (Nassaji, 2009). Explicit Elicitation (EE) has been referred to as a type of feedback that elicits a reformulation by repeating and highlighting the error with an additional metalinguistic prompt (Lyster & Ranata, 1997; Nassaji, 2009). For example:

Student: And they found out my friend [pronounced as /ferend/] running away.

Teacher: Is that correct, friend [pronounced as /ferend/]?

Student: Sorry. Friend [pronounced as /frend/].

Implicit Elicitation (IE) has been defined as a type of feedback that elicits a reformulation without making any reference to the error, by simply asking for clarification or repetition (Lyster & Ranata, 1997; Nassaji, 2009). For example:

Student: And they found out my friend [pronounced as /ferend/] running away.

Teacher: I'm sorry, they found out your ...?

Student: My friend [pronounced as /frend/].

According to Rezaei, Mozaffari and Hatef (2011), there are three ways to accomplish elicitation during a face-to-face communication, each of which varying in their degree of implicitness or explicitness. The first one is “request for reformulations of an ill-formed utterance. The second one is through the use of open questions. The last strategy, which is the least communicatively intrusive strategy and hence the most implicit, is the use of strategic pauses to allow a learner to complete an utterance” (p. 24).

Another worthy-of-attention point concerning the impact of oral corrective feedback, of any type, is the need to make a distinction between immediate uptake and subsequent retention. Such differentiation is, indeed, crucial since equating uptake with retention will undoubtedly confound the research results. Uptake is the immediate response to feedback, while retention is the ability of subsequent, and of course appropriate, production and perception of the target language. It has been claimed that uptake cannot be a reliable measure of language acquisition (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Lyster, 1998), that uptake “does not mean that long term learning has occurred” (Nabei & Swain, 2002, p. 46), and that the best measure of learners’ language knowledge is their subsequent production and perception of a linguistic skill or component (Williams, 2001, as cited in Fotos & Nassaji, 2007).

Literature review

The findings of the research studies regarding feedback strategies and the effect they bear on language learning have always been different, and sometimes despairingly controversial, to the extent that some researchers have even cast doubt on their effectiveness, applicability and reliability (Allwright, 1975; Chaudron, 1986, 1988; Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001; Hendrickson, 1978; Kim, 2004; Long, 2006; Truscott & Hsu, 2008). Chaudron (1988) has revealed that feedback is usually provided erratically and pretty often goes unnoticed by learners, and Allwright and Bailey (as cited in Rezaei, Mozaffari, & Hatef, 2011) have argued that the application of corrective feedback should be delayed to trigger the learners’ self-repair. According to nativists like Krashen (1981), error correction is not only useless but also it might be harmful for language learners.

By contrast, many others consider feedback as the information that is provided to the learner to improve his performance. Lyster and Ranta (1997) studied the distribution and frequency of four types of corrective feedback and French learners’ uptake in four elementary-level immersion classrooms. The researchers then classified errors as phonological, lexical or grammatical. Their study revealed that although recasts were the most frequently used method of correction (55% of cases), they were the least effective method in eliciting learners’ accurate immediate uptake, while the other types of feedback including elicitations, repetitions and clarification requests resulted in more successful student-generated repair.

Leeman (2003) studied 74 learners of L2 Spanish who were engaged in communicative interaction with her as the teacher; she came to the conclusion that only groups that received recast and enhanced-salience of positive evidence could significantly outperform the control group in the post-test, and that the implicit negative evidence could not play a major role in the learners’ language development.

Ammar and Spada (2006) studied the impacts of recasts and prompts on L2 Learners’ written and oral ability across different proficiency levels were analyzed, and prompts were revealed to be more contributive to learning than recasts and the effectiveness of recasts was shown to be sensitive to the learners’ proficiency level.

A major study carried out by Ammar (2008), on the effects of prompts and recast on Francophone learners’ acquisition of third person possessive determiners, depicted that prompts

are more beneficial to language development than recasts, particularly for those learners who are at the elementary level of language proficiency.

