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EFL Teachers' Error-correction Strategies in Speaking Classes:

A Study of Experienced and Novice Iraqi Teachers' Perceptions

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating teachers' opinions about error correction. 100 experienced and novice Iraqi EFL teachers (50 of each group) participated in the survey and to this aim Fukuda's (2004) questionnaire was administered to them. Participants were also interviewed about the frequency of giving and receiving verbal error correction, and time and types of spoken error correction. Then, the error-correction perceptions were analyzed. This was done by taking some issues into consideration, such as; the differences in using error-correction strategies based on experience level, their perception of error-correction, and the preferred strategies they would like to employ for correcting students in speaking classes. The results manifested that there was a difference between novice and experienced teachers in terms of their perception towards error correction. Furthermore, teachers preferred to correct implicit errors committed by students as the end of learners' utterances. This study brought about some implications and suggestions for further researches.

Keywords: Error-correction, Iraqi EFL teachers, Perceptions, Speaking, Strategies

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Introduction

During the 1950s and 1960s one of the main concerns of language teachers was error correction. In language methodology, in the grammar-translation method students were required to provide the correct answer and in the case of error occurrences, the teacher would act on the spot as a corrector (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). As Brooks (1960) assumed "like sin, error is to be avoided and its influence overcome, but its presence is to be expected." However, at the time of declination of audio-lingual approach in foreign/ second language, this method of error correction diminished (Oladejo, 1993). The direct method concentrated on self-correction tools via of diverse techniques (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Fluency rather than accuracy was important in the Communicative Language Teaching Method (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

Krashen (1985) defended the idea of unconscious learning through comprehensible input. However, in the acquisition process, noticing is unavoidable. Analysis in the field of corrective feedback provided different findings for different researchers. Among them, Tsang (2004) in his study concluded that teachers used recasting most often and made an explicit type of error correction. However, they did not necessarily guide students to repair their errors while repetition was the major common type of feedback which led to repairs. He proposed that negotiation can be helpful in the majority of cases for correction of grammatical errors while the phonological errors were mostly repaired by recast and explicit correction. Two implications arise here: Using different types of feedback may be more effective than providing the correct forms; and while grammatical repairs are intendeded to follow negotiation, the recast and explicit correction techniques develop the phonological repairs. Whereas, Lasagabaster and Sierra (2005) attempted to discover whether the error correction strategies would be helpful in facilitating students' learning and whether the students perceive these corrections as effective. The results manifested that the students did not receive a significant number of teacher correction. The teachers and the students in this study declared the effectiveness of error correction by teachers when they have enough time and sufficient knowledge to explain the errors.

Williams (1999) attempted to explore the learners' attention to form through observing the corrective feedbacks, repetitions, recasts, and clarifications. Williams (1999) declared that the learners were willing to attend to form, but less frequently.

Learners mostly employed the requesting strategy for getting assistance from their teachers and the attention to form increased significantly along with the proficiency progress. Against the findings of the previous study, Truscott (1999) stated that the grammatical error correction was not confirmed and claimed that teachers and students who were eager to have excessive error correction may be confronted with serious problems related to teaching and learning. The research also emphasized that grammatical fluency could not be feasible by oral correction provided for the students.

There has been extensive research on corrective written feedback while just few studies have been carried out on spoken corrective feedback. Morra and Asis (2009) carried out a study on error correction in essay writing. They analyzed the effect of two different types of teacher

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feedback: with some notes provided on the margins and through some recorded feedback. The findings indicated that both types of feedback positively affected students' essay writings.

There is lack of enough research on the teacher's role in error correction. For instance, Kennedy (2010) examined performance of two groups of students in terms of their language levels. In the study, 15 participants received feedback from an ESL teacher. The result manifested that the students in two groups made different types of error and each group received different types of corrective feedback that the teacher distinguished appropriate according to their proficiency level. Fujioka and Kennedy (1997) in their study on different techniques for correcting errors and the role of teacher in correcting students' errors examined college students and they asked their attitude toward different classroom techniques applied in order to correct their errors in second language classroom. They found out that: first, the predominant error correction is teacher correction type; second, self-correction is of different nature from peer or teacher correction; and third, students' status (freshman, sophomore, etc.) and class size are major factors for determining self-correction or teacher correction.

