

## **Peer-To-Peer Corrective Feedback In A Group Interaction**

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**Abstract:** The study investigated the provision of corrective feedback and learner repair of errors following feedback in interactional context of peer-to-peer conversations, particularly in a group setting. A total of four students in their early twenties participated in the study. These students are participants of the “Friends of English” (FoE) programme conducted by Centre of Teaching and Learning, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. The relationship among error types, feedback types and learner repairs were examined. The interaction between these students in a group setting was recorded using *Sony Sound Forge*. The recorded interactions were transcribed and coded for types of errors (Syntactic / Lexical / L1), types of negative implicit feedback (Negotiation / Recasts) and learner repairs. Findings indicate that the mentor focused on recasts. He provided implicit negative feedback in the form of recasts to all three types of learner errors while engaging in the discussions. The majority of L1 errors were corrected followed by Lexical errors. Syntactic errors had the least number of repairs. Lexical error was the focus of the mentor as over half of Lexical errors received feedback followed by Syntactic error and L1 use.

*Keywords:* peer-to-peer conversations

### **Introduction**

In line with the new world of globalization, international communication has been increasing and resulting in the growing demand for communicative competence in English in Malaysia. However, it has appeared that teaching English in Malaysian education institution to be insufficient to develop English proficiency for communication among students. According to “The Star” newspaper (July, 2006) a number of 70% of graduates are unemployed and one of the reason of the unemployment is their lack of English communication skills. The deficiency of communicative competence in English in Malaysia appears to result from the lack of interpersonal interaction in English as a Second Language (ESL) learning context where English is not fully used as a means of communication.

### **Statement of the problem**

Although many studies have been done on corrective feedback in negotiated interaction, few or none focused on mentor-mentee or peer-to-peer interaction in a group setting outside of the classroom, Hall (2000), calls for sufficient research “to help us compare the scope and circumstances of contextual conditions ... the myriad issues connected to classroom interaction and additional language learning in all learning contexts require more examination” (p. 296-297). Mentor-mentee or peer-to-peer interaction creates a different context of interaction apart from classroom interaction. Therefore, it is appealing for me to carry out this research to examine the benefits of corrective feedback in this different context, other than classroom interaction. It is also questionable whether implicit negative feedback occurs in a way that is usable by learners in mentor-mentee context. Thus, this research is one avenue in showing the availability of implicit negative feedback and the relationship among error types, feedback types and immediate learner repair in a context that is different from most of the research that has been done.

## **Objectives of the study**

- a) to discover the type(s) of learners' errors that lead(s) to implicit negative feedback.
- b) to examine the type(s) of learners' errors that was repaired when receive implicit negative feedback.
- c) to ascertain the type of learners' error that was the focus of implicit negative feedback given by peer.

## **Significance of the study**

The significance of this study lies in informing English learners and instructors that interaction within a group of peers provides feedback and the availability of using the feedback, elements that are considered to be vital and crucial for second language development. It also provides opportunity for learners to practise speaking using the second language in a relaxed and informal way. Thus, this study will be able to exemplify the benefit of peer to peer group interaction for second language advancement. Furthermore, we can gain better understanding of the relevance of classroom interactions between teacher-students and among students. This can be achieved through this research finding whether peer-to-peer interaction makes negative feedback available to learners, in a form that is usable and used by all learners, and thus facilitate second language acquisition and development. Therefore, we could then encourage the availability of negative feedback in language classroom in teacherstudents interaction, pair work as well as group work.