Nassaji (2009) attributes the effectiveness of recasts and elicitations to their characteristics and degree of explicitness. He states that recasts “can occur in the form of a meaning-focused confirmation of a learner’s message with no explicit clues, in which case they can be considered fairly implicit and possibly ambiguous in their function as corrective feedback” (p. 422). Recasts can also be considered to be more explicit and transparent when they “occur intensively and repeatedly in response to certain target forms or can be used in conjunction with additional intonational signals such as rising intonation and added stress” (p. 422). Besides, several factors are shown to have an influence on the degree of explicitness including the form and number of changes they involve or the length of the feedback.

Many researchers even believe that error correction can foster teacher-learner interaction in language classes which is a key in the success of learning (Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997); in socio-cultural perspectives to language learning, correction has also been claimed to have a facilitative and constructive role (Sheen and Ellis, 2011).

Sepehrinia et al. (2011) have considered recast as the most frequent type of feedback yet probably the least effective one; “while some researchers have criticized it as inefficient, others have supported it as an unobtrusive type of feedback, especially useful during interactive activities” (p. 18). Two important factors, they have claimed, contribute to the effectiveness of recasts, namely saliency or noticeability of recasts by the learners and also the learners’ language proficiency.

Rassaei, Moinzadeh and Youhanaee (2012) studied the effects of two types of corrective feedback, namely recasts and metalinguistic feedback, on the acquisition of implicit and explicit knowledge by 86 Persian EFL learners via timed and untimed grammaticality judgment tests and an elicited oral imitation test. Their results revealed a distinct advantage of the metalinguistic feedback over recast in both post- and delayed post-tests and its contribution to the acquisition of L2 knowledge. Besides, the effects of metalinguistic feedback were shown to be more invariant than those of recasts.

The study conducted by Vahdani and khabbazi Alavi (2013) demonstrated that recast was the most frequent type of oral corrective feedback for the classes. Also, they showed that the recast method was mostly favored by high proficient learners while the lower level learners preferred to be orally corrected by elicitation.

Saeidi and Raveshi (2013) studied the effect of the two types of corrective feedback (i.e., recast and elicitation) on 24 upper-intermediate L2 learners’ mispronunciation in terms of their immediate uptake and subsequent retention (in careful and vernacular styles). Their study revealed that recasts led to more repaired uptake as compared to elicitation; however, it was the explicit elicitation method that resulted in a significant change in the learners’ use of careful and vernacular styles.

Lyster, Saito and Sato (2013) compared the results of research studies dealing with the frequency of corrective feedback across instructional SLA contexts, revealed the learners’ corrective feedback preferences, and elaborated on the theoretical perspectives and research studies in support of and against the use of different types of feedback, especially with regard to the role of instruction, the overall purpose of the corrective feedback, and also the learners’ uptake. They also introduce novel avenues in better appreciating and fortifying the role of corrective feedback in class interactions.

Based on Golshan (2015), the effectiveness of corrective feedback hinges upon on a conflation of factors such as type, mode, complexity, timing and intensity of feedback as well as the type of error and the learners' language proficiency.

Research questions

The present study was intended to address the following research questions:

Q1. Is there any significant difference among the four experimental groups, receiving EE, IE, ER and IR, in terms of uptake of the target phonological features?

Q2. Is there any significant difference among the four experimental groups, receiving EE, IE, ER and IR, and the control group in terms of retention of the target phonological features?

Methodology

Participants

Ninety male EFL learners with an age range of 16 to 25 in five intact classes who had already signed up for the intermediate level in a language institutes in Yazd, Iran were chosen. The classes were randomly assigned to four experimental groups and one control group. Each experimental group was supposed to receive a specific type of oral corrective feedback (namely, EE, IE, ER and IR), while for the control group no feedback was provided.

Instruments and materials

To secure the homogeneity of the participants, the Preliminary English Test (PET) was carried out, which is a kind of standardized examination designed by the Cambridge English Language Assessment. To glean the research data and objectify the scoring in the experiment sessions, some researcher-made pronunciation checklists were required for the observer to record the number of phonological errors of the participants, the type of feedback provided for each type of phonological error, and subsequently the learners' uptake and retention. Besides, two textbooks entitled "Agatha Christie, Woman of Mystery" by John Escott (2008) and "Hamlet" by Alistair McCallum (2008) were chosen. Based on the Oxford Bookworms Library, the difficulty level of the books was the same, each being at stage 2 and having 700 headwords.

