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Corrective Feedback in EFL university classrooms: A Case Study at an Italian university

Questo articolo esamina gli errori commessi dagli studenti e le correzioni fornite durante le 'esercitazioni orali' in un corso di inglese svolto in un'università italiana. Il corpus è costituito dalle trascrizioni di sei lezioni offerte a due gruppi, uno principiante e l'altro pre-intermedio. I risultati evidenziano che sebbene i 'recast' siano il tipo di correzione più usato in entrambi i gruppi, la distribuzione degli altri tipi di correzione varia. Anche la frequenza delle correzioni varia tra i due gruppi e risulta, infatti, molto più alta nel gruppo di principianti. Inoltre, l'obiettivo pedagogico e le diverse modalità di partecipazione degli studenti alle attività hanno entrambi influenzato la percentuale degli errori corretti e il tipo di correzione fornito. Non sorprende che gli errori commessi durante le attività grammaticali siano stati corretti con maggiore frequenza rispetto a quelli commessi durante le attività comunicative, con una differenza particolarmente significativa nel gruppo pre-intermedio. Infine, lo studio evidenzia il ruolo degli studenti nel fornire correzioni e suggerisce che questo aspetto possa essere oggetto di un'ulteriore ricerca.

1. Corrective Feedback

Although considerable research has been devoted to corrective feedback given to students learning another language, there is still no clear answer as to how teachers should deal with the errors students make during oral classroom work. Early studies on this issue illustrated its complexity and brought attention to the inconsistency and imprecision shown by teachers (Allwright 1975, Chaudron 1977, Fanselow 1977, Long 1977). One of the problems is that students often

do not realize that they are being corrected. Therefore, the first step is for learners to become aware that they have made an error. However, as Brown (1987) underlines, corrective feedback must not consist in constant interruptions or in punitive reinforcement as this would lead to students giving up attempts at communication (Vigil and Oller 1976). Recent studies have suggested the use of feedback techniques which may be more easily noticed by learners and which may be more effective (Lyster and Ranta 1997, Lyster 1998, Panova and Lyster 2002).

In their study on corrective feedback and learner uptake in French immersion classes in elementary schools, Lyster and Ranta (1997) identified six different feedback types: recasts, explicit correction, elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests and repetition.[2] Although recasts were the most widely used technique, making up 55% of the feedback moves, they had the lowest rate of uptake (31%). Lyster and Ranta attributed this low rate of uptake to the fact that students may not always recognize recasts as corrections. In fact Lyster (1998: 206) explains that recasts "risk being perceived by learners as alternative yet equally correct forms". Similar results were found in a study on adult learners' perceptions of interactional feedback carried out by Mackey *et al.* (2000), who point out that recasts were often perceived as alternative ways of saying the same thing. In fact, they highlight that recasts were used for morphosyntactic errors, but students seldom recognized the target of the feedback. On the other hand, phonological and lexical errors were followed by negotiation or negotiation and recasts, and feedback was perceived more accurately. Because of the ambiguity of recasts, Lyster and Ranta (1997) suggest that teachers use more elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests and repetition, since these techniques are not only more likely to be perceived as corrective feedback, but, unlike both recasts and explicit correction, they encourage student generated repair. In fact, they point out that whereas both recasts and explicit correction provide the correct form, the other four techniques can be classified as 'negotiation of form', that is "the provision of corrective feedback that encourages self-repair involving accuracy and precision and not merely comprehensibility"

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[2] These will be examined in more detail in the next section, where examples of each will be provided.

(Lyster and Ranta 1997: 42). However, there are also problems with repetitions. Chaudron (1998) explains that because teachers often also repeat students' correct utterances to show agreement, appreciation or understanding, repetitions of incorrect forms may not always be perceived as corrective feedback. He therefore suggests that teachers should repeat incorrect utterances with more emphasis or with a different intonation in order to make them more explicit.

