

The Effects of Implicit, Explicit, and Emergent Oral Feedback on Iranian EFL Learners' Accuracy, Fluency, and Attitude¹

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Received: 2019-05-11 | Revised: 2019-06-21 | Accepted: 2019-08-27

Abstract

In this study it was attempted to investigate whether different CF strategies, including implicit, explicit, and emergent CF, can differently affect the accuracy and fluency of oral production among Iranian EFL learners. In addition, it explored the learners' attitudes towards how they felt about the CF types applied in the classroom. For these purposes, the researchers selected 54 homogeneous pre-intermediate learners on the basis of the PET results and randomly assigned them into three experimental groups: the Implicit group, the Explicit group, and the Emergent group. While the Implicit and Explicit groups received just implicit feedback and explicit correction for their erroneous oral production, respectively, the Emergent group took CF from implicit to explicit. Oral narra-

¹ DOI: [10.22051/ghor.2019.26029.1122](https://doi.org/10.22051/ghor.2019.26029.1122)

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tive and picture description tasks and semi-structured interviews were used to collect the quantitative and qualitative data for the study. The results of inferential statistics indicated significant differences among the feedback types in both past-tense and future-tense accuracy. Moreover, the Emergent group had a better performance compared with the other groups with respect to accuracy. However, no significant difference was revealed among the feedback types with respect to fluency. The results of the content analysis also indicated that the learners mostly preferred to receive emergent feedback and participate in the process of error correction. The findings of this study can raise researchers', teachers', and teacher trainers' awareness of the function of various CF types.

Keywords: Accuracy, fluency, emergent feedback, explicit feedback, implicit feedback, attitude

Introduction

Corrective feedback (CF) is one of the major issues students encounter every time they are involved in language production. Because the needs of the learners making errors and the style of their teachers regarding these errors may vary in real performance, CF, as one kind of negative feedback (Ellis, 2009a), has been defined in various ways. Lightbown and Spada (1990) referred to CF as a sign to the learners indicating that the target language produced by them is erroneous. Ellis (2009a), likewise, defined CF as a response to learners' erroneous form in order to have them recognize their erroneous utterance and try to correct it. According to Chu (2011), the focus on formal features in CF is different from what students experienced in traditional teaching methods since attempt is made by the teacher to draw students' attention to linguistic form as arise incidentally during communicative and meaning-focused lessons. In fact, the CF offered is normally an attempt on the part of the teacher to incorporate language-focused learning with meaning-focused input and output.

Ellis (2010) pointed out that CF has just been described in terms of the cognitive aspects of correction, whereas a deep understanding of CF requires considering both the social context of CF and the individual differences of learners. According to Ortega (2013), most cognitive-interactionist discussions of second language (L2) instruction suffer from a tension that is built by separations such as implicit and explicit CF. For example, Lyster and Ranta (1997) suggested six different types of CF, including recast, clarification request, repetition, elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, and explicit correction, which are along implicit/explicit continuum feedback types, and have been employed in conducting an important number of experimental and non-experimental CF studies (e.g., Ammar & Spada, 2006; Dilans, 2010; Nassaji, 2007).

Ortega (2013) further noted that a benefit of exploring CF within Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (SCT), based on which Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994) emergent feedback was proposed, is that these separations do not exist, and the continuum along them is not predictable since it can change dynamically in the same communicative activity and over multiple consecutive activities, as a

learner and an expert jointly facilitate the gradual and non-linear emergence of self-regulation. As Jin (2012) mentioned, based on the SCT, learning takes place in the social interaction and optimally appears in the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which refers to "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Wertsch and Hikmann (1987) claimed that the learners' ZPD should be recognized through the collaborative interaction between the learners and the teacher. In fact, specifying a learner's ZPD is seen as a negotiated discovery through which the teacher can determine precisely what the learner is able to accomplish alone and to what extent he/she is in need of assistance to accomplish. Accordingly, in an attempt to link second language acquisition theorizing with social practice of language teaching in an Iranian context, the present study examined the effectiveness of CF strategies on Iranian EFL learners' oral production. Besides, it considered the learners' attitudes as a determining individual difference in language learning.

Review of the Related Literature

Oral Corrective Feedback Strategies

Various types of oral CF can be classified either as implicit or explicit. Implicit CF indirectly and incidentally informs language learners that what they have produced is erroneous. On the other hand, explicit CF overtly and clearly presents a hint about the existence of an error and provides the target-like form (Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2006; Long, 2006). Lyster and Ranta (1997) proposed six oral CF types, among which *recast*, *clarification request*, *repetition*, and *elicitation* fall under the category of implicit feedback, whereas *metalinguistic feedback* and *explicit correction* are classified as explicit feedback.

Recasts as the most common form of implicit feedback can be defined as "the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a learner's utterance, minus the error" (Lyster & Ranta, 1997, p. 46). In support of using recasts, Long (2006) reported that recasts, by creating form-meaning connections, supply the correct forms to the learner. Furthermore, they do not interrupt the flow of communication which may be an important factor for acquisition. Some other researchers, however, have been less enthusiastic about recasts. For example, Lyster (2004), who was not in favor of recasts, mentioned that they were ambiguous. That is, the learner could not easily determine when they were corrective and when they were not.

According to Lyster and Ranta (1997), *clarification request* indicates to the learner that his/her utterance needs a reformulation or repetition since the teacher misinterpreted his/her production or it was ill-formed. In a *repetition*, the teacher isolates the ill-formed part of the learner's production and usually with a change in intonation repeats it to enable the learner to see that the error has been made. In an *elicitation*, the teacher relies on three strategies to elicit

the correct form from the learner. The teacher can elicit the correct form either by asking questions from the learner, stopping for a short time to have the learner complete the teacher's expression, or by having the learner reformulate his/her production. *Metalinguistic feedback*, without directly providing the correct answer, applies either comments or questions to inform the learner of the well-formedness of his/her utterance (Lyster & Ranta, 1997).

Explicit correction, as the most explicit feedback strategy, directly supplies the correct form to the learner's ill-formed target production (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). According to Ryan (2012), the main advantage of this method is that the student immediately recognizes that the form he/she provided was incorrect. However, the disadvantage with this method is that the student may not retain the corrected form that was provided for him/her. In other words, since, in this method of correction, the teacher gives the correct form, there is no chance for the student to try and find out why his/her form was incorrect.