## **Scope of the study**

The scope of this research covers the provision of implicit negative feedback, learner errors as well as immediate repair done by the learners. I will be looking into implicit corrective feedbacks which are negotiations and recasts and not other feedback moves and techniques. I will only focus on three different errors made by the learner. They are; syntactic and lexical errors, as well as uses of first language (L1). Syntactic and lexical errors are selected in adaptation of Morris (2005) work whereby he studied corrective feedback to syntactic and lexical errors in a computer mediated L2 class. As for L1 error, even though it is a code-switch, it is also considered as an "error" in the context of this study due to several reasons. I will discuss more in section 1.10. My samples will be one male and three female students ranging from the age of late teen to early twenties who are involved in "Friends of English". I will give further explanation of "Friends of English" in the third chapter. The reason why I choose this group is because of the language proficiency of the mentor. Due to the fact that I am looking into feedback and errors made in English, the mentor should be someone who uses English fluently and accurately. The mentor should also be someone who is trained to be aware of learner errors to be corrected. The data would be a collection of naturally occurring speech which would be taped using a laptop and an mp4 player. All data would be collected in a semi-casual spoken context.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants of the Study**

The participants of this study are members of "Friends of English" programme conducted by English Language Unit from Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). This programme is one of the courses offered by CTL under English Language Support Programme which offers opportunity for UTM students to practise using English in a semi-casual, relaxed and informal way. The goal of this programme is to improve English proficiency of UTM students through interaction. This can be achieved by carrying out conversations with mentors or Conversation Partners. The Conversation Partners are UTM students who have undergone training in facilitating discussion through one-on-one or group discussion as well as training in teaching English. Therefore, most of the Conversation Partners are students who are undertaking TESL (Teaching English as Second Language)

programme. However, due to the vast number of UTM students, a Conversation Partner may also be students from different field of study. Those students with band five and six of the MUET (Malaysian University English Test) result are eligible to apply as Conversation Partner.

I will focus on one “Friends of English” group and will be consistently recording the meetings of this particular group. The method of choosing this group is based on the Conversation Partner or mentor of the group. The mentor would not be a native speaker, but he has to use English as his first language in a fluent and accurate manner and has undergone training in teaching English.

These two criteria are important due to the fact that one of my objectives is to look at the types of errors made by the speakers. Therefore, the mentor should be someone who are aware of most of the errors made and are able to make certain corrective feedbacks to the errors.

### **Speech Sample**

The conversation among FoE members during their meetings will be recorded. The duration of the recording will be the same as the duration of each meeting. The expected duration of each recording is fifty minutes to one hour of interaction on the same FoE group. This means, I will only tape the conversation of the same participants throughout the semester. I will only proceed with my recording if all of the members are present for the group discussion. This is because, I would like to ensure the consistency of this research. The expected frequency of recordings that I will collect is five recordings, which means, I have to be present five times during the group discussion. I will record the whole conversation and transcribe it. However, I will be looking at only three variables when analyzing the transcription. The first variable is implicit corrective feedbacks which are negotiations and recasts. The second variable is the three different errors or “unwanted form”; syntactic and lexical errors, as well as uses of first language (L1). The last variable is immediate repair done by the learners following feedback.

### **Method of Data Collection**

I will be collecting my data using Sony Sound Forge Software which is installed in my laptop. In order to enhance the recording, I will be using a mini microphone attached at my laptop as the gadget to record the conversations during “Friends of English” meetings. I will also use an mp4 player as a backup gadget in case of any failure of the laptop or electricity in the building where the meetings will be held. I will be present in the same room with the group members as a passive observer. I will be there as a researcher who needs to know what is really happening during the conversation. This is important for transcribing the audio recordings later. I will be able to have more understanding of the words spoken in the audio recording and will be able to visualize the conversation. As I am planning to see the provision of implicit negative feedbacks and its relationship among error types and immediate repair, I would be looking for naturally occurring speech and interaction to ensure that the data collected would be authentic and genuine. Naturally occurring speech is non-elicited speech that is produced in real situations and cannot be controlled by the researcher. Apart from doing recordings, I would be distributing a set of questionnaire to all the learners (refer to appendix B) and I will be conducting a structured interview (refer to appendix C) to be able to take into consideration other aspects that would have some effects on my research and the outcome of the analysis later. Some of it being their English level of proficiencies (based on the MUET result) and their learning style.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **What type(s) of learners' errors lead to implicit negative feedback?**