Turning back to recasts, some studies have shown that recasts can be effective as long as certain conditions are met. These are "(a) individualized attention, (b) consistent focus, (c) developmental readiness, and (d) intensity" (Han 2002: 568). Furthermore, the results of a study on the effects of recasts on the production of question forms in English carried out by Mackey and Philp (1998) also suggest that developmental readiness may play a role in the effectiveness of this type of feedback. In fact, they found that for "more advanced learners, interaction with intensive recasts may be more beneficial than interaction alone in facilitating an increase in production of targeted high level morphosyntactic forms" (1998: 339). Moreover, in a study on error treatment in adult ESL classrooms, Panova and Lyster (2002) found that recasts accounted for the highest number of feedback moves (55%), but students' uptake after recasts was only 40%. Nevertheless, they argue that recasts are important in classroom discourse since they are "efficient and natural ways of responding to students" as well as a good way of dealing with incorrect utterances which "are beyond the students' current interlanguage" (2002: 591). In fact, Lyster and Ranta (1997) found that, although recasts were the most popular type of feedback regardless of proficiency level, the teacher with the most advanced students used recasts considerably less. This implies that teachers may find recasts more useful with students of lower proficiency level who may not yet be ready to produce the correct target form.

Other researchers underline the importance of trying to match corrective feedback to individual students' preferences and as a consequence suggest the use of a wide range of feedback techniques (Allwright 1975, Tedick and de Gortari 1998, James 1998, Allwright and Bailey 2004). However, it is not always easy to satisfy students, who may prefer explicit corrections (Kaufmann 1993, cited in James 1998), though these are not as effective. In fact, Bartram and Walton

(2001) believe that the least effective type of corrective feedback is simply providing students with the correct form.

Researchers have also stressed the importance that self-correction as well as peer-correction can have in language learning (Chaudron 1988, Van Lier 1988, Slimani 1992 (cited in Panova and Lyster 2002), Tedick and de Gortari 1998, Bartram and Walton 2001) First of all, learners may benefit more from the errors they correct themselves. In fact, in a study by Slimani (1992, cited in Panova and Lyster 2002: 576), learners said that they noticed "forms that they were pushed to self repair more than forms that were implicitly provided by teachers". Lyster and Ranta (1997: 57) believe that student-generated repair is important because it gives learners opportunities "to automatize the retrieval of target language knowledge that already exists in some form" and rely on "their own resources and thus confront errors in ways that may lead to revisions of their hypothesis about the target language". Thus, by learning to recognize and correct their own errors, students become more independent. Therefore it is very important that teachers give students enough time to self correct instead of immediately interrupting them with the correct answer. James (1998) also suggests that, since correction should be aimed at the whole class,[3] teachers should involve other students in the correction of each other's errors as it might be a way of taking away some of the embarrassment of being explicitly corrected by the teacher. Finally, regardless of who provides corrective feedback, an atmosphere of mutual support and cooperation can make things easier, more enjoyable and more fruitful.

The pedagogical focus of the lesson is also an important factor in deciding when an error should be corrected. Studies reviewed by Chaudron (1998) show that when instructional focus is on form, corrections occur more frequently. Moreover, he explains that teachers will be more likely to correct an error when it pertains directly to the focus of the lesson. Not surprisingly, a high priority is given to error correction in grammar-based instruction whereas error correction does not constitute a major proportion of the activity in L2 classrooms which focus on communicative activities. This reflects Hendrickson's

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[3] James refers to EFL classes in general and gives no specifications regarding class size or age.

(1978:157) suggestion that teachers should be more tolerant of errors made during communicative practice and "should reserve error correction for manipulative grammar practice", a view which most practitioners still agree with.

Another important factor to consider when deciding whether or not corrective feedback should be given is the learner's readiness to incorporate the feedback provided (Allwright and Bailey 2004, Klein 1986 (cited in Tonkyn 1998), Tonkyn 1998). The learners' proficiency level should also be taken into consideration when deciding what kind of feedback to provide (Lyster and Ranta 1997, Tedick and de Gortari 1998).

Teachers must also decide which errors to correct. Hendrickson (1978) recommends focusing more on errors that impede intelligibility (global errors), and not worrying too much about errors which do not affect the meaning of the message (local errors). He also advises teachers to correct errors which have a stigmatizing effect as well as errors that are frequent. However, research shows that these suggestions, especially the last one, are not always followed. For example, through a review of studies carried out in L2 classrooms, Chaudron (1998) found that the more a particular type of error is made, the less likely a teacher is to provide corrective feedback. In fact he found that discourse, content and lexical errors received more corrective feedback than grammatical and phonological errors, which were much more common. He also found a wide variation between the overall percentage of errors treated by different teachers. Similarly, in a study carried out by Lyster (1998) on the relationship between error types, feedback types and immediate learner repair in four Canadian French immersion classrooms, results show that teachers provided more corrective feedback after phonological and lexical errors, 80% and 70% correction rate respectively, than after grammatical errors and unsolicited uses of L1, 56% and 46% respectively. Therefore, although grammatical errors made up the highest percentage of errors (50%), they did not receive the highest rate of feedback. Moreover, phonological errors only made up 16% of the total errors and yet received a high rate of feedback by all four teachers.