From the different positions toward and against corrective feedback reviewed above, this can be implied that the effectiveness of spoken corrective feedback not only rely on the methods of its application, but it affects individual learners' ability to think deeply. Since, limited studies have been conducted on the effect of error correction on language learners' proficiency in general and particularly on error corrector in speaking classes, the present study attempted to contribute to the relevant literature on the effects of teacher correction on in EFL speaking classroom context.

In the light of the present study, the researcher aimed to analyze the experienced and inexperienced teachers in terms of their perception of error correction in speaking classes. The independent variables were error-correction strategies utilized by teachers. There were some dependent variables in this study; such as teachers' role and strategies in error correction, and the perception of novice and experienced teachers.

In fact, the inspiring idea which gave birth to this work was attempting to enlighten errorcorrections provided by Iraqi experienced and novice teachers for EFL learners who were learning English. Intending to accomplish this purpose; the researchers tried to address three raised research questions:

- RQ1. Do experienced Iraqi EFL teachers and novice ones employ different strategies for error-correction in speaking classes?
 - RQ2. What are Iraqi EFL teacher's perceptions of error correction in speaking classes?
- RQ3. What strategies do Iraqi EFL teachers use in correcting students' errors in speaking classes?

The present study deals with error-correction strategies in speaking classes and their application in Iraqi EFL context. Many teachers believe that providing correction strategies is one of the tasks which requires a great amount of time from the teacher and a high degree of practice from student. The efficacy of correction is a subject of inquiry among many researchers and educators. Some researchers criticized corrective feedbacks, theoretically and practically (Krashen, 1985, 1992, 1993; Schwartz, 1993; Truscott, 1996, 2007). On the other hand, some

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others supported and explicated the benefits of providing feedbacks, also theoretically and practically (e.g. Gass, 1997; Lalande, 1982; Long, 1996, 2007; Schmidt, 1990, 1995, 2001).

Generally speaking, errors have been considered as deviations in speech from the model they attempt to master (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). Corder (1967) has distinguished errors from mistakes and views "errors" as systematic errors of learners' hidden knowledge of the language. These errors are representative of learner's current level of development in target language. On the other hand, he manipulates the term "mistakes" to hint at incorrect forms due to some memory lapses, slips of the tongue and other types of performance errors.

Corder believes that errors are unavoidable in language learning, so through making errors, learners test their hypothesis about the essence of language they are learning. Corder also mentioned two explanations regarding learner errors. First, "the occurrence of errors is merely a sign of the present inadequacy of the teaching techniques" (p. 163). These reasons can be the interference from L1, overgeneralization, an imperfect knowledge of the target language, the complexity of target language, and fossilization. So, teachers should be more cautious about how to deal with their students' errors than the simple diagnosing of their errors.

Methodology

Participants

In order to meet the present study's objectives, 100 Iraqi EFL teachers participated in this study. They were all approached by e-mail. They were male and females and their age range was between 23 to 45 years old. However, the age range and gender were not regarded as the influential variables in this study. This resulted in a final subject pool of 50 novice teachers who had less than 10 years of teaching experience and 50 experienced ones enjoying more than 12 years of teaching experience. They were chosen as the participants of this study based on a cluster sampling method, as they did not work at the same school, so all of them had been chosen from different Iraqi high schools and they were grouped in terms of their years of experience of teaching.

Instrumentation

Fukuda's (2004) Teacher Preferences for Error-correction Questionnaire

Fukuda's (2004) questionnaire consisting of a form for teachers (Number of items= 25) will be employed in the present study. One section of questionnaire is devoted to the demographic information about the participants. The first, there are 22 items which are aimed at exploring the teachers' judgments about giving and receiving verbal error correction, frequency of giving and receiving verbal error correction, time of verbal error correction, types of errors which need to be corrected, types of spoken error correction (i.e., from item 12 to 19). The questionnaire has a Likert-scale type format with answers ranging from "strongly agree to strongly disagree". Another type of answering this Likert- scale survey is answering them by ranging from "always to never", and another kind of rating this survey is in "very effective to very ineffective".

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After collecting the questionnaires, the reliability analysis of the questionnaire was conducted and it turned out to be 0.624 which was considered to be an acceptable level. For five parts of the questionnaire in the present study, the reliability index of the three sections is estimated as follows: giving and receiving spoken error correction ($\alpha = 0.64$), frequency for giving and receiving spoken error correction ($\alpha = 0.62$) and time of spoken error correction ($\alpha = 0.59$), types of spoken errors that need to be corrected ($\alpha = 0.60$), types of spoken error correction ($\alpha = 0.67$). Therefore, this questionnaire is recognized as a reliable instrument for measuring teacher preferences for error-correction of Iraqi teachers.