From the perspective that CF should be negotiated (i.e., embedded in the tutor-learner oral communication, during which the tutor starts adapting his/her correction to the manner of the learner's responsiveness so that the learner can reach the level of self-correction), Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) specified a number of mechanisms for effective negative feedback within the learners' ZPDs. They proposed that the mediation which is presented by a more experienced person such as a teacher in an interactive activity should be graduated. That is, the teacher should try to realize the learner's ZPD so as to suggest the appropriate assistance and to help the learner perform at his/her potential level. To achieve this purpose, the teacher should start his/her help moving from a more implicit level towards an explicit and a concrete level (i.e., emergent feedback), until the appropriate level is reached. Furthermore, the assistance provided by the teacher should be contingent. That is, the assistance should be supplied only when the learner needs it and removed when the learner is able to have self-control and to act independently. Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) noted that when using the same form, various learners possess various ZPDs, and the same learner possesses various ZPDs when using various forms. The process of discovering the learner's ZPD is a continuous process during which the learner's needs are assessed and the teacher's assistance is tailored to that condition. Consequently, the learner's ZPD and the potential level of his/her ability cannot be discovered without a dialogic activity which gradually emerges between an expert and a novice.

Some studies reported that implicit types of correction, including recasts, can have the same effectiveness as more explicit types (e.g., Dilans, 2010; Gholami & Talebi, 2012; Han, 2010). Dilans (2010) examined the impacts of prompts and recasts on vocabulary development among intermediate ESL learners in the Southwestern United States. The findings showed that both types of CF were equally beneficial in the short term and that prompts were slightly more superior in the longer term. Han (2010) considered the relative influence of recasts and metalinguistic feedback on Chinese language learners' acquisition of classifiers. Both CF groups indicated a significant increase com-

pared with the control group on the post-test. Similarly, in an Iranian EFL context, Gholami and Talebi (2012) investigated the effects of the same two types of CF on the acquisition of regular past tense among low-intermediate level learners. The findings of the study indicated that, although the two groups receiving the CF types outperformed the control group who received no feedback, there was no significant difference between the CF types.

A number of research studies pointed out some advantages for prompts and explicit correction over recasts (e.g., Ammar & Spada, 2006; Jafarpour & Hashemian, 2013; Pawlak, 2013; Sheen, 2010). Ammar and Spada (2006) surveyed the potential benefits of recasts and prompts on the ESL learners' acquisition of third-person possessive determiners *his* and *her* in the Montreal area. They found that prompts were generally more beneficial, and that the effectiveness of recasts differed based on the learners' proficiency level. That is, for high-proficiency learners, both prompts and recasts were equally beneficial, whereas for low-proficiency learners, prompts were more beneficial than recasts. Sheen (2010) examined whether there was any difference in the effectiveness of oral and written CF on the use of English articles by intermediate ESL learners in the United States. The findings suggested that the extent of explicitness of CF has more influence than the channel in which it is presented on CF effectiveness. Pawlak's (2013) study explored the effect of explicit and implicit CF on removing pronunciation errors made by ESL advanced Polish learners. He reported that the use of explicit feedback and prompts were superior to the use of recasts concerning the explicit knowledge of the pronunciation of the target words. In an EFL context, Jafarpour and Hashemian (2013) compared the effect of recasts with that of prompts on learning the third person singular marker *s* by Iranian pre-intermediate learners. They concluded that prompts led to more achievements than recasts.

Some other studies suggested that implicit feedback is more effective than the explicit type (e.g., Jang, 2011; Perdomo, 2008). Perdomo (2008) assessed the efficacy of recasts in the use of past participles and the auxiliary verb *to have* for the present perfect tense in an oral EFL context in Venezuela. Results supported the claim of the effectiveness of recast compared to explicit CF. Jang (2011) investigated the influence of language anxiety on the effectiveness of recasts and prompts with respect to L2 learning process among Korean EFL university students. Results revealed that low-anxiety learners benefitted more from recasts and further developed their L2 explicit knowledge.

Of particular relevance to the present study are Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994) and Nassaji and Swain's (2000) studies. Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) conducted their study among ESL pre-intermediate learners and their teacher to investigate the changes in the learner's responses based on the nature of the teacher's mediation which was carefully relevant to the learner. They found that the learners progressively moved from inter-psychological to intrapsychological functioning and became more independent to self-correct their errors. Nassaji and Swain (2000) compared the effectiveness of negotiated help considering the EFL Korean learner's ZPD with that of randomly provided help

not considering the learner's ZPD. It turned out that the person who received assistance within her ZPD was able to correctly employ it on a post-test.

Dimensions of Oral Production

According to applied linguists (Ellis, 2009b, Skehan, 1989, 1996, 1998), accuracy, fluency, and complexity are considered as the three central dimensions of L2 production which are used to measure L2 development. Two of the dimensions of oral production, which are relevant to the present study, are accuracy and fluency.

Accuracy refers to demonstrating higher levels of capacity to have control in the language and not to make errors in production, as well as avoiding demanding structures that might cause errors (Ellis, 2009b). According to Lennon (1990), oral accuracy is characterized as the ability to produce speech which is not erroneous. Skehan (1996) stated that oral accuracy is judged based on the congruence between oral language production and the formal rules of the target language.

Fluency concerns the capacity to connect different pieces of utterance together with ease and without any improper hesitation (Hedge, 1993). Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992, p. 141) mentioned that fluency as an indicator of a level of communicative proficiency involves the capability for the

- easy production of spoken language;
- use of language with a good control over intonation, vocabulary, and grammar;
- effective communication of ideas; and
- production of connected speech without making difficulties in understanding or a failure in communication.

Accuracy and fluency are so closely related that they are inseparable (Eskey, 1983). According to Eskey, there are some formalists who believe that language learning equals learning rules. On the other hand, there are some activists who have a different perspective, claiming that language learning equals how to implement it. Skehan (1998), in his trade-off hypothesis, also named the limited attentional capacity model, proposed that when attention is committed to one area, it may hinder the achievement of the other areas, and they possibly suffer. Thus, considering a balance and giving an equal significance to these areas of performance including accuracy and fluency are necessary.