2. Research methodology

2.1. Research aims

As outlined above, many studies have been devoted to corrective feedback. Some studies have concentrated on corrective feedback and learner uptake in content based instruction in French immersion classes (Lyster and Ranta 1997, Lyster 1998), in ESL adult courses (Panova and Lyster 2002) and in adult ESL and Italian as a foreign language courses (Mackey et al. 2000). Other studies have focused more specifically on recasts in either middle school ESL science courses (Doughty and Varela 1998) or ESL adult courses (Han 2002, Mackey and Philp 1998). Finally, the differences between negative feedback provided to adult and children ESL learners have also been investigated (Oliver 2000). However, I thought it would be of interest to look into how corrective feedback is provided in EFL contexts, in particular at university level. Thus, this study focuses on the types of errors made and on the corrective feedback provided during oral classroom work in an Italian university. It seeks to investigate whether proficiency level and pedagogical focus can have an effect on the type of corrective feedback provided and on the types of errors treated. It also examines the role students themselves play in providing feedback.

In particular, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1. When listening to students' utterances, do teachers correct different types of errors depending on what kind of classroom activity is being carried out?
2. How are these errors corrected?
3. Does error treatment also depend on the students' proficiency level?

2.2. Teaching context

The teaching context selected as the site for data collection is an EFL course held at the Faculty of Economics, University of Calabria (Italy). The course is held over two 5-week-periods, with a 3-week-exam period in between, with one-hour lessons held three times a week for a total of 30 hours in class. It is structured around an integrated syllabus which emphasizes the importance of structures and how they are related to their

communicative function. Throughout the course, emphasis is given to speaking, listening and reading skills, with little work on writing skills. Students are divided into classes depending on their level of English, which is established through a written placement test and usually varies from beginner to pre-intermediate. However, the course syllabus is the same for every class since all students are required to take the same final exam regardless of the class they belong to.

In order to guarantee a clear difference in the proficiency level of the students involved, an important criterion as regards my third question, the classes observed were an elementary level class (from now on referred to as Group A) and a pre-intermediate level (Group B). Both classes were held by the same teacher.

2.3. Participants

Group A was made up of 38 native Italian speakers, all of whom had studied English before but had a very limited knowledge, as was evidenced in the placement test. They were therefore grouped into an elementary level class. Group B consisted of 35 native Italian speakers as well as two foreign students, one from Poland and one from Albania. They had achieved the highest scores on the placement test (pre-intermediate level). Not all of the students attended every lesson observed, with the average number of students present during the lessons observed being about 28.[4] Attendance was slightly lower for both groups during the last lesson observed, probably due to the fact that it was the last week of lessons when attendance rates are usually lower, and this might have influenced classroom behavior.

The teacher is a 30 year-old female native speaker of English with 8 years' teaching experience. She is a very enthusiastic, outgoing and friendly teacher and was selected for three main reasons. First of all, she was willing to have her lessons observed and video-taped. Secondly, it was important to observe the same instructor teaching the same course to groups of different proficiency levels (question 3) since involving another teacher would have meant carefully having to take into consideration factors such as school of thought, skill, experience,

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[4] Attendance Group A- **lesson 1**: 31, **lesson 2**: 30, **lesson 3**: 25; Group B- **lesson 1**: 31, **lesson 2**: 29, **lesson 3**: 23.

personality, all of which may affect which errors are corrected and how they are corrected. Finally, it was also important to observe groups that had the same number of students since teachers and students may act differently in larger classes than in smaller ones. The teacher did not know I was focusing specifically on corrective feedback; the only request was that the lessons observed involve the same material and activities with both groups.

2.4. Data-collection instruments and procedures

The data derives from an observational study of two classes taking the same EFL course. An interview with the teacher was also held after classroom observation was completed.[5]

2.4.1. Classroom observation

The research was carried out through a structured observation of teacher/students interaction (real time and recorded) under normal classroom conditions.[6] Three lessons with each class were observed during the last three weeks of the course with the consent of both the teacher and the students. Real time observation consisted in taking notes which focused on errors, verbal feedback and any paralinguistic features used to provide feedback such as intonation, stress, gestures, facial expressions or the teacher writing on the board. When dealing with pair/group work, at least one 'sub-group' was observed during each lesson. The lessons were also video-recorded for subsequent analysis. The video recorder was placed at the front of the classroom and was moved to record pair and group work when necessary. The recordings consist in 6 one-hour lessons altogether, 3 lessons with Group A and 3 with Group B.