One step for validating the research instrument was observing the lessons taught by teachers. Due to the provided opportunities for observations, verifications for matching the views and opinions of teachers with the real decisions made by teachers was possible. During the observation of interaction in classroom, the researcher sat at the back of the classroom so as to not to highlight his presence. Also, the researcher ensured students regarding anonymity and the point that all the data related to the teacher-student interaction would be available to the researcher not their teacher or the school principals.

Procedure

Before conducting the actual study, some of the participants volunteered to take part in a pilot study to ensure the researcher about the appropriateness of the time allocated for filling out the questionnaire and the comprehensibility of the items as well. Volunteers asserted that the survey could be completed with no difficulty and their reported time for finishing this questionnaire was between 20 to 25 minutes.

Upon consultation with several teachers, spring semester was selected as the best time for the study since teachers had more time to contemplate on the questionnaire items and on the other hand, classes were still being held and so the teachers' classes could be observed by the researchers. It is possible that the time of the year in which the survey was administered may have influenced responses. All these teachers participated in this study were teaching the same level in high school, but they have been categorized in terms of their teaching experiences into two groups of novice and experienced. The questionnaire was distributed to 100 teachers, to 50 novices and 50 experienced and they were required to answer the items carefully.

Results and Discussions

In terms of answering the first research question, teachers' responses to items 7 to 11 of the error correction questionnaire were analyzed. To do so, the demographic information in items 23 to 25 provided by teachers were analyzed. The descriptive Table 4.1 shows the results. Table 4.1.

Descriptive Statistics Regarding Teachers' Demographic Information

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			Teaching	5
	Group		Experien	ce
	-	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teaching	Experienced	50	10.26	3.23
Experience	Inexperienced	50	3.86	1.45
Level	•			

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The reported data manifested that teachers' average level of experience in terms of years of experience was less than 4 years for the inexperienced (M=3.86) and more than 10 years for the experienced ones (M=10.26).

Then, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the experienced teachers' preferred strategies for error-correction and novice ones. The results of table indicated that t (48) = 2.50, p =0.018. So, regarding *p*-value (0.018< .05). So, the first null hypothesis could be rejected.

Table 4.2. *Independent Samples Test for Two Groups*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance			t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
•	Equal variances assumed	1.63	0.41	2.50	48	0.018*	0.68	0.271
experience	Equal variances not assumed			2.50	47.9	0.019	0.68	0.271

^{*}The mean difference between groups was significant at p≤0.05

These results suggested that error-correction strategy preferences for teachers differentiates according to their experience level. More specifically, these results suggested that Iraqi teachers may differentiate in strategies they preferred for correcting their students' speaking errors.

In order to answer the second research question, the researcher ran the One-sample t-test. The results indicated that teachers' preferences for items 1, 2,4,5, and 6 were greater than the chance level of 3 for item 1 (M = 4.4, SD = 0.72), t (99) = 10.5, p < .001, item 3 (M = 1.7, SD = 0.67), t (99) = -9.5, p < .001, item 4 (M = 4.1, SD = 0.88), t (99) = 6.8, p < .001, item 5 (M = 3.7, SD = 0.89), t (99) = 4.6, p < .001 and item 6 (M = 3.5, SD = 1.00), t (99) = 3.0, p < .001. However, regarding item 2, the preference of teachers was lower than the chance level of 3 (M = 3.3, SD = 0.85), t (99) = 2.3, p > .001. Table 4.3 represented the results.

In the case of item 22 (M = 4.6, SD = 0.47), t (99) = 19.0, p < .001, teachers' preferences were greater than the chance level of 3. For items 20 (M = 2.9, SD = 1.18), t (99) = -0.1, p > .001

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and 21 (M = 3.2, SD = 1.11), t (99) = 1.3, p > .001, teachers' preferences were lower than the chance level of 3.

