

On the Relationships among Oral Error Correction Preferences and Dogmatism level in Teachers, and Their Impacts on Iranian EFL Students' Achievements

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Abstract

The present study aims at investigating the relationships among EFL teachers' preferred oral corrective feedbacks, their dogmatism levels, and their adult students' overall achievements in the semester. This was done through a self-report questionnaire handed to the teachers, a one-session observation of their classes to determine their preferred types of oral error corrections, and examining the students' final grades in the semester in an EFL institute in Iran. A total of 10 teachers and 233 students participated in the study. The results revealed a clear preference for explicit correction of students' oral errors, among the seven corrective feedbacks introduced here, in dogmatic teachers which was positively and significantly correlating with students' final grades. Ignoring students' errors was also found to be totally undesirable and had a significant negative correlation with dogmatism. Further conclusions along with educational implications are also discussed.

Key Words: *Oral Error Correction, Dogmatism, Language Achievement*

Introduction

Making errors is an indispensable part of learning process. Learning English, particularly, involves several years of trials and errors on the part of students. Teachers can facilitate this process simply by giving corrective feedbacks in treatment of students' errors. The critical issue seems to be that whether the teachers should correct all students' errors even at the cost of damaging their self-confidence, or should these errors be ignored? And if correction is the choice, when and how should these errors be corrected? Which options lead to better understanding and more proficiency on the part of students?

This outstanding role that teachers play may be affected by different cognitive constructs, namely their dogmatism level. The invisible process going on in teachers' minds which involves making choices between different corrective feedbacks can be under the effect of their dogmatism, and consequently affect students' overall achievements. The term "dogmatism" has been introduced by Rokeach (1954). It has been defined as the inclination of individuals to assume their beliefs are absolutely true (Rokeach, 1960), or as Sternberg (2012) puts it, believing in absolute authority and being relatively intolerant of others. Our surrounding world is abundant with dogmatism. We have certainly seen so many dogmatic people who insist on their own beliefs and never surrender to others' justifications. They are usually described as narrow -

mindful and not open to criticism. Despite its importance, this issue has been underestimated in educational researches.

The study presented here aims at exploring these principal issues in an EFL context. What are the preferences of dogmatic EFL teachers in treatment of their students' oral errors? To what degree does this dogmatism affect students' achievement level?

Review of Literature

Error Corrective Feedbacks

The history of error correction has always been accompanied with controversial claims. Some teachers believe that correcting students' errors is tiring and time consuming and students' motivation might be negatively affected if they confront the teachers' disappointing correcting look most of the time. On the contrary there are some enthusiastic teachers who are strongly in favor of error correction and believe it is a beneficial tool in students' improvement.

When it comes to error correction we are dealing with one individual's reaction to a student's piece of writing or utterance. This inevitably means that there will be disagreement among teachers about what, when, and how to correct. Rivers (1983), for example, believes that constant correction dampens enthusiasm and efforts of students while they are struggling to express themselves with their newly acquired knowledge. The student samples in Lasagabaster and Sierra (2005) stated their preference for not being corrected constantly, as they feel inhibited. They prefer to communicate more freely rather than being continuously corrected. However, this does not mean that they do not wish to be corrected. This is in line with Chkotua's (2012) belief that although many teachers consider in-class error correction very useful and productive, students consider it as a sort of humiliation in front of the class and friends.

On the contrary, there are some researchers and instructors in favor of corrective feedbacks. They believe that errors should not be ignored and language improvement happens only by focusing on form (e.g. Woods, 1989). More recently, Finn and Metcalfe (2010) stated that feedback toward errors has considerable positive effects for memory performance, but the kind of feedback is of great importance. As Pashler et al. (2005) maintain simply telling the learner whether they are right or wrong does not suffice. In order for the feedback to be processed and internalized in students' minds, conveying the correct answer seems crucial. Only after getting the correct answer as feedback do students show an increase in retention. Therefore, feedback is more constructive when it relays the correct answer (Finn and Metcalfe, 2010). Ayhan et al. (2011) also claim that corrective feedback in EFL classes is of great value and it draws learners' attention to form but the effectiveness of the corrective feedback is determined whether or not it results in uptake and successful repair.