As Segalowitz and Lightbown (1999) noted, studies on CF within the framework of form-focused instruction were initiated by the results of Canadian French immersion programs where learners failed to reach native-like accuracy. Partly due to this historical development, CF effectiveness has been considered mainly with regard to learning grammar. However, according to Segalowitz (2003), Segalowitz and Freed (2004), and Derwing, Munro, and Thomson (2008), automaticity and particularly a change in the processing speed can also explain L2 development. Although the positive relationship be-

tween the processing speed (i.e., cognitive fluency) and production fluency has not been affirmed yet, some significant change in production can exhibit underlying cognitive processing.

Several studies focused on examining the effect of implicit or explicit CF on both accuracy and fluency development (e.g., Chandler, 2003; Farrokhi, Zohra-bi, & Chehr Azad, 2017; Sato & Lyster, 2012). In her study, Chandler (2003) examined first- or second-year students at an American conservatory receiving four different CF procedures. She found that both accuracy and fluency significantly increased among the learners, but with respect to accuracy, direct CF and location only feedback types had the most progress. Sato and Lyster (2012) assigned four university-level English classes in Japan to four treatment situations in order to determine the influence of peer interaction and oral CF on second language development. After the treatment, the two CF groups who received prompts and recasts, respectively, progressed in both accuracy and fluency. On the other hand, the group who had just interaction with peers performed better than the control group with respect to fluency. In another attempt, Farrokhi et al. (2017) explored the effects of different CF conditions (i.e., delayed explicit metalinguistic CF, extensive recast, and intensive recast) on pre-intermediate Iranian EFL learners' spoken general accuracy and breakdown fluency. The results indicated that the different CF conditions had insignificant effects on the spoken general accuracy and fluency.

Attitude

Attitude as an influential concept for understanding human behavior is recognized as a mental state which refers to the beliefs and feelings about the class, language, people, and culture of the language (Richards et al., 1992). Chuang (2012) mentioned that teachers, besides equipping themselves with the necessary competence and teaching skills, have to understand the learners' psychological needs and their attitudes. Recognizing learners' attitudes and preferences can assist in offering them the right type of education in the form of learner-centered language teaching policies. If learners feel that their needs are being surveyed and catered to, they might develop a positive attitude toward what they are learning (Oladejo, 1993).

Schulz (2001) noted that students' beliefs and attitudes can influence the degree of their acceptance of the teacher's instruction. Language teachers, therefore, need to keep these beliefs in their mind when designing classroom activities so that the teaching activities can be perceived in the learners' minds as leading to learning. On the other hand, if students and teachers hold divergent views about the specific aspects of the language class, students might find the teaching as unsatisfactory, and teachers might find their students as unmotivated or uninterested. In line with Schulz, Brown (2009) maintained that teachers should investigate and understand their students' attitudes on teaching and learning and discuss differences in expectations in order to avoid the sense of failure among the students. This does not mean that instructional

strategies should obtain students' confirmation, but the divergence between teachers' and students' views should be removed. According to Brown, if students' and teachers' assumptions can converge, then teachers would have a better chance to guide their students to successful language learning. Knowing what learners think about CF will help teachers to plan for and present information in line with their contextual needs.

Several studies highlighted the learners' attitudes and preferences toward the implicit and explicit types of CF (e.g., Abukhadrah, 2012; Amador, 2008; Khorshidi & Rassaei, 2013; Mohamed, 2011; Yoshida, 2008). Amador (2008) surveyed English beginners' attitudes at the University of Costa Rica's School of Modern Languages. The results revealed that the students preferred those techniques in which they were explicitly told what their mistake was. In another study, Yoshida (2008) investigated teachers' and learners' preferences for CF types in Japanese EFL classrooms. The findings showed that recasts were the most favored CF type by the teachers. However, the learners preferred to have an opportunity to think about their errors in order to come up with the correct forms before receiving CF from their teachers.

Mohamed's (2011) study reported the opinions of French as a foreign language teachers and learners about CF in Egypt. She found that despite the teachers who preferred recasts for correcting the learners' oral errors, the learners did not see recasts as effective and favored prompts more. Arab EFL adult students' and teachers' preferences for oral CF were studied by Abukhadrah (2012). The results pointed out that the students and teachers both had positive attitudes towards error correction. The most popular feedback strategy for students was metalinguistic feedback. On the contrary, teachers had a higher preference for recasts. In another EFL context, Khorshidi and Rassaei (2013) investigated sex differences in the learners' preferences and attitudes toward CF at Shiraz Azad University in Iran. The findings revealed that there were no significant differences between males and females with respect to their preferences for CF, except that they rated the necessity of error correction differently. Furthermore, clarification request and repetition were the most frequent feedback, while explicit feedback was the least frequent feedback among males and females.

Statement of the Problem

Although speaking is considered an important language learning skill, many learners, especially in EFL contexts, continue to make linguistic errors in their oral production and find it hard to develop a fluent command of the language (Zhang, Zhang, & Ma, 2010). According to Nunan (1995), one of the significant barriers to the process of learning comes from the mismatch between teacher and learner opinions about what should happen in the classroom. Unfortunately, some researchers such as Amrhein and Nassaji (2010) reported mismatches between how students want to receive feedback in the classroom, and how it is actually given by the teacher. The introduction of the concept of the emergent

feedback, thus, calls for further scrutiny into the extent to which this form of feedback might prove more effective compared to the other feedback types. It can be assumed that incorporation of learners' proficiency level in the emergent feedback as a criterion for delineating the degree of explicit/implicitness of the feedback offered may serve the dual purpose of drawing their attention towards erroneous forms, and thereby, enhancing their accuracy, as well as maintaining their fluency by declining barriers to their flow of speech. In this regard, the present study aimed to investigate whether different CF types, including the implicit, explicit, and emergent CF, can have varying effects on the accuracy and fluency of Iranian EFL learners' oral production. Moreover, it attempted to find out about the learners' attitudes towards the various CF types employed in the classroom. In accordance with the purposes of the study, the following research questions were posed:

1. Is there a significant difference among the implicit, explicit, and emergent feedback types regarding their effectiveness in promoting the accuracy of Iranian EFL learners' oral performance?
2. Is there a significant difference among the implicit, explicit, and emergent feedback types regarding their effectiveness in promoting the fluency of Iranian EFL learners' oral performance?
3. What are the learners' attitudes toward the implicit, explicit, and emergent feedback types?