Table 4.3. *One-Sample T- Test Teachers' perceptions of error-correction*

	Test Value = 3					
	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Item 1	4.4	0.72	10.5	99	0.00	1.4
Item 2	3.3	0.85	2.3	99	0.02	0.3
Item 3	1.7	0.67	-9.9	99	0.00	-1.2
Item 4	4.1	0.88	6.8	99	0.00	1.1
Item 5	3.7	0.89	4.6	99	0.00	0.7
Item 6	3.5	1.00	3.0	99	0.00	0.5
Item 20	2.9	1.18	-0.1	99	0.87	-0.0
Item 21	3.2	1.11	1.3	99	0.19	0.2
Item 22	4.6	0.47	19.0	99	0.00	1.6

A Friedman test was conducted to determine whether participants had a differential rank ordered preference for the perception towards error-correction. Results of that analysis indicated that there was a differential rank ordered preference for the related presented items, t(3) = 56.03, p = .000 < .05. (Table 4.4)

A post hoc comparison of the rank ordered preferences for the items was presented. Results of this analysis indicated that there were significantly more favorable rankings of item 4 over item 5 and item 5 over item 6 and 6 over 3 (4>5>6>3). So, there was a significant difference in how participants evaluated these items. This manifested that generally, teachers preferred to correct students' errors after they finished their utterances and this item was the first priority of teachers in their perception about error correction.

Table 4.4. Friedman test for Items 3 to 6

100	
56.03	
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.000	
Rank	
3.2	
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2.9	
	56.03 3 .000 1 Rank 3.2 1.1 2.7

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Also, in the case of items 20, 21 and 22, the researcher made use of the results of the Friedman test. The findings indicated that there was a differential rank ordered preference for the related presented items, t(2) = 30.31, p = .000 < .05. (Table 4.5).

A post hoc comparison of the rank ordered preferences for the items showed that there were significantly more favorable rankings of item 22 over item 21 and item 21 over item 20 (22>21>20). This implied that the main preference of teachers in correction of students' speaking errors was students' correction.

Table 4.5. Friedman test for Items 20 to 22

Triedman test jor tiems 2	20 10 22
N	100
Chi-Square	30.31
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000
N	Iean Rank
Item 20	2.7
Item 21	1.7
Item 22	1.5

In order to answer the third research question, first the results of One-sample t-test were analyzed. (Table 4.6). The results of One-sample t-test indicated that teachers' preferences were greater than the chance level of 3 for

The results indicated that teachers' preferences for items 12,14,15,16, 17 and 18 were greater than the chance level of 3 for item 12 (M = 2.2, SD = 1.0), t (99) = -4.1, p < .001, item 14 (M = 4.4, SD = 0.6), t (99) = 11.5, p < .001, item 15 (M = 2.4, SD = 1.1), t (99) = -2.8, p < .001, item 16 (M = 4.3, SD = 0.8), t (99) = 8.4, p < .001, item 17 (M = 1.9, SD = 0.8), t (99) = -6.6, p < .001, item 18 (M = 3.6, SD = 1.24), t (99) = 2.9, p < .001. However, regarding items 13 (M = 3.1, SD = 1.2), t (99) = 0.7, p > .001 and 19 (M = 3.1, SD = 1.21), t (99) = 0.4, p > .001, the preference of teachers was lower than the chance level of 3.

Table 4.6.

One-Sample T- Test

	Test Value = 3					
••••	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Item 12	2.2	1.0	-4.1	99	0.00	-0.7
Item 13	3.1	1.2	0.7	99	0.48	0.1
Item 14	4.4	0.6	11.5	99	0.00	1.4
Item 15	2.4	1.1	-2.8	99	0.00	-0.6
Item 16	4.3	0.8	8.4	99	0.00	1.3
Item 17	1.9	0.8	-6.6	99	0.00	-1.0
Item 18	3.6	1.2	2.9	99	0.00	0.6

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-	Test Value = 3					
	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Item 12	2.2	1.0	-4.1	99	0.00	-0.7
Item 13	3.1	1.2	0.7	99	0.48	0.1
Item 14	4.4	0.6	11.5	99	0.00	1.4
Item 15	2.4	1.1	-2.8	99	0.00	-0.6
Item 16	4.3	0.8	8.4	99	0.00	1.3
Item 19	3.1	1.2	0.4	99	0.65	0.1

Table 4.7. Friedman test for items 12 to 19.