Procedure

This study lasted about eleven weeks (i.e., 20 sessions), including two observation sessions, one session for the pre-test, nine treatment sessions, one session for the first post-test, six sessions with no treatment (a four-week interval), and a final session for the second or delayed post-test. Via cluster random sampling, five EFL classes with 90 students were selected and categorized into five homogeneous groups. The groups were then randomly assigned to four experimental groups and one control group. Each class was held two sessions a week, each session lasted 105 minutes, and approximately 45 minutes of each session was allotted to the study, centered on story retelling tasks as the main data-collecting tool, and the procedure of offering corrective feedback by the teachers and tapping the learners' reaction (i.e., uptake and retention).

The classes were taught by different teachers, who were first trained with the specific type of corrective feedback they were supposed to provide. The teacher in the control group was asked not to provide any type of feedback for his students' phonological errors. The researcher played the role of the observer, taking down the learners' correct and incorrect pronunciation, the types of corrective feedback, and the students' uptakes. The study details were not revealed to the participants until the end of the experiment.

The observation was conducted in the first two sessions. This was in the form of a very accurate observation of the students' activities in all five classes. Here, all the class activities in which the students were engaged including readings, discussions, questions and answers were focused. The main aim was to find three types of phonological errors with the highest and at the same time most similar frequency across all the experimental groups and the control group. It is important to point out that the (suprasegmental) prosodic features like intonation of speech, rhythm, pitch or stress pattern were not taken into account due to the complexity of providing a corresponding corrective feedback to the errors.

All the pronunciation errors of the students were sorted out based on their frequency of occurrence in each group, and then three types of phonological error were chosen. These errors were the use of long /i/ instead of short /i/, adding the /e/ sound to consonant clusters, and pronouncing /v/ for /w/, which together comprised about 57 percent of the overall learners' segmental phonological errors. These three types of phonological errors, in turn, became the basis of the pre-test, treatment, and the two post-tests. The frequency of each of these errors is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Frequency of each type of target error in the observation sessions*

Type of error	Frequency
adding /e/ to consonant clusters	22%
using long /i/ instead of short /i/	18%
pronouncing /v/ for /w/	17%

Some other types of phonological errors included the use of long /u/ instead of short /u/ (13%), short /i/ instead of long /i/ (10%) and /e/ instead of /ə/ (4%). The mispronunciation of proper names was not considered in data gathering.

In the third session (i.e., after the observation), the pre-test was carried out. The students were asked to retell an assigned part of the story "Agatha Christie, Woman of Mystery". To secure the validity of the experiment, the retelling task took two minutes for every student and it was first modeled by the teacher; the students became familiarized with the required retelling procedure and structure. The reason for applying the retelling task was that the target phonological features could be focused better and in a more controlled manner; since the teachers were supposed to continuously interrupt the students while retelling and provide feedback, the retelling task was more appropriate than normal communication. That is because in retelling, students are more prepared and apt to speak than in an on-the-spot interaction.

In the pre-test, the three types of phonological errors already chosen in the observation stage were focused. Here, the researcher attempted to count the number of times each of these three features was used by the students during the re-telling task. For the sake of consistency, when a learner happened to repeat an error because of hesitation, each time the error was made was counted. In sum, the number of correct and incorrect pronunciation of the sound /w/, the short /i/, and consonant clusters were computed, based on which a score was given to the students out of 20. No feedback or correction was provided to any groups.

After the pre-test, the treatment started; for each experimental group, one type of corrective feedback was given to all three types of phonological error. Each student was asked to retell a part of the short story "Hamlet" in two minutes. The learners in the experimental groups were given the corresponding feedback by the teacher whenever they mispronounced a target phonological feature, while those in the control group were not given any feedback. The feedback