Method Design

The present study employed a mixed-method design, relying on both quasi-experimental quantitative study, consisting of pretests, treatment sessions, and posttests, and a qualitative study conducted via interviews. Regarding the quantitative part of the study, the independent variable was oral CF with three levels (i.e., implicit, explicit, and emergent), and the dependent variables were the accuracy and fluency scores in oral production. In the qualitative part, the attitudes of the participants in the three CF groups were the main variable of the study.

Participants

The participants in the study were 54 female Iranian EFL learners, ranging in age from 15 to 25 years. They were selected out of 90 pre-intermediate level learners studying the book *American English File 2* in Taktazan Institute and Middle East Language Teaching Center in Tabriz, one of the largest cities in the Northwest of Iran. They had already been assigned into their classes by the officials based on the placement test they had taken. However, the researchers also administered a Preliminary English Test (PET) among five classes to ensure their homogeneity in terms of their language proficiency level at the outset of the study. Three of these five classes were in Taktazan Institute and the other

two classes were in Middle East Language Teaching Center. Each class included 18 learners whose mother tongue was either Azari Turkish or Persian. Consequently, the researchers chose three out of the five classes (two classes in Tak-tazan Institute and one class in Middle East Language Teaching Center) and assigned them randomly into three experimental groups (i.e., Implicit, Explicit, and Emergent).

Instruments and Materials

Preliminary English Test (PET)

In order to check the initial homogeneity of the classes in terms of their proficiency level, the researchers adopted a version of PET (2009), which is developed by Cambridge English and tests communicative competence through four language skills (i.e., reading, writing, speaking, and listening). The results of PET for each participant was out of 100. That is, Paper 1 (Reading and Writing) carried 50%, Paper 2 (Listening) 25%, and Paper 3 (Speaking) 25% of the total marks for the whole examination.

Target Structures

As Ellis et al. (2006) suggested, CF will mostly assist learners in developing already partially mastered structures than to obtain entirely new linguistic forms. Ellis (2009a) further noted that highly focused CF, in which the focus is on just one error type, or somewhat less focused CF, which is directed at a limited number of pre-specified error types, are potentially more effective than unfocused CF, which will target all or most of the errors learners commit, so teachers should correct specific target forms in different lessons. Following Ellis et al. (2006) and Ellis (2009a), the researchers in this study just focused on the use of *simple past*, *past continuous*, and *be going to* or *present progressive* for *expressing future prior plans*. The learners of the present study were somehow familiar with these structures and had partially explicit knowledge of them. However, according to the teachers at language institutes, who were in direct contact with the learners, these structures were still problematic areas for the learners, especially in their oral production.

Pre-Test and Post-Test of Oral Production

To elicit *simple past* and *past continuous*, the researchers adopted two oral narrative tasks (one for the pre-test and the other for the post-test) from "Do and Understand" by Gerngross and Puchta (1996), while for eliciting *be going to* or *present progressive* for *future planned events*, they took two oral picture description tasks (one for the pre-test and the other for the post-test) from the same source. As Roothoof (2014) mentioned, "Do and Understand" relies on a series of clear pictures and storylines which are immediately understood by the students in pre-intermediate and intermediate levels. Picture A in both pre-test

and post-test focuses on eliciting *simple past* and *past continuous*, and Picture B in both tests is related to the use of *be going to* or *present progressive* for *future arrangements*.

The oral narrative task presented in Picture A and used in the pre-test was entitled "An Umbrella". It was composed of five picture strips, and each learner was asked to narrate the events related to the characters of the story. To elicit production of the focused forms, the teacher who was one of the researchers asked them to start their story with "One day, Tommy was walking with a man in the street,...".

Picture B which was used as a picture description task in the pre-test included nine picture strips, and it was about "Lisa's Plans". Each learner was supposed to describe the strips in the chronological order. Moreover, they were asked to start their description with "This winter, Lisa is going to Alp valley,...".

The oral narrative task related to Picture A in the post-test was composed of five picture strips, but had pictures different from those of the pre-test. Each learner was asked to start the story entitled "A Dog Walk" with "Yesterday, when Joe was walking his dog,...".

The picture description task as presented in Picture B in the post-test contained nine picture strips. It was about "Sara's Plans", and each learner described the strips individually starting with "Tomorrow, Sara is going to her grandma's house...".

The selected visual materials were compatible with the target forms that were mainly focused in the classes, and the learners had already studied the possible vocabularies needed for their descriptions. Prior to telling the story and describing the strips, individual learners were given two minutes to think about the pictures. Each learner took the speaking test individually with the teacher in maximum 10 minutes.

Materials

Materials in the institutes were chosen from American English File 2 by Latham-Koenig, Oxenden, and Seligson (2014). American English File 2 with engaging texts, topics, and tasks (picture description tasks, spot the differences tasks, etc.) is designed, generally, to give pre-intermediate learners full skills coverage, and specifically, to elicit specific target forms in their speaking.

Measures of Accuracy and Fluency

The learners' oral descriptions of the pictures in the pre-test and post-test were recorded using an MP3 player, and then they were transcribed. Following Wiggleworth (2008) and Wiggleworth and Storch (2009), who proposed that the proportion of error-free clauses to the total clauses (EFC/C) is the most precise procedure to determine accuracy, the researchers used the same measure to

specify the learners' accuracy. To measure fluency of the learners' oral production, drawing on Lennon (1990), Cucchiarini, Strik, and Boves (2002) and Iwashita, Brown, McNamara, and O'Hagan (2008), the researchers counted the number of lexically and grammatically correct words produced orally by learners per minute, while repetitions and hesitation markers (e.g., mm, ah) were removed from the word count.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 21 learners selected randomly from the experimental groups (seven from each group) in order to find out their opinions and attitudes about the oral CF types in their language classes. Based on Dornyei (2007), the researchers designed an interview guide which contained a set of guiding questions and prompts and provided a framework to direct the interviews toward the issues the interviewer wanted to learn about. All of the interviews were recorded in their entirety by an MP3 player for later analysis.