Trieuman test jo	1 tiems 12 to 19.			
N	100			
Chi-Square	99.29			
df	7			
Asymp. Sig.	.000			
Mean	Rank			
Item 12	3.9			
Item 13	2.9			
Item 14	1.5			
Item 15	3.1			
Item 16	1.8			
Item 17	4.1			
Item 18	2.3			
Item 19	2.5			

For this part of the analysis, the Friedman test was conducted to determine whether participants had a differential rank ordered preference for error-correction strategies. Results of the analysis manifested that there was a differential rank ordered preference for these items, t (7) = 99.29, p= .000 < .05. (Table 4.7)

A post hoc comparison of the rank ordered preferences for the items was utilized. The results indicated that there were significantly more favorable rankings of item 14 over item 16 and item 16 over item 18 and 18 over item 19 and item 19 over item 13 and item 13 over item 15 and item 15 over 12 and 12 over 17(14>16>18>19>13>15>12>17). So, there was a significant difference in how participants preferred items for speaking error corrections strategies. This manifested that generally, teachers preferred to correct students' errors implicitly and among these items, this item was the first priority of teachers in their perception about error correction.

One important point to note here is that the kind of error correction in teaching methodology may be associated with the theoretical aspect behinds the methodology adopted in teaching speaking skills. According to the behavioristic notion, teachers must be the source of reinforcement and punishment in students' speaking. Teachers in this place plays a significant role in encouraging the students' faultless speaking or punishing them once they make error. In this regard, teachers were assumed to be as the authority and classroom ideal prototype and the

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learners' role was seen as diminishing. Students only produced some outputs in their speaking and it was the teachers' task to ponder on them and make either direct or indirect correction. The results of this part of the study indicated that the majority of teachers believed that there should be an appropriate lapse in giving corrective feedback to the students and errors should not be corrected on the spot by making interruption in the process of students' speaking. This interruption in speaking may lead to further mistakes and this may create lack of interest in finding the source of errors. So, the first priority was attributed to the delayed correction and the last priority was given to the immediate type of error correction.

The results of this study manifested the priority of indirect types of feedback over direct types for correcting students' speaking errors. This classification of strategies in Fukuda's speaking error correction questionnaire was based on Panova and Lyster's (2002) classifications of error treatment, in other words feedback types used for the student errors (recasting/elicitation/metalinguistic feedback/repetition/explicit feedback/no corrective feedback). For more clarification on the results, there seems to be a movement from implicit to explicit types of feedback.

Researchers are interested in the subjects related to language learning and teaching in second and foreign language learning and teaching contexts and in their related issues from different perspectives. Some researchers pursue their own researches in the field of language teachers while others are more inclined toward topics related to the learners of second or foreign language. It is evident that in various methodological approaches adopted throughout years, different theoretical approaches on error correction were dominant. Generally, the notion of error is changing gradually and the movement occurred from eradication of error by teacher in behaviorist approach towards error analysis conception and providing sufficient condition for a successful language learning, that was primarily introduced in communicative language approach.

Conclusion

In this study, the researchers presented different conditions for error correction in the process of teaching speaking skill. Findings manifested that error correction process for teachers was viewed positively. This positive attitude towards error-correction in speaking skill can assist students in learning language in natural condition and can be representative of teachers and students' openness towards real communicative language process. Considering correction, it has been noticed that language classes especially speaking classes could become more authentic if adequate space was allocated to self-correction, which is an essential pre-requisite for a natural conversation.

Generally speaking, use of error correction is effective for any type of language skill learning. The findings showed a variation in teachers' opinions on the benefits of them using error correction. The result of the present work, indicate that the major concern of teachers for choosing the best strategy. If they do some error correction strategies in their classrooms, it shows their attempt to provide a good learning situation and manage students' learning more effectively.

As a whole, the results of the present study, strongly supported findings of many previous research by other specialists in the field of language teaching. The result of the present study was

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in line with the study carried out by Uysal and Aydin (2017). They examined error correction effect on acquiring oral and teachers' role as error corrector. They found that error correction may contribute to habit formation in terms of self-correction among students, proper use of language, learners' accuracy and fluency. One other findings of this study was that teachers concentrated on errors such as pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. These errors may directly deviate listeners from the exact meaning in a communicative situation and so they may employ different strategies for error correction.

Recommendation in this research were made based on the gaps found from the obtained results. Education in each area differs from other areas. Due to some limitations this study does not deal with a wider scope. Future studies can involve a larger population with more teachers in order to be more generalizable in its result. In this study some variables such as teachers' experience level and was investigated. Further studies demand considering some other factors such as teachers' gender, level of education. Last but not the least, since this study was based on error correction in speaking skill, there felt to be space for further research to take other skills into consideration.

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