was given once, and the learner who had committed the error was checked by the observer whether he could successfully correct the error or not right after the feedback, which was marked as uptake or no uptake. The learners' pronunciation errors, the teachers' feedback and the learners' uptake were recorded in the checklists for all the participants in each session and then were aggregated for all the learners during the nine sessions in each experimental group. The whole class was also audio-recorded, which helped re-checking the accuracy of the computations. If the teacher missed an error or did not provide the proper feedback, or when the other students provided the correct pronunciation before the learner got a chance to repair, the error would not be considered. This happened just for about five percent of the whole feedback activities, and hence was negligible. Besides, for some students it took longer than two minutes to finish their retelling assignment; however, just the first two minutes was considered for the data collection. In addition, only in about seven percent of the cases, the students could not continue retelling up to the allowed time mostly because of being unprepared and/or forgetting a part of the story, yet their performance was considered. Since no feedback was provided by the teacher to the control group, no uptake was also expected either. Other activities were also taken up in the class such as conversation practice, class discussions, grammar teaching and language exercises, yet the teachers did not, as much as possible, give the students any other pronunciation clues.

After the treatment sessions, two post-tests were carried out in order to examine the delayed effect of feedback types (i.e., retention) to see whether the participants could recall the repaired uptakes or not after two logical time lapses. Both of these post-tests were quite similar to the pre-test, in which the learners were asked to retell a similar section from the same story book, and their performance was recorded. The first post-test was done in session 13, right after the treatment. Then, from session 14 to 19 (about four weeks), the experimental groups were not given any feedback (i.e., treatment) and afterwards the second post-test was conducted in session 20. For the purpose of data analysis, the scores the learners achieved based on their correct pronunciations, errors and uptakes were calculated and became the basis for the statistical analyses.

Results

The first research question dealt with the differences among the EE, IE, ER and IR groups in terms of uptake of the target phonological features. Table 2 depicts the descriptive statistics.

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics for the performance of the learners in experimental groups in the uptake*

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
EE	18	12.6028	2.52915	.59613
IE	18	10.1000	3.47377	.81877
ER	18	13.6111	2.78270	.65589
IR	18	10.3556	2.92137	.68857
Total	72	11.6674	3.24917	.38292

The mean score in the ER group was the highest of all, followed by the EE and IR groups, with the IE group in the lowest place. After ascertaining the normal distribution of the data and homogeneity of error variances, One-way ANOVA was run to statistically compare the means differences among the groups. The results are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. *One-way ANOVA for the uptake scores in the experimental groups*

	Sum Squares	of Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	158.951	52.984	6.100	.001
Within Groups	590.605	8.685		
Total	749.556			

There was a significant difference among the groups in terms of uptake. Tukey post-hoc test was conducted to ascertain which contrasts were significant; the results are given in Table 4.

Table 4. *Tukey post-hoc test for the uptake scores*

(I) group	(J) group	Mean Difference (I- J)	Std. Error	Sig.
	IE	2.50278	.98236	.062
EE	ER	-1.00833	.98236	.735
	IR	2.24722	.98236	.111
IE	ER	-3.51111*	.98236	.004
	IR	-.25556	.98236	.994
ER	IR	3.25556*	.98236	.008

There were significant differences between the IE and ER groups, and also between the ER and IR groups; explicit recast, therefore, proved to be significantly more conducive to uptake than implicit elicitation and implicit recast.

The second research question examined whether there was a significant difference among the groups in terms of retention of the target phonological features. The descriptive statistics for the pre-test, immediate post-test and delayed post-test are brought up in Table 5.

Table 5. *Descriptive statistics for the performance of the learners in experimental and control groups in the pre-test, immediate post-test and delayed post-test*

Test	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
	EE	18	12.5806	1.99975	.47135
	EI	18	13.8011	1.92244	.45312
Pre-test	ER	18	12.6894	2.15301	.50747
	IR	18	14.4278	2.52681	.59557
	Con.	18	13.5294	2.55491	.60220

	Total	90	13.4057	2.30414	.24288
	EE	18	14.6311	2.23857	.52764
	ER	18	14.8961	2.06752	.48732
Post 1	ER	18	14.3878	1.78483	.42069
	IR	18	14.5156	2.52947	.59620
	Con.	18	13.2128	2.07999	.49026
	Total	90	14.3287	2.18493	.23031
	EE	18	14.5900	1.94814	.45918
	ER	18	12.7394	1.50913	.35571
Post 2	ER	18	12.8744	1.88031	.44319
	IR	18	13.1461	2.27888	.53714
	Con.	18	12.9911	1.89499	.44665
	Total	90	13.2682	1.99323	.21011

To show which specific groups were significantly different from each other at each of the three time points, again after ensuring the normal distribution and homogeneity of variances, three one-way ANOVAs were run, yielding the results in Table 6.