Students seem to be expecting to be corrected when they make an error. But the matter of how to correct errors has been a complex issue throughout the history. Different categories of error treatment have been devised over years. These feedback types are generally divided into two broad categorizations of implicit and explicit feedback types. Ellis (2009), for instance, proposes a model of corrective feedback (CF) strategies including:

	Implicit	Explicit
Input Providing	Recast	Explicit Correction
Output Prompting	Repetition Clarification Request	Metalinguistic Explanation Elicitation Paralinguistic Signal

Adopted from Ellis (2009)

Panova and Lyster (2002) introduce seven types of corrective feedbacks: recast, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, explicit correction, repetition, and a separate group for translation because of its high frequency in their study. These categories are defined and exemplified as follows:

Corrective feedback	Definition	Example
1. Recast	An implicit corrective feedback move that reformulates or expands an ill-formed or incomplete utterance in an unobtrusive way.	Student: He didn't wrote all the words in his notebook. Teacher: Oh, so he didn't write all the words in his notebook. (Jernigan and Mihal, 2008)
2. Clarification request	Eliciting, reformulation or repetition from the student with respect to the form of the student's ill-formed utterance. Often this type of feedback seeks clarification of the meaning as well.	Student: He didn't wrote all the words in his notebook. Teacher: What was that? [rising tone] (Jernigan and Mihal, 2008)
3. Metalinguistic feedback	Comments, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of the student's utterance, without explicitly providing the correct answer.	Student: He didn't wrote all the words in his notebook. Teacher: Now, think about the verb here. What tense are you trying to use? (Jernigan and Mihal, 2008)
4. Elicitation:	A corrective technique that prompts the learner to self-correct.	Student: [to another student] what means this word? Teacher: Uh, Louis, how do we say that in English? What <i>does</i>? Student: Ah, what does this word mean? (Brown, 2007)
5. Explicit Correction	Explicit signals to the student that there is an error in the previous utterance. A clear indication to the student that an utterance has been ill-formed which also provides the correct form.	Student: When I have 12 years old... Teacher: No, not <i>have</i> . You mean "when I was 12 years old." (Brown, 2007)
6. Repetition:	Repeating the ill-formed part of the student's utterance, usually with a change in intonation.	Student: When I have 12 years old.... Teacher: When I <i>was</i> 12 years old.... (Brown, 2007)

7. Translation:	A response to a well-formed utterance in the L1, a translation of the utterance into L2.	Teacher: All right, now, which place is near the water? Student: Non, j'ai pas ni. (L1) T: You haven't finished? Okay, Bernard, have you finished? (Jernigan and Mihal, 2008)
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Table 1: Definition and example of corrective feedbacks

Among these corrective feedbacks, recast has been reported to be the most frequent in many studies (e.g. Lyster and Ranta, 1997; Panova and Lyster, 2002; Sheen, 2004; Farrokhi, 2007), which has been found to be the most desirable on the part of students in Katayama (2007). Ignorance of errors is also a highly occurring feedback (e.g. Fanselow, 1977; Panova and Lyster, 2002), but has been reported to be the least favored corrective feedback by the students (e.g. Katayama, 2007; Cathcart and Olsen, 1976; Oladejo, 1993).

Dogmatism

The other part of this study deals with teachers' dogmatism. The term "dogmatism" is originally a psychological construct introduced by Rokeach (1954). Rokeach (1954) adopts the view that it is more important to pay attention to the "structure" of attitudes rather than their "content". In his belief, "structure" of the attitudes means the rigidity with which they are held. To Rokeach, the rigid, unchanging beliefs of a person reflect his "dogmatism".

