The Effect of Explicit Corrective Feedback on Improving the English
Pronunciation of Iraqi Intermediate Graders

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Abstract

This quasi-experimental study aims at investigating the effect of feedback on developing the pronunciation skills of intermediate EFL learners in Iraq and how such feedback can help them improve their pronunciation and speaking skills. The sample of the study included 40 female first-year intermediate graders at Al-Remah intermediate school during the second semester of the academic year (2021-2022).

The sample was then subdivided into two groups: an experimental group (n=20), set to receive explicit corrective feedback, and a control group (n=20), set to receive no feedback. The two groups were exposed to a 3-month pronunciation tests in the early experiment. After that, both groups passed a post-test. Results revealed that explicit corrective feedback in the experimental group was more effective than in the control group.

Keywords: EFL learning; Pronunciation; Intermediate education; Feedback.

أثر استخدام التغذية الراجعة التصحيحية الصريحة في تحسين نطق اللغة الإنجليزية لدى طلاب
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المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة الشبه تجريبية إلى تقصي أثر التغذية الراجعة على تطوير مهارات التلفظ و النطق لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق ومساعدتهم على تطوير مهارة النطق لديهم من خلال استخدام أسلوب التغذية الراجعة التصحيحية الواضحة. تألفت عينة الدراسة من طلبة المرحلة الأولى في الدراسة المتوسطة في مدرسة الرماح المتوسطة خلال الفصل الدراسي الثاني من العام الدراسي (٢٠٢١–٢٠٢٢).

تكونت عينة الدراسة من (٤٠) طالبة في السنة الأولى، وتم تقسيم العينة إلى مجموعتين: المجموعة التجريبية والمجموعة الضابطة. تلقت المجموعة التجريبية (وعددها ٢٠) ملاحظات تصحيحية صريحة، بينما لم تتلق المجموعة الضابطة (وعددها ٢٠) لأي نوع من التغذية الراجعة. تعرضت المجموعتان لاختبار النطق في بداية التجربة التي استمرت لمدة ثلاثة أشهر. ثم خضعت المجموعتان لاختبار بعدي. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن التغذية الراجعة التصحيحية الصريحة في المجموعة التجريبية كانت أكثر تأثيرًا منها في المجموعة الضابطة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعليم، التلفظ، الدراسة المتوسطة، الاختبارات، اللغة الانكليزية قي العراق

1.Introduction

Due to its universality, English language is considered one of the most significant languages in the world. Many people around the world speak it, either as a first or second/foreign language. In addition, English is the key that opens the doors to the scientific and technical information that many nations require for their economic and political progress. For individuals looking for work, proficiency in English is essential.

The four language skills that students should develop when learning English these are speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Since all of these English skills are related to one another, they are all necessary. The four skills will not be the emphasis of this study because they require constant work and take a lot of time. The only skill that is the focus of this research is speaking, and the researcher has focused on one aspect of speaking, namely "pronunciation." One crucial element of English is pronunciation. In English, pronunciation is crucial because poor pronunciation can lead to misunderstandings regarding the meaning of what is being said. One of the

most crucial tasks for English teachers is helping students with their pronunciation because it plays a significant role in their speaking and listening abilities. The idea of feedback is one that is widely used in language teaching, so it's something to consider. This type of communicated or exchanged information may be provided by teachers, students, or even by other parties like parents or higher authorities for the purpose of a school's or a student's self-evaluation. But it is frequently related to teachers assessing their students. Ur (1996: 242) defines feedback as "information that is given to the learner about his or her performance of a learning task, usually with the objective of improving this performance".

Feedback is often characterized as "information provided to pupils about their performance that directs future conduct" (Ambrose, 2010, p. 125). Feedback not only identifies areas for improvement and advancement but also helps students identify potential future learning opportunities. Feedback is frequently used in the context of education to refer to the teacher's comments on the work of his or her students. According to Oxford Dictionary (2012), feedback is information on the worth or quality of a product or someone's work. It can also be criticism or advise. In the literature, it has been asserted that feedback usually refers to the reader's or listener's reaction to the learner's speech or writing. According to this definition, feedback is a response to a performance, which could be either oral or written. For instance, a teacher might offer correcting information, a peer can offer an alternative strategy, and a book can offer material to clarify concepts. A "result" of performance is feedback. To explain, when you send a message to a recipient, you will likely receive a response from him that may be verbal, suggestive, or gestural. This response will indicate the quality of the impact left by the message, whether positive or negative, and how it presents more, abstains from doing so, displays more, or takes a position in response to it (Al-Sharqawi, 2011).