Table 6. *One-way ANOVAs for the pre-test, immediate post-test and delayed post-test*

Test		Mean Square	F	Sig.
Pre-test	Between Groups	10.846	2.148	.082
	Within Groups	5.049		
Post 1	Between Groups	7.637	1.646	.170
	Within Groups	4.639		
Post 2	Between Groups	10.231	2.781	.032
	Within Groups	3.679		

Regarding the pre-test, there was not any statistically significant difference among the five experimental and control groups. It means that prior to the treatment sessions, all the learners started off at the same baseline. In regard to the immediate post-test, likewise, there was not any significant difference among the groups. It means that none of the treatment interventions (i.e., types of corrective feedback) could prove to be different from the others in a short-term period; although the mean score of the learners in all the experimental groups was seemingly higher than that in the control group, it failed to uncover any statistically significant difference among the groups. Regarding the delayed post-test, however, there was a significant difference among the groups; the effect of the treatment interventions was somewhere different among the groups after the time interval. The Tukey post-hoc test was conducted to address the comparison among the groups considering their delayed post-test scores. The results are given in Table 7.

Table 7. Tukey post-hoc test for the delayed post-test scores

(I) group	(J) group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
EE	IE	1.85056*	.63931	.038
	ER	1.71556	.63931	.065
	IR	1.44389	.63931	.169
	Con.	1.59889	.63931	.100
IE	ER	-.13500	.63931	1.000
	IR	-.40667	.63931	.969
	Con.	-.25167	.63931	.995
ER	IR	-.27167	.63931	.993
	Con.	-.11667	.63931	1.000
IR	Con.	.15500	.63931	.999

Although the EE group appeared to outperform the other experimental groups and the control group, the post-hoc test revealed that the significant difference only lay between the EE and IE groups. A comparison between the mean scores of the groups in the immediate and delayed post-test reveals the fact that time interval played a negative role in the learners' retention of the phonological features. Yet, to check the main effect of the between-subjects variable (i.e., group), the within-subjects variable (i.e., time) and also their interaction, mixed between-within ANOVA was performed. First, the sphericity assumption needed to be ensured, postulating that the variances of the differences between the related groups of the within-subject factor for all groups of the between-subjects factor were equal. The results are illustrated in Table 8.

Table 8. Mauchly's test of sphericity^a

Within	Mauchly's Approx.	df	Sig.	Epsilon ^b
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Subjects Effect	W	Chi-Square			Greenhouse -Geisser	Huynh- Feldt	Lower- bound
time	.962	3.290	2	.193	.963	1.000	.500

Since the probability value was greater than 0.05, the assumption of sphericity was not violated. Table 9 illustrates the results of the tests of between-subjects effects.

Table 9. Tests of between-subjects effects

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Squared	Eta
Intercept	50436.287	1	50436.287	5157.866	.000	.984	
group	28.342	4	7.085	.725	.578	.033	
Error	831.174	85	9.779				

There was no significant difference among the five groups, and none of them could outperform the others in each test. The results of the tests of within-subjects effects are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Tests of within-subjects effects

Source		Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Squared	Eta
time	Sphericity Assumed	29.930	16.685	.000	.164	
	Greenhouse- Geisser	31.080	16.685	.000	.164	
	Huynh-Feldt	29.930	16.685	.000	.164	
	Lower-bound	59.861	16.685	.000	.164	
time group	Sphericity Assumed	10.814	6.028	.000	.221	
	*Greenhouse- Geisser	11.229	6.028	.000	.221	
	Huynh-Feldt	10.814	6.028	.000	.221	
	Lower-bound	21.628	6.028	.000	.221	
Error(time)	Sphericity Assumed	1.794				
	Greenhouse- Geisser	1.863				
	Huynh-Feldt	1.794				
	Lower-bound	3.588				

The first set of rows revealed a significant main effect of time; the scores the learners obtained in the tests changed across the different time periods. Based on Cohen (1988), the partial eta-squared value of 0.16 also reveals a large effect size. The second set of rows also depicted a significant effect in the case of interaction between group and time. The partial eta-squared value of 0.22 suggests a very large effect size. The significant interaction, indeed, shows that the effect

of treatment was influenced by the level of the time variable. The trend analysis of polynomial contrasts is reported in Table 11.