Johnson (2009) proposes thirteen properties prevalent in people exhibiting dogmatism. These properties include cognitive, emotional, and behavioral characteristics. Cognitive properties include intolerance of ambiguity, defensive cognitive closure, rigid certainty, compartmentalization, and limited personal insight. Emotional properties are association between beliefs and anxiety or fear, association between beliefs and anger, as well as existential despair. Behavioral properties are a fixation with power and status, biases towards their own group, authoritarian aggression, authoritarian submission, and arrogance.

Low ambiguity tolerance which is the desire to have everything reduced to black and white with no shades of grey has been highly reported in dogmatic people (Palmer and Kalin, 1985; Brown, 2007). Dogmatism will in turn lead to compartmentalization (Davies, 2005), ideological polarization (Crowson et al., 2008), aggression (Heyman, 1977), and pessimism (Slone, 2000).

Dogmatism can be affected by different factors including the individual's age, gender, and religion. While dogmatism has long been claimed to be correlating positively with age and religion zealotry (e.g. Saraglou, 2002; Rahman, 2006), its positive correlation with a certain sex has not been confirmed yet.

Dogmatism, as an internal indispensable part of teachers' attitudes, will perhaps have impacts on the classroom's atmosphere and the way students' errors are treated by the teacher. This issue will be specifically impactful on EFL educational contexts. As Goldsmith (2010) asserts, dogmatism has a negative correlation with innovation. Because of their penchant for originality and trying new things, innovators show lower degrees of dogmatism. A dogmatic teacher, on the other hand, seems to be the same every session, his class rules never change, and corrective feedbacks are apparently following a routine plan.

In an attempt to tap this notion, Rokeach's D scale (1960) has been designed (Ray, 1973). The Dogmatism Balanced (BD) Scale developed by Ray (1974) is an attempt to reformulate Rokeach scale, which has been the source of dissatisfaction in the participants, with an improvement in the reliability and validity indices.

Methodology

Participants of this study were 10 teachers (of both genders, teaching different levels) at an Iranian language institute and their overall 233 students. The teachers were all experienced having an average of three years teaching experience. The students were also male and female adults learning English in different levels.

The questionnaire utilized in this study is called Balanced Dogmatism (BD) Scale, developed by Ray (1974). This scale consists of forty items on a five-point likert scale format, and participants were asked to choose among five options (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) for each item. The range of scores is from forty to two hundred and higher scores reflect more dogmatism. It is noteworthy to mention that this scale has been revised and updated by its developer, three times, and this version is apparently the most valid and reliable of all (Ray, 1974)

At first, the questionnaire was distributed among the teachers and they were given time to complete them. The scores obtained from these questionnaires indicated the degree of their dogmatism. This was followed by a brief one-session observation of their classes to determine their oral error correction preferences in reality. This observation was done based on Panova and Lyster's (2002) proposed model about oral corrective feedbacks. The seven corrective feedbacks introduced in this model were identified in teachers' reactions to students' oral errors, and the frequency of each preference was calculated. These corrective feedbacks were recast, clarification request, metalinguistic explanation, elicitation, explicit correction, repetition, and ignorance (because of the non-existence of translation as a corrective feedback in these classes, which was in the original model, it was replaced with ignorance, which was also a highly occurring reaction). After the teachers' part was accomplished, the students' overall grades in their final exams were collected from their teachers. These courses were 18-session general English courses and the final exams were tests of achievements. The grades were in a range of 0

to 40. After the required data were collected, the obtained scores were assessed to see whether there were any relationships (significant or non-significant) among the variables.

Findings

	N	Range	Minimum Grade	Maximum Grade
Class 1	26	14	25	39
Class 2	26	12	18	30
Class 3	25	11	23	34
Class 4	24	16	18	34
Class 5	23	20	10	30
Class 6	25	12	28	40
Class 7	25	21	9	30
Class 8	23	11	15	26
Class 9	24	11	29	40
Class 10	22	15	15	30

First the descriptive statistics of the ten teachers' classes is presented.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the classes

The descriptive statistics of the ten teachers' dogmatism level is also presented.