Feedback theories are one of those in many educational areas that have shown such high development over the years. Behaviorism is one that has been theorized for more than a century. This theory is a psychology-based

theory that places students in the role of stimulus respondent. Behaviorism emphasizes the external behaviors of students, which can be changed by applying rewards and punishments. Teachers take their students step-by-step through the curriculum. It is expected of the students that they repeat what their teachers have said . When the students perform well and without making a mistake, the teacher will encourage them and give them rewards to complete what they started, but when the learners make an error , the teacher will provide a suitable feedback to correct their errors Skinner, B. F. (1938).

The educational role of feedback stems from the principles of behavioral theory, which confirms that the individual changes his subsequent behavior if he knows the results of his previous behavior, and also confirms the role of feedback reinforcement, and its role in stimulating motivation, guiding learning, and establishing correct information; Thus, raising the level of achievement (Nabhan 2008) the one who believes that behavior is formed as a result of an association between stimuli and response, and that the response represents the means to achieve the aim, and that the practice of the results leads to students feeling comfortable .

Positive feedback is positive reinforcement and negative feedback is punishment. Positive feedback is when teachers praise their students when they complete an activity successfully. It provides two primary functions: the first is to let the students know that their performance was correct, and the second is to improve their self-confidence by using positive reinforcement. Positive feedback affirms that a learner's response to an activity is correct. It may signal the veracity of the content of a learner's utterance or the linguistic correctness of the utterance (Nelson, & Roberts 2000).

Negative feedback is a form of punishment, while positive feedback is reinforcement. Teachers that give their learners positive feedback do so after they successfully complete an assignment. It has two main purposes: first, it informs the pupils that their performance was accurate, and second, it boosts their confidence by giving them praise. Positive feedback validates a learner's appropriate reaction to an activity. It may indicate that a learner's statement is true to its content or that its linguistic construction is sound (Nelson, & Roberts 2000). Negative feedback indicates that the learner's

statement is linguistically incorrect or lacking in authenticity in one way or another. It has a corrective intention, in other words. Teachers may give students negative feedback when they perform poorly or improperly by criticizing, disciplining, or formally pointing out the error. This form of criticism is categorically believed to hinder learners' development. (Nunan 1991, pp. 195–197,). Corrective feedback (CF) has received much attention from researchers and language teachers, but there has been disagreement about whether and when to correct errors as well as regarding which faults to address (Hyland, 2006). Feedback can be directive from a behavioral perspective. Ackan and Tatar (2010) contend that directive feedback is inappropriate and that it should instead prompt introspection from student instructors. Others distinguished between courteous or straightforward remarks and explicit or tacit criticism. According to constructivism, there are different types of feedback, including form, content, process, and product feedback. According to cognitivism, feedback should be precise and understandable. Bricker & Baker (2010). Others used other language, stating that feedback should be specific, dependable, and descriptive. (Hyland 2001).

2-Pronunciation

In English speaking activities, pronunciation is important since it has a significant impact on the intelligibility of utterances. When a speaker pronounces a word incorrectly, it can hinder communication and could be one of the elements that cause a conversation to break down. Hornby (1995) defined pronunciation as the manner in which a word is said, the manner in which a word is pronounced, or the way in which a person speaks a language. It has been found in the literature that pronunciation is the process of producing speech sounds, comprising articulation, vowel production, accent inflection, and intonation, frequently with relation to the accuracy or appropriateness of the speech sounds. In general, it may be said that pronunciation affects how well speakers and listeners are able to transfer their messages, ideas, and thoughts to one another. More specifically, pronunciation refers to the way a person speaks or makes a word sound in order to facilitate understanding .

Pronunciation includes attention to the particular sounds of a language (segments), aspects of speech beyond the level of the individual sound, such as intonation, phrasing, stress, timing, rhythm (suprasegmental aspects), how the voice is projected (voice quality) and, in its broadest definition, attention to gestures and expressions that are closely related to the way we speak a language. "Abroad definition of pronunciation includes both suprasegmental and segmental features. Although these different aspects of pronunciation are treated in isolation here, it is important to remember that they all work in combination when we speak, and are therefore usually best learned as an integral part of spoken language" (Gilakjani, 2012).

