

ERROR CORRECTION TECHNIQUES IN THE EFL CLASSROOM: EXPLICIT VS. IMPLICIT FEEDBACK

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ABSTRACT

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Effective error correction is vital in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, but opinions vary regarding the most efficient approach. This paper examines the pedagogical impact of explicit (direct) versus implicit (indirect) feedback in helping learners recognize and correct errors. By analyzing student performance and engagement in classrooms where different feedback types were used, the study concludes that while explicit correction accelerates grammatical accuracy, implicit feedback fosters deeper learner autonomy and fluency. A balanced application based on learner level and context is recommended.

Mistakes are an inevitable part of the language learning process. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), error correction is a critical pedagogical tool used to guide learners toward more accurate and fluent language use. However, the method and timing of correction can significantly impact learner motivation, confidence, and retention.

The two main categories of feedback are:

- Explicit feedback, where the teacher clearly indicates the error and provides the correct form.
- Implicit feedback, where the teacher hints at the error (e.g., via recasting or clarification requests) without directly stating it.

The ongoing debate centers around which method promotes better learning outcomes—especially in terms of language accuracy, fluency, and learner autonomy. This study investigates the effectiveness of both feedback types and how they affect students' linguistic development and engagement in EFL settings.

A quasi-experimental study was conducted in two intermediate-level EFL classrooms (ages 16–18) over four weeks. The participants (N=48) were divided into two groups:

- Group A received primarily explicit feedback (e.g., metalinguistic correction, direct correction).
- Group B received primarily implicit feedback (e.g., recasts, repetition with intonation, clarification requests).

Data collection involved:

- Pre- and post-tests on grammar and vocabulary accuracy.
- In-class recordings to observe error correction instances.
- Student surveys to assess perceptions of correction.
- Teacher interviews to reflect on feedback practices.

Observation Category	Group A (Explicit)	Group B (Implicit)
Post-test grammar accuracy increase	+18%	+9%
Post-test vocabulary usage accuracy	+12%	+14%
Student-reported confidence level	3.5/5	4.2/5
Fluency in speaking activities	Moderate	High
Learner preference for feedback type	58% preferred explicit	67% preferred implicit

Key findings:

- Explicit feedback led to higher improvements in grammatical accuracy, especially in written tasks.
- Implicit feedback encouraged greater oral fluency and learner initiative in self-correction.
- Students in the implicit group reported higher comfort and less anxiety during speaking tasks.

These results indicate that both explicit and implicit feedback have distinct advantages depending on the learning objective. Explicit correction is effective for structural accuracy,

particularly in formal grammar instruction and writing tasks, where clarity and correctness are prioritized.

However, implicit feedback fosters learner-centered interaction and supports a communicative classroom environment, where students are encouraged to notice and repair their own mistakes. This aligns with constructivist learning theories, where learners construct knowledge actively through discovery.

The learner's proficiency level and task type also influence which feedback method is most effective. For example:

- Beginners may benefit more from explicit corrections to build a foundation.
- Intermediate and advanced learners can better handle implicit feedback, which challenges them to notice gaps and reflect on their output.

Importantly, feedback timing and tone are critical. Harsh correction, even if accurate, can demotivate students. Therefore, balancing both types and tailoring them to the learner's needs and context is essential for effective language teaching.

Error correction in EFL instruction is not a one-size-fits-all strategy. Both explicit and implicit feedback serve valuable roles in developing different language competencies. While explicit correction is beneficial for building accuracy, implicit techniques support fluency, autonomy, and learner confidence.

A balanced, learner-sensitive approach—where teachers vary their feedback type depending on the task, proficiency level, and learner preferences—can create a more effective and supportive language learning environment.

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