	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5	Teacher 6	Teacher 7	Teacher 8	Teacher 9	Teacher 10
Teachers' Dogmatism	65	150	50	68	165	49	170	154	54	161

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the teachers' dogmatism level

The descriptive statistics of the ten teachers' error correction preferences is presented here. This percentage is done on the basis of one session observation of their classes.

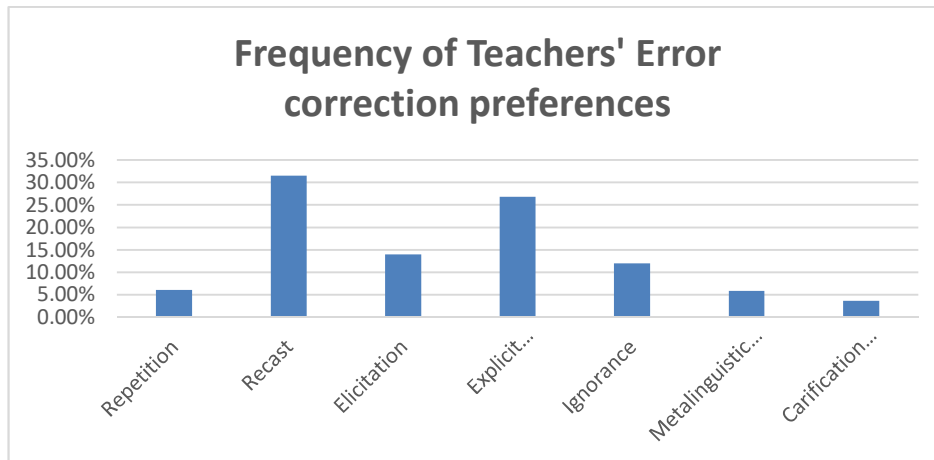


Figure 1. Frequency of Teachers' Error correction preferences

All corrective feedbacks were separately correlated with dogmatism. The results indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between explicit correction and dogmatism ($r = .854^{**}$). There are also significant negative relationship between elicitation and dogmatism ($r = -.829^*$) and ignorance and dogmatism ($r = -.613^*$).

	Repetition	Recast	Elicitation	Explicit correction	Ignorance	Metalinguistic explanation	Clarification request
Teachers' Dogmatism	.831	-.794	-.829*	.854**	-.613*	.514	.717

Table 3. Statistical results of the correlations among dogmatism and corrective feedbacks

According to the results of the correlations between dogmatism and students' overall achievements, teachers' dogmatism affects students' final grades positively and significantly ($r =$

			Final Grades	Dogmatism
Spearman's rho	Final Grades	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.994**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.
	Dogmatism	Correlation Coefficient	.994**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.
		N	10	10

.994**).

Table 4. Statistical results of the correlation between dogmatism and students' final grades

Conclusion

As the results suggest there are significant correlations among teachers' corrective feedback preferences and their dogmatism level. These correlations are investigated here separately. The results show a significant positive relationship between explicit correction and dogmatism. Dogmatic people think they are absolutely right about everything. They only consider their own version of the 'correct answer' as sufficiently correct and the best alternative. That is why they make great use of explicit correction and try to correct their students' errors on spot. This is implicitly in line with the literature. As Franklin and Carr (1971) maintain dogmatic people are highly certain about their beliefs. They are entirely impervious to information that contradicts their opinions. They are certain they are correct and therefore consider other information inaccurate. There is also Boster and Levine's (1988) study in which they propose that dogmatic individuals have an arrogant and defensive style of communication. Their remarks are often dismissive, disdainful, and contemptuous. When attempting to influence others, they do not try to put their words in a delicate way. They instead use the harshest way possible to diminish any chances for their partner's objections.