3- **Previous studies**

This section discusses some of the studies that have been conducted by different researchers to investigate the effect of explicit corrective feedback on different variables.

1) Mohammad Rahimi (2008), examined the effects of feedback on writing consistency over time as well as how the students' native tongue affected the feedback effect. The study's findings revealed no evidence of a substantial impact of the teachers' input. The results, however, revealed that practice and the interplay between practice and feedback had the main influence, leading to improvements in writing accuracy for both groups over the course of a semester, with the feedback group showing the greatest gains. The results also revealed significant disparities in the two groups' ability to reduce their grammatical errors across a range of areas.

2) Wen Chen, Guo-qiang (2021), examined the effectiveness of corrective feedback (CF) from Chinese second language (12) teachers to their students in mainland China. Investigations into how CF works were carried out based on three aspects: teachers' perceptions of CF effectiveness, factors affecting it, and their interplay. An ecological approach-the nested ecosystem model-was employed to analyze data collected from interviews and stimulated recall interviews. A total of 22 dass periods from 11 teachers were observed, and 8 teachers were interviewed. Collected data were then analyzed with Nvivo 11. Findings suggest that teachers' main criterion for effective CF is raising

students' awareness of the error. The influence of each individual factor on CF effectiveness, as well as the influence of their interplay, was examined. This study suggests that in the context of mainland China, teachers' perceptions of effective CF were based on raising students' awareness on the error; factors affecting CF effectiveness were largely the same as those in previous studies. What is new to the current study is that it highlights the influence of indirect factors from cultural and affective dimensions on teachers CF perceptions and the dynamic nature of CF effectiveness.

3)Hossein Nassaji & Qian Liu (2016) examined the effectiveness of written corrective feedback (WCF) for improving L2 learners' grammatical accuracy, fewer studies have investigated the extent to which different educational settings would influence learners' perceptions and preferences of WCF. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from 64 intermediate, advanced-intermediate, and advanced English learners across three proficiency levels (intermediate, advanced-intermediate, and advanced) in a major provincial university of Mainland China. Through extensive written questionnaires, the study explored these learners' perceptions and preferences of the various dimensions of WCF. The results showed that although the participants tended to have a neutral opinion on the role of explicit grammar instruction, overall they expressed a favourable attitude towards error correction. The qualitative data further indicated that the participants wanted to take more initiatives in the revision process of their writing with less interference from teachers. Overall, the findings confirm the value of WCF for EFL learners outside English-speaking countries. The findings also highlight the significance of individual and contextual factors in the ongoing debate over the effectiveness of WCF.

4-Types of Feedback

Oral feedback

Oral feedback is a form of interaction between a teacher and a student or between two students. Either a specific person or a group of people could be the target. "Collective feedback" is when a teacher gathers the most frequent errors and corrects them in front of the class without focusing on any one particular student. This could be viewed as oral feedback that is more group-

focused. Giving oral feedback to students in a classroom may cause them to make mistakes while learning. Because of this, the students are aware of their skill shortages.

Written feedback

Written feedback is the second kind of feedback. Written feedback can be used for any type of work product and is a particularly effective way to provide individualized feedback when a large class or a lack of time prevents one-on-one conferences with learners. For these reasons, teachers typically use written feedback so that they can save more time for learning, making it the most common type of feedback. (Konold 2004, p. 68).

5-Corrective feedback

Corrective feedback, , is a strategy used to improve, reinforce, and correct learners' errors in which the teacher reformulates utterances that may have some errors during the lesson. According to Doughty and Varela (2009), "teachers responded to learner errors by first rephrasing the learner's utterance forcefully stressing the error and, if the learner failed to correct it, reformulating the utterance." When participating in interactive activities in the classroom, some students make mistakes that must be corrected without upsetting or hurting their feelings; otherwise, they will grow frustrated and lose interest in learning. With this in mind, educators should research methods that encourage student participation in a setting with little fear. Any indication to the learners that their use of the target language is inappropriate constitutes "corrective feedback," according to Lightbown and Spada (1999).. This includes various responses that the learners receive. When a language learner says, "He goes to school every day," corrective feedback can be explicit, for example, 'no, you should say "goes," not "go," or implicit, "yes, he goes to school every day," and may or may not include metalinguistic information, for example, 'Don't forget to make the verb agree with the subject' (p. 171-172).