Table 11. Tests of within-subjects contrasts

Source	time	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Squared	Eta Squared
time	Linear	.850	.406	.526	.005	
	Quadratic	59.011	39.505	.000	.317	
time * group	Linear	15.834	7.562	.000	.262	
	Quadratic	5.794	3.879	.006	.154	
Error(time)	Linear	2.094				
	Quadratic	1.494				

The linear component for the interaction of group and time was significant. The quadratic component for the interaction of group and time was also significant. The results reflect the fact that the scores the learners obtained did enhance linearly over time; however, the quadratic component also suggests that the increase then remarkably leveled off and even dropped at the last measurement (i.e., the delayed post-test). Since there was a significant interaction effect of group and time on the learners' scores, the analysis of the means plots would prove helpful in figuring out the trends on interaction. The data for each experimental group was hence compared with those of the control group as illustrated in Figures 1-4.

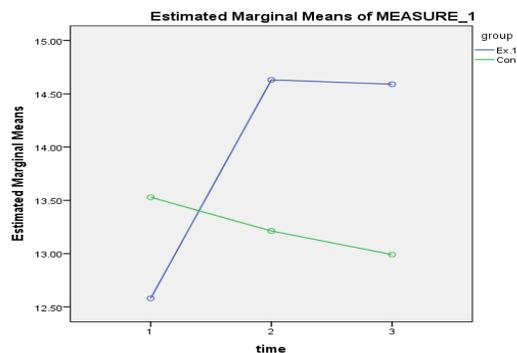


Figure 1. Means plot for the EE group and the control group

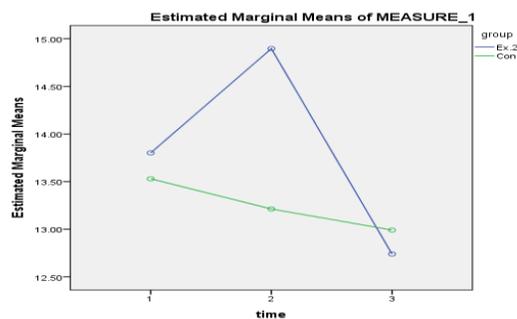


Figure 2. Means plot for the IE group and the control group

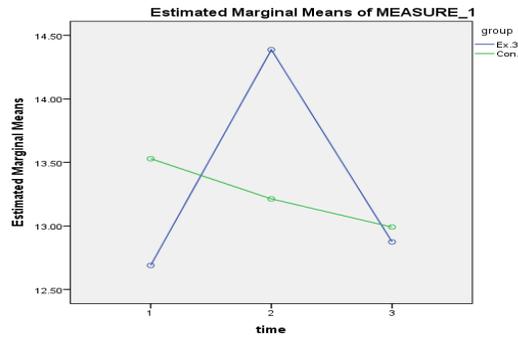


Figure 3. Means plot for ER group and the control group

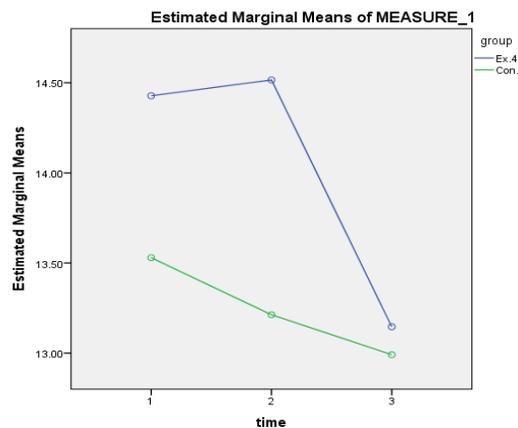


Figure 4. Means plot for the IR group and the control group

In the EE group, the rate of the scores significantly increased from time 1 (pre-test) to time 2 (immediate post-test); the rate clearly leveled off and stayed at about the same level at time 3 (delayed post-test). Hence, the treatment was quite effective in short-run and the effect did not decrease in the long-run. As for the other groups, there was first an increase in the rate of the scores; however, it then declined dramatically, showing the impact of time interval; the effect of treatment was not long-lasting at all.