2.4.2. Interview

Data regarding the teacher's views on error treatment were gathered through an interview which took place after classroom observation had

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[5] I had originally intended to give the students a questionnaire on their attitude towards error correction, but was unable to do so due to time constraints.

[6] The students did not seem to be self-conscious about the presence of an observer and video camera as is shown by the fact that some of them carried out part of the activities in Italian rather that in English even though they were being observed (see below).

been completed. The interview focused on principles of language teaching and learning which might influence her treatment of errors, on her thoughts regarding corrective feedback, on how she deals with errors (e.g. what kind of errors she feels are important to correct, when and how she corrects these errors). She was also asked to watch excerpts of her lessons and comment on the way she treated errors.

2.5. Methods of processing

The video recordings were carefully transcribed, using the notes taken during direct observation when necessary.[7] Because the first ten minutes of each lesson basically consisted in greeting students as they came in and answering questions about the course or exam while waiting for all students to arrive, they were not transcribed. Therefore, the total length of the recordings transcribed amounts to 5 hours (6 'fifty- minute' lessons). The categories used to code the data are type of classroom activity, type of error, source of error, and type of feedback.

2.5.1. Types of classroom activities

Each lesson was subdivided into the different types of activities carried out following the COLT (Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching) category definitions- part A (Fröhlich, Spada and Allen 1985). Activities were, first of all, divided according to the organization of participation (whole class, group work, pair work, individual). There was often not a clear distinction between pair work and group work since, generally speaking, the students preferred working in groups and so some of the 'pair work' was carried out by more than two students. Therefore activities involving pair work and group work were put into the same category. A similar situation occurred with work that was supposed to be carried out individually. Once again, students sometimes tended to work together and there was therefore some interaction. It is for this reason that data regarding activities that were supposed to be carried out individually but were not have also been taken into consideration.

The activities were then categorized into activity types through a

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[7] See appendix for transcript conventions used.

description of what participants did (e.g. teacher introduces activity, students prepare for activity, students ask for/give information) and according to their content (including the explicit focus on language: form/function/sociolinguistic/discourse and the topics covered: holidays, famous people, personal information). The last category regards the materials used, which includes the type of materials (texts (minimal or extended) or visual), the source of the materials: pedagogic (specifically designed for L2 teaching), and the use of materials (highly controlled, semi-controlled, minimally controlled).

2.5.2. Types of errors

No distinction was made between 'errors' and 'mistakes' as it would have been difficult to determine this, with the exception, perhaps, of cases in which students self-corrected immediately. Therefore the word 'error' is used in a broad sense to include both terms. Errors were divided into 5 categories: grammatical, lexical, phonological, content and unsolicited uses of L1. Examples of each error type are shown below.

Grammatical: This includes errors in the use of determiners, prepositions, pronouns (i.e. closed classes); errors in pluralization; errors in tense, in verb morphology, in subject/verb agreement, in the use of auxiliaries, in question formation and in word order. For example:

      (1)   S1: In a tent. Where did you go?
             S2: In Greece. (preposition)

      (2)   S: When John Lennon was born? (question formation)

Lexical: This category includes the inaccurate, imprecise, or inappropriate choice of nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives (i.e. open classes). For example:

      (3)   S: Her surname is De Caro. She plays swim.

      (4)   S1: How did you travel?
             S2: By flight.

Phonological: Coding of utterances regarded phonemes and stress, but did not include rhythm, intonation or pitch range. I concentrated on mispronunciation that can lead to misunderstanding (e.g. 'ship' instead of 'sheep', although it is true that the context usually clarifies any misunderstanding), on pronunciation that was unintelligible and on mispronunciation that could in the long run cause what Porter (1998: A7) refers to as "undue discomfort for the listener". However, as this last point may be subjective since, after all, what one person finds 'irritating' may not be so for others, a native speaker of English was asked to watch some extracts of the videos and note down any pronunciation errors in order to verify inter-rater reliability. The comparison yielded a high level of agreement. Examples of pronunciation errors include:

> (5) T: Yes, playing tennis. And after? What's the man doing?
>   S: Skiing. /skaing/

> (6) S: You traveled /trævəled/ by ship and you stayed on the beach.