Procedure

In this research, prior to the main phase of the study, the researchers validated the data collection instruments in a pilot study. Regarding the validity of the instruments, the researchers initially requested two other experienced English teachers to check the content of the pre-test and post-test pictures and the interview guide for the purpose of the study and give their suggestions. Then, they asked 30 pre-intermediate Iranian EFL learners similar to the main population to see whether the pictures used for the pre-test and post-test and the interview guide were understood correctly as they were intended to be. The participants seemed to be responsive to them and did not report any particular difficulty in their understanding.

Upon checking the learners' homogeneity at the outset of the main study, the researchers randomly assigned the three classes into three experimental groups: Implicit group, Explicit group, and Emergent group. Then, they asked them to complete the pre-tests, including one oral narrative task (Picture A) and one oral picture description task (Picture B). After the pretests, the teacher who was one of the researchers started the treatments. Each class received the treatment for one semester consisting of 10 sessions each about 75 minutes within a time span of five weeks. Every treatment session provided opportunities for all learners to be engaged in one or two monolingual focused oral task that elicited the target form. For instance, they were asked to retell a story to the class about a set of pictures which they had already read or listened to, or they were asked to describe some related pictures while the initial sentence (e.g., Holly is going to work with Rob.) was constructed by the teacher, and they continued the story. All of the tasks with some minor additions were chosen from "American English File 2" by Latham-Koenig et al. (2014), and they were

the same for all three classes. Classes differed only in the CF treatment that they received from the teacher.

Learners in the Implicit group received just *recast* for their erroneous oral production. That is, whenever they made errors in the use of simple past, past continuous, or be going to/present progressive for expressing prior plans in their oral production, the teacher reformulated the erroneous form in her echoing the learners' statement. No additional information was given regarding their errors. The excerpt below further clarifies the teacher's attempt in providing recast for the Implicit group.

Excerpt 1

L: He spend his time with his family.

*T: He **spent** his time with his family.*

In the Explicit group, the teacher afforded *explicit correction* in response to the errors produced orally by learners in applying simple past, past continuous, or be going to/present progressive for future prior plans. That is, if a learner made an error in the target areas, the teacher produced the correct form directly while giving some information to specify that their utterance was ill-formed. Explicit correction used by the teacher can be seen in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 2

L: When they played in the garden, they made noise.

*T: You should say "When they **were playing** in the garden,..."*

The Emergent group took CF from *implicit to explicit* and it was withdrawn by the teacher as soon as the learner showed signs of self-correction for their erroneous production. This means that whenever they made errors in using simple past, past continuous, or be going to/present progressive for future prior plans, the teacher, drawing on Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994), began with the most implicit type of CF, that is, recast. If this strategy failed to produce a response, the teacher asked the learner for more clarification. If this also failed to prompt a response, she adopted the repetition strategy by repeating the erroneous part. If this strategy also failed, she offered the elicitation strategy. If the learner was still unable to recognize the error, the teacher gradually went to the most explicit CF types, including a metalinguistic explanation and finally an explicit correction. Therefore, for the Emergent group, emergent feedback and its related mechanisms (i.e., graduation and contingency) were focused. The excerpt below illustrates learning in the emergent CF-focused classroom.

Excerpt 3

L: This afternoon, I go shopping.

*T: I **am going** shopping. (Recast)*

L: I need some books.

T: Pardon? What do you mean by "I go shopping"? (Clarification request)

L: I go shopping because...

T: I go? (Repetition)

L: I go.

T: I go or I AM GOING? / I am going / I'm going.

interviewees were described and compared so that the themes that emerged repetitively could be identified. Answers were also coded manually according to whether they showed positive, negative, or mixed (mixture of positive and negative) attitudes.

Results

Results of the Proficiency Test Analysis (PET)

A PET was administered to test the initial homogeneity of the five classes in terms of their general proficiency level. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the classes.

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics for the PET in Five Classes

Classes	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Class 1	18	76.50	6.91
Class 2	18	77.55	9.84
Class 3	18	75.77	8.96
Class 4	18	75.50	9.81
Class 5	18	76.94	8.68

In order to find whether the mean scores of the five classes were significantly different or not, a one-way ANOVA, as shown in Table 2, was conducted to compare the mean scores of the classes. The results revealed that there was not a significant difference among the classes regarding their general language proficiency ($F=.160$, $p=.95>.01$). Hence, three out of these five classes were randomly chosen for the purpose of this study.

Table 2.
Results of One-Way ANOVA for the PET

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	50.82	4	12.70	.160	.958
Within Groups	6747.50	85	79.38		
Total	6798.32	89			

Results Concerning the First Research Question

The first research question asked whether there was a significant difference among the implicit, explicit, and emergent feedback types regarding their effectiveness in promoting the oral accuracy of Iranian EFL learners. Table 3 shows the distribution of the pre-test and post-test accuracy scores of the three groups.

Table 3.
Distribution of Accuracy Scores of the Three Groups in the Pre-Test and Post-Test

Variables	Group	Tenses		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Accuracy	Implicit	past tense	pre	18	0.15	0.08	
			post	18	0.46	0.09	
		future tense	pre	18	0.16	0.06	
			post	18	0.50	0.11	
		Explicit	past tense	pre	18	0.15	0.08
				post	18	0.57	0.18
	future tense		pre	18	0.16	0.08	
			post	18	0.58	0.12	
	Emergent		past tense	pre	18	0.15	0.07
				post	18	0.75	0.15
		future tense	pre	18	0.15	0.10	
			post	18	0.73	0.12	

Two one-way ANCOVAs were conducted to find any significant differences among the groups regarding their accuracy in the use of past tense and future tense. Initially, the related assumptions including normality and homogeneity of variances were checked, and then, ANCOVAs were run.

The results of the test of normality are demonstrated in Table 4. Since the significance values for all the three groups in the pre-test and post-test were more than the alpha level (.01), it could be concluded that the distributions of the data were normal.