Dogmatism also seems to be significantly and negatively correlating with elicitation. Elicitation is in fact giving an opportunity to students to express their ideas and beliefs in a non-threatening environment. A teacher providing this opportunity for the students must inevitably have the tolerance to resist their inaccurate and sometimes wild guesses. This is a property which is lacking in dogmatic individuals. This finding is in line with a study conducted by Davis (1998) in which it has been reported that dogmatic individuals were not as likely to recognize insights that contradicted their beliefs. Brown (2007) also maintains that dogmatic people are intolerant of ambiguity and perceive ambiguous or contradictory statements as threatening and difficult to internalize. They do not wish to contemplate situations with inconsistent, incompatible, or conflicting beliefs and thoughts because of their cognitive defensive closure.

There is also a significant negative relationship found between ignorance and dogmatism. Because of their penchant for hearing the correct form from the students, dogmatic teachers do not ignore their students' errors. This is somehow in a mismatch with Palmer and Kalin (1985) who reported that the individuals high in dogmatism react to inconsistent information by minimizing or ignoring it. But in an educational setting, this ignorance may lead to fossilized structures in students. According to noticing hypothesis, corrective feedbacks toward errors must have a satisfactory level of explicitness to be figured out. If errors are to be ignored, they will be simply regarded as flawless by the students. Most of the students, especially the less advanced ones are not proficient enough to figure out their errors and self-correct themselves. Even if they understand that they have made an error it is difficult for them to correct their errors without the teacher's scaffolding. If these errors will be ignored they will be treated as correct, and in the course of time they will change into fossilized forms which will hardly disappear from students' minds.

There is also a non – significant correlation found between dogmatism and recast. The reason for this lack of preference may be summarized in Lyster and Ranta's (1997) study who maintain that recasts are generally implicit in nature because they are not introduced by phrases such as "You mean," "Use this word," and "You should say." But dogmatic people, as Johnson (2009) states, will show anxiety or fear while they face contradicting information. If their beliefs are challenged or questioned, they often seem agitated and uneasy. They do not probably have enough patience to wait and think of an implicit way of correcting the error. This is also in line with Jones and Melcher's (1982) study in which dogmatic people have been reported to show confrontational behavior in conflict situations.

A more important part of the study seeks to examine the relationship between teachers' dogmatism level and students' overall achievement in the classroom. According to the results explicit correction and students' final grades are significantly and positively correlated. Dogmatic teachers' classes seem to be yielding better results. Students may benefit a lot from explicit correction of their errors. This form of corrective feedback is perhaps the most straightforward for them and it not only shows that they have made a mistake but also presents the correct form. Although it may sound harsh at times, but explicit correction provides the students with the correct answers without causing any ambiguity or confusion for them. Lyster (1998) also favors explicit correction and maintains that implicit feedbacks such as recasts are not effective for students because they can be easily misinterpreted as an alternative positive evidence or repetition. Similarly, Mackey and Philip (1998) report that learners who are "developmentally ready" respond positively to implicit corrective feedbacks, while less developmentally advanced ones do not. In fact less advanced learners need more explicit feedbacks because they are not fluent enough to notice the clues hidden in teacher's implicit feedbacks.

This study has several implications for different groups of people dealing with teaching English as a second/foreign language. An important implication for language teachers goes to their corrective feedback preferences. Teachers are recommended to search about different corrective feedbacks and update their knowledge about the impacts of various feedbacks toward errors. They can also benefit from their intuitive hunches about students and do trial and errors to find out the best ways of reacting to students' errors toward which students show better understanding. If students receive effective corrective feedbacks they will have better performances in their tests and therefore their overall achievements gradually increase.

Suggestions and Recommendations

As the current study relied partly on self-report data through the administration of questionnaires, the collected information may be subject to self-flattery. Additionally, the collected results were solely provided through questionnaires and observations of teachers' classes. Future researchers might also benefit from other information gathering procedures such as interviews, diaries, or hidden cameras in classes. Other factors may also affect the results,

such as teachers and students' age, gender, or religion. The potential effect of these factors can also be investigated in future researches.

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