Content: This includes utterances in which students provide wrong, incomplete or unnecessary information. For example:

> (7) S: She's from Lamezia Terme. She likes 'Top of the pops'. There
>   are three bedrooms. (incomplete information)
>   T: Where?

Unsolicited uses of L1: This includes instances when students use Italian where they should use English. This category was added to the other four categories after observation of the first lesson, when it was found that the students were using much more Italian than expected. It was therefore important to include them in the error count. Examples of unsolicited uses of Italian include:

> (8) T: (…) Autumn. But there is another word for autumn. Do you
>   remember?… What happens in autumn?
>   Ss: Cadono le foglie. [= The leaves fall]

> (9) S: It wasn't really hot, the temperature was like, like it is here in
>   winter. It was 'mite'. [=warm]

Following Lyster (1998), uses of Italian solicited by the teacher were not considered, for example:

> (10) T: Perfect. Ok, we have different categories. 'Personal information' What's your name? … your age … 'Free time', what's 'free time'?
> Ss: Tempo libero.
> T: Perfect, ok. Then we have 'flat or house'. Flat?
> Ss: Appartamento.

Nor was the use of Italian to give or ask for clarification or explanations considered as an error. For example:

> (11) S1: How old he has? (asks another student) È giusta? [=Is this right?]
> S2: Sì, penso di sì. [=Yes, I think so.]
> S1: (Calls teacher) È giusta 'how old he has'? [=Is 'how old he has' right?]

Sometimes students used Italian instead of English to carry out the whole activity. This was not taken into account since there was no interaction in English.[8] For example, in the following case the students were supposed to ask each other questions about a past holiday, but did so in Italian:

> (12) S1: Dove sei andato? [=Where did you go?]
> S2: In Spagna. [=To Spain]
> S1: Con chi? [=With whom?]
> S2: Con amici. [=With friends]
> S1: Quando? [=When]
> S2: Ad agosto. [=In August]

Multiple errors: Finally, when multiple errors occurred in an utterance, each error was coded separately. For example:

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[8] This highlights one of the problems of pair work. Although the teacher was very active and constantly moved around the classroom, she was not aware that the students had not fulfilled the task since when they were asked to report back to the class they did so in English.

(13) S: How old he has? (grammatical and lexical)

(14) S: What made John and Paul /pol/ in 1960? (lexical, grammatical and phonological)

2.5.3. Types of feedback

Feedback was coded following the categories identified in Lyster and Ranta's (1997) model of corrective feedback. All feedback was taken into consideration, whether it was provided by the teacher or by another student. In fact, peers provided feedback in the form of recasts, explicit correction and repetition. Therefore a distinction is made between feedback given by the teacher and feedback given by a peer in these three categories. Moreover, attempts at correction by peers were included as feedback. A category for self-correction was also included. Focus was verbal as well as paralinguistic (i.e. intonation, stress or gestures used in giving feedback).

Explicit correction: The teacher or peer clearly says that what the student has said is wrong and provides the correct form. For example:

By teacher:

(15) S: Where is she from? Quindi [=So] … She from…
      T: Don't eat the verb. She_'s_ from …

(16) S: Where are you born?
      T: No, where were you born?

By peer:

(17) S1: How. How old does he?
      S2: Però al passato. [=But in the past] (Starts discussing the rules of the past simple in Italian) How old was he? Penso. [=I think]

(18) S1: When did John Lennon was killed?
      S2: No. When was John Lennon killed.

Attempt at explicit correction by peer:

(19) S1: When you born?
S2: No, when was you born?
S1: No, mi sembra sbagliata. [=No, it seems wrong]
S2: Allora [=Then], when was born you?
S1: Ok.

Recasts: The student's utterance is reformulated, but without directly indicating that it was wrong. For example:

By teacher:

(20) S: Got a fine.
T: Yes, he got a fine, got a fine. Ha preso una multa [= he got a fine] ... There is a man. Where is he going?
Ss: Doctor.
T: To the <u>doctor's</u>.

By peer:

(21) T: Skiing, yes (writes it on the board). The boy is skiing. What is the next person doing?
S1: Windsurf.
S2: Windsurfing.

(22) S1: Poi [=Then] …Who did he met in 1966?
S2: <u>meet.</u>
S1: Sì, [=Yes] meet, meet.