Corrective feedback, in accordance with Bitchener (2008), can enhance learners' abilities. Corrective feedback functions as hypothesis testing in this situation. The learners may be prompted to use their own resources to reformulate the faulty form if the proper form is not provided in the

corrective feedback, on the other hand. Corrective feedback can aid L2 growth in both ways (Ohta, 2001). For example

S1: Yes, I have to…to find the answer on…on the book also?

T: In the book, yes. Both…in the book. (corrective feedback)

S1: In the book.

6-Methodology

Experimental design

The experimental design serves as a guide for the steps that allow the researcher to test his/ her hypotheses by obtaining valid conclusions about the relationship between dependent and independent variables (Best and Khan, 2006, p.177). The experimental design is " *the structure by which variables are positioned or arranged in the experiment"*(Wiersma and Jurs, 2005, p.101). The researcher adopted the " quasi-experimental design" (Cohen 2007, p. 212). Wiersma and Jurs (2005, p.130) define quasi-experimental design as " *the use of intact groups of subjects at random to experimental treatments"*. Participants are evaluated in the current study utilizing a quasi-experimental method with two groups. The control group wouldn't receive any treatment for the independent variable, which in this sort of design is (explicit corrective feedback).

Table (1) : The Experimental Design

groups	Pre –Test	Treatment	Post – Test
experimental group (A)	Pronunciation Test	Explicit corrective feedback	Pronunciation Test
Control group (C)			

7-Instrument of the Research

The pronunciation test

The instrument of this research will be the pronunciation test . It was applied in the pre-test and post-test segments. The pre-test aims to find out the prior knowledge of students' pronunciation and it will be conducted at the first meeting. The post-test aims are designed to find out the improvement of the students' pronunciation, and it will be conducted at the last meeting. The pronunciation test contains four questions to measure student pronunciation ability at both production and recognition levels. In question one, sounds comparison is used. The aim of this question is to test students' ability to recognize the different sounds among a list of words. The students listen to the pronunciation of a group of four words and indicate which one is different. In the second question, different words ending in (ed) are presented to the students. This question is used to check whether students are able to recognize the difference between the pronunciation of /t/, /d/ and /id/. Different words are used in the third question to assess students' ability to pronounce words with the sounds/p/,/b/,/v/,/f/,/s/,/z/,/k/,/tS/and/∂/,/ɵ/.Question four includes paragraph reading to measure the student's pronunciation in continuous reading.(see appendix A).

8-Test Validity

Validity is the essence of any form of evaluation that is precise and consistent (Cohen 2006, p.106). The degree to which an instrument, however, measures what it is intended to measure is referred to as an instrument's validity. Validity demonstrates how research data were gathered and analyzed in order to interpret the reality under investigation. To achieve the validity of the research, the researcher designed a test for the students.

9-Reliability of the pronunciation test

Reliability is the consistency of findings or measures' (Adams & Lawrence, 2019, p.118). The reliability of the pronunciation test was ensured by exposing the test to 20 participants from the population rather than from the study sample. The correlation coefficient is found to be **0.924** and this is considered a high stable coefficient.

10-The Statistical Tools Used:

The following statistical tools are used in the present research:

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(1) **The T-test for Two Independent Samples:** This tool is used in order to identify whether there are any significant difference between the two groups in the pre and posttests and on certain variables such as age, level of achievement in English of the preceding year to check whether the two groups are equal to begin the experiment.

(2)**The Pearson Correlation Coefficient Formula:** This tool is used to estimate the reliability of the tests.

11-Results and Discussion

The mean pronunciation score of the (EGA) is compared with that of the (CG) in the total scores of the post-test. The mean score is found to be 69.20 for the EGA and 51.90 for the CG. The "T" test formula for the two independent samples is used to find out if there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups or not. The "T" value calculated is found to be 4.649 at a 0.05 level of significance, which indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups. The difference between the means of scores obtained by the EGA and the CG shown in (Table 2) indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups.

Table (2) : The Mean, Standard Deviation, and T-Test Value of the Post-Test Scores of Both Groups in pronunciation

Group	No	Mean	SD	T-value	Sig
EGA	20	69.20	9.294	4.649	0.000
CG	20	51.90	9.963		

Also by comparing the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test for EGA with GC, it is found that 48.35 for EGA and 44.30 for CG in the pre-test, while the mean score of the post-test for EGA is found at 69.20 and 51.90 for CG. The "T" test formula for the two independent samples is used to find out if there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups or not. The t-test is found to be 5.984. This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group (EG A) and those of the control group(CG) in the

pronunciation from the pretest to the posttest. Table 3 shows the difference between both groups .