When the peers in this study engaged in the semi-formal interaction, they were provided feedback in response to the learners' errors by the mentor. The results show that all three types of error made had received feedback by the mentor. All three types of error identified in the study lead to implicit negative feedback in the form of recasts. However, over 38% of the errors were lexical, thus making it the highest percentage of the error which received feedback. 34% was syntactic and only 28% was L1. The highest percentage of syntactic errors done which received feedback was in session 3, whereby 60% of the errors made are syntactic error. This is different with lexical error where a total of 53% of the lexical errors receiving feedback was done in session 5. As for the usage of L1 which received feedback, the most of it was committed during the fifth session. The outcome of this analysis might be related to the background of the mentor. He is someone who has undergone training in teaching English as a second Language; therefore, he may be comfortable in correcting the learners' errors. He may have perceived himself as not just an ordinary peer, but also a teacher to the other speakers, which may explain why all types of errors were given feedback.

### **What type(s) of errors was repaired when learners receive implicit negative feedback?**

Learners repaired 74% of all three types of errors made throughout the FoE session. The majority of repairs done was for L1 use (82%), followed by lexical errors (79%) and syntactic errors (63%). While most of L1 use and the majority of lexical errors were corrected, the rate of syntactic error correction was the lowest. Why were most of L1 uses repaired? These students who joined FoE programme need to have their own self-motivation to learn English through interaction. Therefore, they may have just been careful in tolerating their own L1 usage. That outcome that shows lexical errors were corrected at higher rates than syntactic errors should not come as a surprise, as the focus of FoE is to encourage fluency over accuracy. Therefore, the learners and the mentor may have concentrated more on their lexical growth over grammatical accuracy. In addition, the mentor may not have as much chance to correct syntactic errors done due to the on-going interaction by the learners whereby he does not want to interfere with the learners' fluency and confidence as they are speaking.

Over seventy percent of learners' errors that received feedback were repaired. Studies that examined face-to-face, child-to-child interactions have also reported that children frequently repair their errors immediately following feedback (Oliver 1995, 2000, 2002). This is also true with regard to this peer-to-peer interaction. It is possible that the rate of repair was high because, peers are comfortable with each other and considered as "risk takers", thus may not be afraid and willing to take chances when producing or modifying their L2 with their peers or mentor. Following feedback, the learners repaired the majority of lexical errors and most of the L1 uses. They repaired their syntactic error the least in comparison to the repair of lexical and L1 errors. It is possible that syntactic errors are more difficult to process than lexical errors because processing and assessing the rules of grammar is far more complex than retrieving lexical items (Morris, 2005). In addition, the learners are not focusing on form, but more on fluency in English, as the main objective of FoE is for the learners to improve their English communication proficiency in a casual and informal way. Therefore, the mentor focuses less in syntactic uses over lexical errors.

### **What type of learners' error was the focus of implicit negative feedback given by peer?**

Of the three types of errors, lexical use was the main focus of recasts by the peer. 38% of the feedback provided to the learner was for lexical errors. 34% of the recasts were meant for the syntactic error and only 28% was for L1 uses. The main focus of feedback by the mentor was for lexical uses. This may happen due to the fact that lexical errors are easier to correct because it is usually made in the form of

incorrect and inappropriate vocabulary. Therefore, the mentor could easily interrupt the interaction to correct the inappropriate vocabulary. This is not true with syntactic errors whereby it is more difficult to correct. This is mainly because syntactic error happens in a sentence and the mentor would rather have the learners to talk confidently than stopping them just to correct their syntactic errors.

## Conclusion

As a conclusion, corrective feedback in the form of implicit negative feedback was available for the learners in peer-to-peer group interaction. All three types of errors identified in this study were given feedback in the form of recast. Very little correction was given in the form of negotiation. All types of errors followed recasts were repaired. By investigating the effect of implicit negative feedback in a group of peer-to-peer interaction, it is hoped that some contributions could be made to the development of language teaching. Besides, it is believed that this study has covered a narrow scope of corrective feedback issue, and other researchers and interested students are recommended to carry out related studies to push the frontiers of knowledge in this regard.

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