Some recasts were also used as confirmation checks, and this was specified in the coding. For example:

(23) S: Irene went to the sea in St. Tropez last year. She went with her best friend. She went with … by car and stay in a hotel, do excursions and sunbathe.
T: She went on many excursions? (recast + confirmation check)

Clarification requests: The teacher indicates that the student's utterance has not been understood or that it contains a mistake and that the student needs to repeat it. For example:

(24) T: The boy is swimming. What is the girl doing?
     S: Playing to tennis.
     T: Sorry?

Metalinguistic feedback: The teacher asks questions, gives information or makes comments on the formation of the student's utterance. She may also provide grammatical explanations. Examples:

(25) S: When John Lennon was born?
     T: (writes it on the board) Do you like this question?

(26) S: What did … What they did in 1960?
     T: (whispers) Auxiliary, subject, verb.

Elicitation: the teacher directly elicits a reformulation by asking questions or by pausing to allow the student to complete the teacher's utterance. For example:

(27) T: Yes, she's sunbathing. What are the two tourists doing?
     S1: Visiting.
     T: There is a word when you visit different places. Do you remember? When you go and visit places...
     S2: Sightseeing.

(28) S: She went parents.
     T: She went …
     S: with her parents.

Repetition: The teacher or peer repeats the student's error and changes intonation to draw attention to it. For example:

By teacher:

(29) S: She was born Catanzaro.
     T: She was born Catanzaro?

By peer:

(30) S1: What's her name? (not clear who she's referring to)
     S2: What's her name??
     S1: Di tua sorella. [=Your sister's]

Multiple feedback: This includes a combination of feedback in one teacher turn. For example:

> (31) T: Windsurfing (writes it on the board). And after windsurfing?
> Ss: Barca a vela. [=Sailboat]
> T: Yes, barca a vela. In the famous paragraph about Al Wheeler, yes? He went <u>sai</u>….? You don't remember? … <u>Sailing</u> … (Elicitation + recast)

> (32) T: She's writing postcards (writes it on the board). And there is a nice man, what's he doing?
> S: Jogging.
> T: He's jogging? He's not really jogging. What is he doing? (repetition, metalinguistic clues and elicitation)

While agreeing with Lyster and Ranta (1997) that some combinations such as 'elicitation + recast' or 'recast + metalinguistic feedback' could in effect be considered as 'explicit correction' rather than 'multiple feedback', I felt it was important to keep the distinction. As a consequence, all combinations of feedback are included in this category.

Self-correction: Students self-correct without receiving any feedback.

> (33) S: (…) Later we go… no, we went swimming.

> (34) S: Who did he marry /mari/… marry in 1962? (corrects pronunciation)

> (35) S1: Come si dice si è divertito? [=How do you say 'he had a good time'?]
> S2: To fun. No, to enjoy himself

No correction: no corrective feedback is given.

2.6. Methods of analysis

The following steps were taken to analyze the data:

1. Corrective feedback in each lesson: The data for Group A and Group B were initially analyzed separately. The first step was to establish the distribution of error types within each lesson. Each category of error was therefore expressed as a percentage of total errors made in the lesson. The rate of corrective feedback given was then established by comparing the number of errors made with the number of corrective feedback moves. Finally, in order to establish what types of errors the teacher tried to correct and what type of feedback she provided, the number and percentage of feedback moves per error type were analyzed.

2. Comparison of corrective feedback in different activity types: The data from the different activities were compared in order to establish whether the teacher corrected different types of errors depending on the type of activity which was being carried out.

3. Comparison of corrective feedback given to both groups: In order to establish whether corrective feedback also depends on the student's proficiency level, a comparison of the same type of activities carried out with the two groups was made. The rate of corrective feedback given was compared as were the number and percentage of feedback moves per error type.

4. Teacher interview: The teacher's perceptions of how she treated errors were compared with what she actually did in the classroom.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Results Group A

Tables 1-6 present the results of all Group A lessons observed. Table 1 shows the distribution of error types in all three lessons. As can be seen, the most frequent error type is grammatical, followed by phonological errors, lexical errors, unsolicited use of Italian and, finally, content errors.

Error type	Number of errors (N=237)	Percentage of errors
Grammatical	128	54%
Phonological	58	24.5%
Lexical	26	11%
Unsolicited uses of L1	16	6.7%
Content	9	3.8%

Table 1: Group A total: Distribution of error types

The distribution of feedback moves across the different error types is shown in Table 2. The proportion of error types receiving corrective feedback reflects the distribution rate of the different error types.