Discussion

Several studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of recast and elicitation, yet few of them have taken a closer look on the degree of their explicitness, since elicitation is often considered as a rather explicit form of correction, whereas recast is usually regarded as a rather implicit type (Ellis & Shintani, 2013). The present study, however, made a distinction between the explicit and implicit form of these two common types of corrective feedback.

In answer to the first research question, the results showed that there were significant differences among the experimental groups in terms of correct uptake; those learners who received explicit recast obtained the highest score. Hence, the findings are, indeed partly, in line with the findings of researchers like Oliver (1995), Leeman (2003), Sheen (2006), Long (2006), Lyster and Izquierdo (2009), Nassaji (2009), Asari (2012), Saeidi and Raveschi (2013) and Vahdani and khabbazi Alavi (2013). Asari (2012), for example, states that short, declarative and single-change recasts are capable of triggering repair. Nassaji (2009) also has shown that recasts are more effective than elicitations in their immediate effect in identifying and correcting the

linguistic forms during interaction. In a similar vein, Saeidi and Raveshi (2013) have reported that recast leads to more repaired uptake as compared to elicitation among upper-intermediate L2 learners.

According to Golshan (2015), recasts can provide learners with positive evidence (i.e., models in L2). Yet it is a matter of controversy whether they can provide negative evidence, as a form of feedback on language features, as well. The important point, he notes, is that “the type of evidence that recast provides depends on learners’ perception, and it is illogical to predetermine what type of evidence a recast supplies to the learner” (p. 8-9). Regarding the greater effectiveness of explicit recast in uptake, as compared to implicit recast, more research studies seem to be welcome. It seems quite natural that greater emphasis and added stress on recast culminates in its higher immediate effectiveness. The results also contradict those of many researchers such as Carroll and Swain (1993), Lyster and Ranta (1997), Lyster (1998, 2004), Panova and Lyster (2002), Loewen and Philp (2006), and Engwall and Ba’lter (2007), who believe that providing learners with other types of feedback would obtain better results, perhaps because recasts are usually viewed by learners just as contributors to the flow of communication and not correction, and they do not, in many instances, repair their utterances following recasts. Panova and Lyster (2002) assert that recasts are harder to notice by the learners, who take them as another way of transmitting a meaning rather than a corrective move. According to Loewen and Philp (2006), successful uptake significantly occurs when the corrective feedback comprises elicitation or metalinguistic information and not recast. Ohta (2000) even asserts that uptake cannot be considered as an accurate indicator of learners’ use or not use of recasts, calling for further attention to the context and nature of the instruction in this regard.

In answer to the second research question regarding retention, the learners from the different groups performed differently across the different time periods. In general, the learners in none of experimental groups could significantly outperform those in the control group; the scores the learners obtained on the tests enhanced linearly over time; however, the increase then leveled off and even fell in the delayed post-test for most of the groups. In other words, as the analysis of the means plot showed, the effect of treatment diminished to a great extent over time in all the experimental groups except for the EE group, where the effect leveled off but did not fall. The EE group, however, only outscored the IE group significantly. Implicit elicitation was not shown to be fruitful as the learners did not pay due attention to it. Sometimes, it even led to misunderstanding and confusion; once a teacher corrected a learner’s error in pronouncing the letter “w” in the phrase “was tired”, the student just replaced, erroneously, the word “was” with “were”, again reiterating the error. Even in some cases, the learners avoided using the word that contained the error and instead used another word of a similar meaning. For instance, the word “came” was once used instead of “entered” which was corrected for the wrong pronunciation of the beginning “e”. The same happened for “vocabulary” which was used when one student was asked to correct his pronunciation of “word”, mispronouncing the initial “w”. This shows that the learners sometimes cannot realize the reason for the teacher’s implicit feedback or figure out which part is erroneous. Recast could neither prove much helpful in enhancing the students’ performance on pronunciation in the long run. Learners seem to take for granted whatever a teacher says in the form of correction and do not heed the intended grammatical, semantic, syntactic or, as in this study, phonological point (Carroll and Swain, 1993; Loewen and Philp, 2006). This might be due to the fact that recast does not usually call for further attention to the error. It is just a reformulation, a kind of repetition, and when students’ overriding focus is on the meaning and content of the language, such form of error correction would not contribute to their building a more accurate and enduring repertoire of language. Recast appears to be more tuned