Table 4.
Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for the Normal Distribution of Variables

				N	Z	Sig	
Accuracy	Implicit	past tense	pre	18	0.81	0.51	
			post	18	0.85	0.45	
		future tense	pre	18	0.56	0.91	
			post	18	0.6	0.86	
		Explicit	past tense	pre	18	0.73	0.65
				post	18	0.82	0.49
	future tense		pre	18	0.99	0.27	
			post	18	0.65	0.78	
	Emergent	past tense	pre	18	0.62	0.82	
			post	18	0.93	0.34	
		future tense	pre	18	0.89	0.40	
			post	18	0.73	0.65	

Based on Table 5, the assumption of the homogeneity of variances in the past tense ($F=4.15$, $p=.02>.01$) and future tense ($F=.52$, $p=.59>.01$) was met. This means that the variances of the accuracy scores in the past tense and future tense were equal among the three groups.

Table 5.
Results of Levene's Test for Comparing Variances in Accuracy Scores

	F	df1	df2	Sig
Past	4.15	2	51	0.02
Future	0.52	2	51	0.59

The results of ANCOVAs for past-tense and future-tense accuracy scores are shown in Table 6. In this analysis, the pre-test scores were considered as the covariate. That is, the effects of the pre-test scores were removed from the post-test scores, and then, the three groups were compared according to the remaining variance. The results demonstrated a significant difference among the three groups regarding their accuracy in the past tense, $F(2,50)=16.42$, $p=.000 < .01$, partial eta-squared=.39, and their accuracy in the future tense, $F(2,50)=18.93$, $p=.000 < .01$, partial eta squared=.43. It means that 39% of the variance in past-tense accuracy scores and 43% of the variance in future-tense accuracy scores were explained by the treatment.

Table 6.
Results of Covariance Analysis in Accuracy Scores

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Eta-Squared
Past	Pretest	1.38	1	1.37	0.00	0.98	0.00
	Group	0.74	2	0.37	16.42	0.000	0.39
	Error	1.13	50	0.02			
Future	Pretest	0.06	1	0.06	4.68	0.03	0.08
	Group	0.51	2	0.26	18.93	0.000	0.43
	Error	0.68	50	0.01			

According to Table 7, the adjusted means of the Implicit, Explicit, and Emergent groups in the post-test after controlling for their differences in the pre-test with regard to past tense were .46, .57, and .75, and with regard to future tense they were .50, .58, and .73, respectively, implying that the Emergent group outperformed the other groups with respect to accuracy in both past tense and future tense. After the emergent feedback, the explicit and implicit feedbacks were in the second and third positions, respectively, in terms of their effectiveness on both past-tense and future-tense accuracy development.

Table 7.
Mean and Standard Error of Accuracy Scores in the Post-Test after Controlling for the Pre- Test Scores

	Group	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Past	Implicit	0.46	0.03	0.39	0.53
	Explicit	0.57	0.03	0.5	0.65
	Emergent	0.75	0.03	0.68	0.82
Future	Implicit	0.50	0.02	0.44	0.55
	Explicit	0.58	0.02	0.52	0.64
	Emergent	0.73	0.02	0.68	0.79

Results Concerning the Second Research Question

The second research question asked whether there was a significant difference among the implicit, explicit, and emergent feedback types regarding their effectiveness in promoting the oral fluency of Iranian EFL learners. Table 8 presents the distribution of the pre-test and post-test fluency scores of the three groups.

Table 8.
Distribution of Fluency Scores of the Three Groups in the Pre-Test and Post-Test

Variables	Group	Tenses	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Fluency	Implicit	past tense	pre	18	59.94	10.06
			post	18	68.27	19.73
		future tense	pre	18	62.44	7.25
			post	18	82	20.20
	Explicit	past tense	pre	18	60.55	9.40
			post	18	69.72	21.33
		future tense	pre	18	63.83	8.05
			post	18	86.55	18.57
	Emergent	past tense	pre	18	61.72	7.11
			post	18	72.11	10.36
		future tense	pre	18	63.61	8.30
			post	18	88.22	13.73

Two one-way ANCOVAs were conducted to find any significant differences among the groups regarding their fluency in the use of past tense and future tense. Initially, the related assumptions including normality and homogeneity of variances were checked, and then, ANCOVAs were run.

The results of the test of normality are demonstrated in Table 9. Since the significance values for all the three groups in the pre-test and post-test were more than the alpha level (.01), it could be concluded that the distributions of the data were normal.

Table 9.
Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for the Normal Distribution of Variables

			N	Z	Sig	
Fluency	Implicit	past tense	pre	18	0.53	0.94
			post	18	1.15	0.13
		future tense	pre	18	0.59	0.87
			post	18	0.73	0.66
	Explicit	past tense	pre	18	0.62	0.83
			post	18	0.81	0.51
		future tense	pre	18	0.41	0.99
			post	18	0.48	0.97
	Emergent	past tense	pre	18	0.61	0.84
			post	18	0.53	0.93
		future tense	pre	18	0.59	0.87
			post	18	0.55	0.91

Based on Table 10, the assumption of the homogeneity of variances in past tense ($F=2.19$, $p=.12 >.01$) and future tense ($F=1.32$, $p=.27 >.01$) was met. This

means that the variances of the fluency scores in the past tense and future tense were equal among the three groups.

Table 10.
Results of Levene's Test for Comparing Variances in Fluency Scores

	F	df1	df2	Sig
Past	2.19	2	51	0.12
Future	1.32	2	51	0.27

The results of ANCOVAs for the past-tense and future-tense fluency scores are shown in Table 11. In this analysis, the pre-test scores were considered as the covariate. That is, the effects of the pre-test scores were removed from the post-test scores, and then, the three groups were compared according to the remaining variance. The results demonstrated that there was not a significant difference among the three groups regarding their fluency in the past tense, $F(2, 50)=.13$, $p=.87 >.01$, and their fluency in the future tense, $F(2, 50)=.61$, $p=.54 >.01$.