Error Type	Feedback moves (N=159)	Percentage of FM
Grammatical	90	56.6%
Phonological	25	15.7%
Lexical	22	13.8%
Unsolicited uses of L1	15	9.4%
Content	7	4.4%

Table 2: Group A total: Distribution of feedback moves per error type

Table 3 presents the percentage of errors treated per error type. Overall, corrective feedback was provided for 67.1% of the errors made.[9] It is important to underline that this figure includes corrective feedback provided by the teacher, by peers as well as self correction. If we consider each of these categories separately, we find that the teacher provided feedback for 57.8% of the errors made, peers provided feedback for 7.6% of the errors while students self corrected 1.7% of the errors made.

[9] The percentages per lesson were as follows: **lesson 1** 64.2%, **lesson 2** 68.2%, **lesson 3** 70.8%.

Error Type	Feedback moves	Percentage of errors treated
Unsolicited uses of L1	15/16	93.7%
Lexical	22/26	84.6%
Content	7/9	77.8%
Grammatical	90/128	70.3%
Phonological	25/58	43.1%
Total	**159/237**	**67.1%**
• by teacher	137/237	57.8%
• by peer	18/237	7.6%
• self correction	4/237	1.7%

Table 3: Group A total: Rate of corrective feedback per error type

The distribution of the different feedback types is illustrated in Table 4. Overall, 137/159 feedback moves (86.2%) were by the teacher, 18/159 (11.3%) by peers, and 4/159 (2.5%) were self correction.

Table 5 presents the distribution of feedback types per error type. It is interesting to see that peers provided more explicit correction than the teacher (8 moves vs. 7 moves), although it is necessary to point out that explicit correction by peers included 3 attempts.

Feedback type	Feedback moves (N=159)	Percentage of FM
Recast	**68**	**42.8%**
• by teacher	60*	37.8%
• by peer	8	5%
Elicitation	**32**	**20.1%**
Explicit correction	**18**	**11.4%**
• by teacher	9	5.7%
• by peer	9**	5.7%

Multiple feedback	17	10.7%
• Elicitation + recast	5	
• Recast + elicitation	4	
• Repetition + elicitation	2	
• M. clues + elicitation	2	
• Repetition + recast	1	
• Repetition + m. clues	1	
• Elicitation + explicit correction	1	
• Repetition + m. clues + elicitation	1	
Clarification request	10	6.3%
Metalinguistic clues	5	3.1%
• by teacher	4	2.5%
• by peer	1	0.6%
Repetition	5	3.1%
Self correction	4	2.5%

  * one with confirmation check
** including attempts

Table 4: Group A total: Distribution of feedback types

The percentage of errors treated varied according to the type of activity. The highest percentage of errors was treated during the presentation of activities to the whole class (91.2%). This was followed by 68.4% of errors treated during pair work which involved preparation of questions and 63.6% of errors treated during a whole class activity in which students checked the questions they had prepared. These two figures show that the percentage of corrective feedback given was higher during pair/group work than during a whole class activity, although both were focusing on accuracy. This can be explained by the

Feedback type	Grammatical (N=90)	Phonological (N=25)	Lexical (N=22)	Unsolicited uses of L1 (N=15)	Content (N=7)
Recast	**32 (35.5%)**	**21 (84%)**	**7* (31.8%)**	**8 (53.3%)**	0
• by teacher	29 (32.2%)	19 (76%)		5 (33.3%)	
• by peer	3 (3.3%)	2 (8%)		3 (20%)	
Elicitation	**16 (17.8%)**	**1 (4%)**	**6 (27.3%)**	**4 (26.7%)**	**5 (71.4%)**
Ex. correction	**15 (16.7%)**	**0**	**2 (9.1%)**	**0**	**1 (14.3%)**
• by teacher	7 (7.8%)		1 (4.55%)		
• by peer	8** (8.9%)		1**(4.55%)		
Multiple feedback	**8 (8.9%)**	**0**	**6 (27.3%)**	**3 (20%)**	**0**
Clarification request	**7 (7.8%)**	**2 (8%)**	**0**	**0**	**1 (14.3%)**
ML clues	**5 (5.5%)**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
• by teacher	4 (4.4%)				
• by peer	1 (1.1%)				
Repetition	**5 (5.5%)**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Self correction	**2 (2.2%)**	**1 (4%)**	**1 (4.5%)**	**0**	**0**

* one with confirmation check

** including attempts

Table 5: Group A total: Distribution of feedback types per error type

low rate of correction of phonological errors during the latter activity (see Table 6). Corrective feedback followed 60.5% of errors made during pair/group work in which students asked each other questions, while 50% of the errors made were treated during a reporting activity carried out with the whole class. Finally, it is not surprising to see that only 20% of the errors made when students were working individually were treated.