with a focus on meaning and message rather than form. Mackey and Philp (1998) have similarly depicted that recast and elicitation are not so much effective particularly for learners with lower language proficiency since they usually lead to misinterpretation. These findings are, to some extent, in support of the non-interventionist approach to teaching pronunciation which casts doubt on the effectiveness and applicability of corrective feedback (Allwright, 1975; Chaudron, 1986, 1988; Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001; Hendrickson, 1978; Kim, 2004; Krashen, 1981; Truscott, 2007; Truscott & Hsu, 2008). According to Krashen (1981), providing explicit correction to learners' error will only serve as an obtrusive technique which undoubtedly disrupts the flow of communication and interaction. Chaudron (1988) has revealed that feedback is usually provided erratically and pretty often goes unnoticed by learners. According to Lyster and Ranta (1997), although recast and elicitation can serve as an effective tool in causing language development by pushing students to self- or peer-correction, they do not lead to student-generated repair of the target feature. Therefore, their effect does not seem to be sustained over time. These findings, however, are not in line with those of many researchers including Lightbown and Spada (1990), Long (1996), Mackey and Philp (1998), Doughty and Varela (1998), Ferris and Hedgcock (2005), Ellis et al. (2006), Dabaghi (2008), Nassaji (2009), Lyster and Izquierdo (2009), Chu (2011) and Rassaei, Moinszadeh and Youhanaee (2012). Doughty and Varela (1998) have found that recasts can lead to the enhancement of accurate pronunciation. Lightbown and Spada (1990) and Chu (2011) have also corroborated the positive and sustained role of corrective feedback in improving oral English accuracy.

Conclusion

It has long been argued by many researchers that mentoring learners' outputs and giving feedback on their phonological performance is fundamental to successful acquisition of a language. Developing intelligible oral skills has to be a permanent concern for teachers. At the same time, they are also required to be able to have sound criteria in diagnostic evaluation of their students' pronunciation. Lots of programs, instruments and methods have been introduced so far (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 2010; Golshan, 2015). Teachers, however, are themselves responsible for finding the best way for the very particular context they are teaching in and the very particular students they are teaching to. A certain type of implicit corrective feedback, for example, might not become useful in dealing with an error; in its explicit form, however, it could prove remarkably effective. As the results of this study revealed, Iranian intermediate EFL learners did not benefit from oral feedback very much, particularly in its implicit form. Moreover, short-term training of pronunciation features did not lead to long-lasting learning; explicit recast led to more uptake but the effect waned over time. In terms of the retention of the target phonological features, explicit elicitation was shown to be more effective than the other types of corrective feedback, especially implicit elicitation, yet none of the experimental groups could significantly outperform the control group. Hence, teachers have to opt for other instructional approaches and practice other types of correction, keeping in mind that in a different setting everything might be strikingly different.

Hence, teachers need to have an enduring and comprehensive program for developing their learners' phonological competence, and this needs persistence, determination and patience on the part of teachers as well as students. To help EFL learners develop their phonological skill, on a par with that of native speakers, teachers are required not only to take sufficient heed of the subject-matter teaching but also to different techniques and approaches of responding to their students' oral output, specially their erroneous utterances. In this regard, they need to know whether, when, how and to what extent to correct their students' phonological errors.

Since this study limited its scope to a specific language proficiency, age, and gender, it can be replicated with a larger and more diverse group of subjects in other contexts for more generalizable and justifiable results. Further, the other types and modes of corrective feedback might be considered, and their effect can also be probed in the development of other language skills and components, for example writing and speaking as well as vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Uptake, learning, and retention might hence be redefined in such studies, making it more clear for language teachers what to teach and how to teach. Further, in this study, a retelling task was used for the purpose of data collection by eliciting errors and feedback. Other tasks and techniques might as well be considered, such as role play, reading aloud, group discussion and problem solving to encompass other communicative activities that a learner is usually expected to be involved in.

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