Table (3) : The Mean, Standard Deviation, T-Test Value of the Pre- Test and post-Test of the Experimental group (EGA) and Control group in pronunciation test

Groups	No	Mean Pre-test	Mean Post-test	SD Pre-test	SD Post-test	T-value	Sig
EGA	20	48.35	69.20	15.380	9.294	0.763	0.455
CG	20	44.30	51.90	8.749	9.963		

The result of the current study indicates that the achievement of the students in the pronunciation test in the experimental group A (ECF) is significantly higher on average than that of the students in the control group B (CG) .The strategy is undoubtedly a result of the fact that ECF enables learners to study more while also quickly and effectively improving their pronunciation. When they pronounce the letters, all psychological barriers—such as anxiety, stress, hesitation, and fear—are removed. It's possible that ECF helped the students remember the information they had learned during the explicit strategy training, explaining why it was superior to CG in pre-post gains for pronunciation. It's possible that ECF helped the students remember the information they had learned during the explicit strategy training, explaining why it was superior to CG in pre-post gains for pronunciation.

Recommendations:

On the basis of the above findings and conclusions of the research, the following recommendations are forwarded.

(a) For EFL Teachers:

1. Based on the research findings, it is strongly advised that teachers take into account the preferences of their students while providing oral corrective feedback, particularly when deciding on the form, timing, and content of the feedback. Corrective feedback can be damaging to the

improvement of students' learning if these factors are not taken into account.

(b) For Textbook Designers:

When creating pronunciation materials, textbook authors should take the requirements and interests of their students into account. Additionally, they should give teachers enough instructions and recommendations on how to teach pronunciation.

Pedagogical Implications

The importance of the current study lies in its pedagogical implications it has for learning and teaching EFL. In other words, this study will assist Iraqi EFL teachers and students in gaining better understanding of the effect of using recast and explicit corrective feedback in enhancing and developing pronunciation skills in learning English.

Pronunciation is a crucial component of communication and should not be neglected in the classroom. Error correction has been shown to be a successful method for assisting students in getting rid of recurring errors in the pronunciation of difficult words. For students to pronounce words precisely and correctly, teachers must deliver the relevant information clearly, correct any mistakes that are made, and provide enough feedback.

Suggestions for Further Research

1) An investigation of how Recast-based teaching pronunciation affects the pronunciation of Iraqi EFL learners. Also, to determine if the findings confirm the findings of the present study or not.

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Appendix (A)

Q1\ Listen to the following groups of English words and tell which one is different by circling it.   (25 M)

1-this – thick – Maths – thin

2-too- food –soon – good

3-country –fun –summer –truth

4- suite – pool –blue –threw

5- enough – cough – although – rough

6- feat – great – seat – beat

7- orange – arrange – change – acquaint

8- sweater – clean –leather –weather

9- station –kation – notion –nation

10- shirt – fire – first – bird

11- filled –wanted –enjoyed – preferred

12- blood – mood –moon –soon

13- gain – stain – bargain – plain

14- merely – there – here – sincere

15- monster – cone – pond – bond

16- machine – magic –tragic – logic

17- chief – of – leaf – thief

18 –clip – triple – title –little

19 – buck – duck – reduce – structure

20 – sparrow –pardon – remark – party

21- roar – coat – roast – toast

22- push – bush – fussy – bullet

23- count – country – counter – county

24- invitation – blind – decide – provide

25- though – cough – although – soul

Q2\ Pronounce the following words: (25 M)

Words	/t/	/id /	/d/
Washed			
painted			
talked			
finished			
cooked			
played			
listened			
learned			
stayed			
visited			
climbed			
slowed			
corrected			
stopped			
cleaned			
watched			
liked			
changed			
watered			
killed			
delighted			
tidied			
worried			
helped			
invented			

Q3\ Pronounce the following words: (20 M)

Words	Correct	Incorrect

Q4	knives life watch Munich class exercise there thought people Erbil			/

Read the following paragraph   **(30 M)**

I read your name in a magazine. Would you like to be my pen –friend? I hope so. I am a Japanese boy and I am thirteen years old. As you can see. I live in a small town called Soma. My house is very near the sea. My favourite pastimes are fishing and collecting stamps. What is Iraq like? Japan is not very big, but it is very beautiful. There are a number of large cities as well as small towns and villages.