Table 11.
Results of Covariance Analysis in Fluency Scores

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Eta-Squared
Past	Pretest	927.61	1	927.61	3.03	0.08	0.05
	Group	81.06	2	40.53	0.13	0.87	0.00
	Error	15259.39	50	305.18			
Future	Pretest	62.98	1	62.98	0.19	0.65	0.00
	Group	394.12	2	197.06	0.61	0.54	0.02
	Error	15950.57	50	319.01			

According to Table 12, the adjusted means of the Implicit, Explicit, and Emergent groups in the post-test after controlling for their differences in the pre-test with regard to past tense were 68.65, 69.81, and 71.64, and with regard to future tense they were 81.88, 86.63, and 88.26, respectively, implying that they were not significantly different.

Table 12.
Mean and Standard Error of Fluency Scores in the Post-Test after Controlling for the Pre-Test Scores

		Group	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Past		Implicit	68.65	4.12	60.37	76.93
		Explicit	69.81	4.11	61.53	78.08
		Emergent	71.64	4.12	63.35	79.93
Future		Implicit	81.88	4.21	73.4	90.35
		Explicit	86.63	4.21	78.16	95.09
		Emergent	88.26	4.21	79.8	96.72

Results Concerning the Third Research Question

The first interview question asked the learners about the ways that they were corrected in their classes. The purpose of this question was to find out whether the learners recognized the ways that they received CF. A comparison of the responses of the three groups indicated that nearly half of the learners in the Implicit group had difficulty in realizing the teacher's feedback. For example, one of the learners (L11) pointed out that her utterance was correct, and the teacher wanted to restate it better. In fact, she did not realize she was corrected.

On the other hand, all learners in the Explicit and Emergent group realized that they received feedback from the teacher. The only difference in the responses of the two groups was that the Explicit group immediately noticed the teacher's feedback after producing an erroneous form. For example, L7 and L12 mentioned it in the following way:

L7: The teacher corrected our incorrect sentences and gave some information so that we could realize our errors.

L12: The teacher corrected me clearly but did not explain the correct form more and just gave some information.

The Emergent group, however, gently and gradually noticed that they were receiving feedback since, in this group, feedback started from an implicit feedback and moved toward an explicit one. They knew that their teacher's purpose was to give them responsibility for correcting themselves. L15 and L10 put it in this way:

L15: The teacher tried to extract the correct form from us. If we could not, she produced it.

L10: The teacher continuously tried to get us to notice the problem. If we could not correct it, she ultimately corrected it.

The purpose of the second interview question was to find out about the ways that the learners preferred to be corrected in their language classes. The researchers noticed that, in the Implicit group, except for two learners who enjoyed their teacher's strategy of correction, others preferred to participate in the process of error correction and had negative attitudes toward the implicit feedback in the form of recast. The following are extracted from positive and negative attitudes:

L11: I prefer that the teacher correct me in cooperation with me and not ask other learners to correct me. (Negative)

L2: I think the best way for correction is correcting indirectly as my teacher did. In this way, the learner can notice the problem. (Positive)

In the Explicit group, all learners reported that they preferred the teacher to initially extract the correct form from the learner. They added that in the case they were unable to correct themselves, the teacher could present more examples with explanations. The analysis of their attitudes showed that they had

negative feelings toward their teacher's strategy of correction. For example, L7 and L3 expressed:

L7: I prefer to correct myself with the help of the teacher. If the teacher corrects me immediately as my teacher did, I will make the same error again. (Negative)

L3: Helping learners to correct themselves and, if necessary, giving some explanations and examples can stop making the same errors. We didn't have this in the class. (Negative)

The learners in the Emergent group all mentioned that they preferred the way their teacher corrected them since they were gradually corrected. Thus, the attitudes of the Emergent group were completely positive toward their teacher's strategy of correction. For example, L5 and L12 pointed out:

L5: I prefer the same strategy used by my teacher because we are allowed to think about the problem and correct it. (Positive)

L12: I prefer my teacher's strategy since we can work on our error and notice it slowly. (Positive)

Discussion

The present study was designed to determine the differential effect of the implicit, explicit, and emergent feedback types on the accuracy and fluency of Iranian EFL learners' oral production. As for the first research question, the results revealed that there were significant differences among the three feedback types with regard to both past-tense and future-tense accuracy enhancement. Furthermore, the emergent CF which was rooted in the SCT proved to be more effective compared with the other CF types.

These findings are compatible with those of a number of studies which reported the effectiveness of CF on overall accuracy development (e.g., Chandler, 2003; Sato & Lyster, 2012). However, the results do not support the research studies which showed advantages just for prompts and explicit correction (e.g., Ammar & Spada, 2006; Jafarpour & Hashemian, 2013; Pawlak, 2013; Sheen, 2010) or for implicit types of correction over more explicit types (e.g., Jang, 2011; Perdomo, 2008). The effectiveness of the emergent feedback in this study underscored the assumption that no single type of CF is desirable, and as suggested by Ellis (2009a), teachers need not limit themselves to a particular CF strategy, and they have to adjust their particular strategies to the learner who is corrected. A theoretical explanation for this finding can be discovered in the SCT where learner's comprehension is prioritized and considered crucial in the process of regulation (Brown, 2009), and there is an attempt to personalize various features of learning.

The findings are also in agreement with those of Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994), Nassaji and Swain (2000) and Lantolf and Thorne (2007), who confirmed the demands of the SCT that weighing up the learner's developmental level and adapting CF to this consideration can assist their development. However, those studies had a small-scale case study design and provided feedback

on learners' written errors. The other possible reason for the effectiveness of emergent feedback over the other feedback types in this study could be attributed to the type of mediation administered by the teacher when confronting learner's errors in the classroom. That is, for the Emergent feedback group, teacher's mediation was not predicted beforehand, and it targeted learner's emergent needs. It started at a highly implicit level, progressively became more specific and explicit, and was removed when the learner showed the capacity to function independently. Table 6 indicated that the partial eta-squared values for past-tense and future-tense accuracy scores were .39 and .43, respectively, which represented a very large effect size. It means about 39% of the improvement in past-tense accuracy scores and 43% of the improvement in future-tense accuracy scores were related to the treatment. Therefore, the emergent feedback allowed the learners greater opportunities to self-regulate. As Lantolf and Thorne (2007) pointed out, learners gradually moved from the stage of other-regulation, which included varying levels of assistance in the form of implicit and explicit mediation by the teacher, to self-regulation which involved having the capability for completing activities with the least or no support from the teacher.

For the second research question, the analysis of the results suggested that although the oral fluency of all the feedback types was enhanced after the treatment, no statistically significant differences were identified among the three CF types in past or future tense. The results of this section are somehow consistent with the findings of Chandler (2003) and Sato and Lyster (2012), who found that CF increased overall fluency development, but they did not document if there were meaningful differences among the feedback types with respect to their effectiveness on different areas of fluency development. The results are also in line with Farrokhi et al.'s (2017) study in which there were non-significant differences among different CF conditions on the pruned speech rate, as an index of spoken temporal fluency.

The findings seem to indicate that although the duration of each interaction between the teacher and the learner in the three CF types was not the same, they benefited similarly in terms of their past-tense and future-tense fluency. In other words, unlike the Implicit and Explicit groups who received an immediate brief correction in the form of recast and explicit correction, respectively, the Emergent group possibly received a longer duration of mediation since the teacher had negotiation with the learner in order to adjust error correction to the learner's state of responsiveness in the classroom. Nevertheless, they had similar achievements regarding oral fluency. This might be related to the learners' more attention to accuracy which inhibited them slightly from considering their fluency as they monitored their oral production carefully. In other words, according to Skehan (1998), since the capacity of the learners' attention is limited, there might have been a trade-off between accuracy and fluency, and their accuracy might have developed at the expense of their fluency. Some improvement in learners' oral fluency in all three experimental groups might also be due to the repeated use of vocabularies and structures focused during the treatment sessions. This justification also lends support to Jong and Perfetti

(2011), who claimed that repeated production may result in long term positive changes in observable fluency.

To answer the third research question, the researchers applied semi-structured interviews. The learners' responses to the first interview question indicated that nearly half of the learners in the Implicit group had difficulty realizing that they were corrected by their teacher. Other researchers (e.g., Ellis, 1993; Swain, 1995) also argued that implicit techniques such as recasts always run the danger of not being perceived as corrective in purpose. However, in the Explicit and Emergent group, such difficulty in noticing the teacher's feedback was not specified since explicit correction applied for the Explicit group directly signaled to the learners that an error had been committed (Ellis & Sheen, 2006). Also, in the case of the Emergent group, emergent feedback started at a highly implicit level and progressively became more specific and concrete until the appropriate level was reached (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994).

The learners' responses to the second interview question revealed that the majority of the learners in the Implicit group, except for two learners, preferred to participate in the process of error correction. All of the learners in the Explicit group also had the same opinion. In addition, the Emergent group reported their high preference for their teacher's CF strategy which indicated the priority of the emergent feedback. Based on the answers to the interview questions, the researchers noticed that the Implicit group, except for two learners, had negative attitudes toward the recast. Likewise, the Explicit group had negative attitudes toward explicit correction. On the contrary, all learners in the Emergent group showed their positive attitudes toward emergent feedback.

The results obtained do not support Amador (2008), who reported that the students preferred those techniques in which they were explicitly told what their mistake was. However, this finding is in line with Yoshida (2008), who found that the learners preferred to have an opportunity to think about their errors before receiving direct CF from their teachers. The positive attitude for the emergent feedback can be explained by the fact that, in the emergent feedback, learners' abilities were considered as emergent which were increased through interaction in the social context particularly within learner-teacher interactions in the classroom. Accordingly, as Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) suggested, the teacher focused on the abilities of learners who were on the edge of emergence and assisted them to extend their current competence by equipping them with the assistance which was in tune with their ZPDs. Two of the learners in the Implicit group, who preferred just the feedback strategy received from their teacher (i.e., recast), were probably used to traditional ways of feedback provision in which the learner does not participate in the process of correction, and the teacher relies on one implicit or explicit feedback.

Conclusion

Based on the results, various types of CF have different effects on oral accuracy. The results suggest that the emergent CF is more effective than the others since

it does not focus on a particular feedback type, but rather, it is related to the context where the teacher interacts with the learners to co-construct their ZPD. Furthermore, the learners' opinions reveal their positive attitudes toward emergent feedback since it provides opportunities for them to participate in the process of error correction. Another conclusion concerns the fluency of oral performance which seems not to be subject to significant difference under various feedback conditions. Therefore, one possible suggestion might be that in order to boost learners' fluency while not ignoring their accuracy, teachers might employ their feedback strategies, as Lyster, Saito, and Sato (2013) recommended, based on linguistic targets, learners' developmental level, and the classroom orientation.

The results of this study could have implications specifically for researchers, teachers, and teacher trainers. This study adds something new to the previous CF research regarding the superiority of the emergent feedback compared with the other types of CF strategies. Despite the fact that most studies have shown that CF facilitates language learning and students from diverse educational contexts are very receptive to it, there might still be certain resistance from teachers in accepting the findings related to appropriate ways of error correction. This indicates that more studies may be needed to help close the gap between CF research and CF pedagogical practices.

This study suggests that teachers in their teaching sequence should have moment-by-moment evaluations of how to provide appropriate assistance to the learners. Therefore, the results of this study can motivate teachers to employ a wider variety of error correction techniques, move from implicit toward explicit feedback types, to make their teaching more effective. The results can also help future teachers of English with developing their own CF strategies. Moreover, they can also offer suggestions to teacher trainers as they could have a significant influence on student teachers who might imitate and model their classroom management styles. By applying pedagogies that emphasize dialogic mediation for promoting students' self-regulation in their training courses, they can partly familiarize the student teachers with these pedagogies, which may not align with students' existing conceptualizations, especially when those conceptualizations are based on their own experiences rather than on formal instruction.

A few limitations to this study need to be acknowledged. First, this study was carried on pre-intermediate level learners. Hence, studies exploring other levels of proficiency (e.g., beginners) might yield different results. Second, the sex of the participants of the study was limited to females. As a result, other studies in which both males and females are investigated and compared can be carried out. Third, the present study focused on three grammatical targets, including *simple past*, *past continuous*, and *be going to* or *present progressive* for *expressing future prior plans*. Future studies are required to identify whether similar results are obtained in response to other grammatical structures.

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