Table 6 illustrates the rate of feedback per error during the different activity types. As we can see, during the presentation phase, all error types received a high percentage of corrections. In the other types of activities, phonological errors tended to have a low rate of correction, whereas grammatical errors were corrected quite frequently (varying from 81.5%- 60.9%), except for those made during the activity carried out individually. A same trend was found with lexical errors: more errors were corrected during accuracy activities and fewer during fluency activities, although the percentages were higher compared to grammatical errors. Unsolicited uses of L1, instead, always received a high rate of correction, regardless of the activity type. Finally, except for the error made when students were asking and giving information, content errors also had a high rate of correction.

The type of feedback given also varied according to the activity type. As regards feedback given while carrying out activities with the whole class, of the 62 errors treated during the presentation activities, 66.1% were recast, 34/41 by the teacher and 7/41 by a peer, 19.4% were followed by elicitation, 6.4% by multiple feedback, 4.8% by clarification requests, 1.6% by both metalinguistic clues and repetition by the teacher, and none were self corrected. As regards the activity in which the students' questions were checked, 34.3% of the errors were followed by recasts, of which 31.4% of the total by the teacher, 20% were followed by elicitation, 17.1% by multiple feedback, 8.6% by explicit correction and another 8.6% by clarification requests, 5.7% by metalinguistic clues (equally provided by teacher and peers), and 2.9% each by repetition and by self correction. Errors treated during reporting activities were followed by recasts in 33.3% of the cases, by multiple feedback 19% of the time, 14.3% by elicitation, by clarification requests and by repetition, and 4.8% by metalinguistic clues. There was no self correction.

As regards pair/group work, errors treated during the preparation of questions were explicitly corrected 69.2% of the time. What is interesting here is that explicit corrections by peers made up 53.8% of the total, although 3/7 were attempts. The remaining errors were followed by elicitation (23.1%) and a recast (7.1%). Pair/group work which involved asking each other questions showed a different trend. 26.9% of the errors treated were followed by recasts, another 26.9% were followed by elicitation, 19.2% were followed by explicit correction (15.4% of the total by the teacher and 3.8% through an attempt by a peer), 11.5% were followed by multiple feedback, 7.6% by self correction, 3.8% by clarification requests and another 3.8% by metalinguistic clues. As regards the activity carried out individually, of the two errors treated, one was explicitly corrected by a peer while the other was self corrected.

Activity type	Grammatical	Phonological	Lexical	L1	Content
Whole class (1) (presentation)	24/26 92.3%	14/18 77.7%	10/10 100%	11/11 100%	3/3 100%
Pair/ group work (1) (preparing questions)	12/18 66.7%	0	1/1 100%	0	0
Whole class (2) (checking questions)	22/27 81.5%	8/22 36.4%	2/2 100%	0	3/4 75%
Pair/ group work (2) (asking for/giving info)	16/26 61.5%	2/6 33.3%	5/6 83.3%	3/4 75%	0/1 0%
Whole class (3) (reporting)	14/23 60.9%	1/12 8.3%	4/5 80%	1/1 100%	1/1 100%
Individual	2/8 25%	0	0/2 0%	0	0

Table 6: Group A: Types of errors treated per activity type

3.1.2. Results Group B

Tables 7-12 present the results of all Group B lessons observed. Table 7 shows the distribution of error types in all three lessons.

Error type	Number of errors (N=181)	Percentage of errors
Grammatical	118	65.2%
Lexical	27	14.9%
Phonological	25	13.8%
Unsolicited uses of L1	8	4.4%
Content	3	1.6%

Table 7: Group B total: Distribution of error types

The distribution of feedback moves across the different error types is shown in Table 8. Unlike Group A, the proportion of error types receiving corrective feedback does not completely reflect the distribution rate of the different error types. Feedback for phonological errors, in fact, made up a lower percentage than that for unsolicited uses of L1, although the number of phonological errors was higher (25 vs. 8).

Error Type	Feedback moves (N=60)	Percentage of FM
Grammatical	43	71.7%
Lexical	8	13.3%
Unsolicited uses of L1	5	8.3%
Phonological	2	3.3%
Content	2	3.3%

Table 8: Distribution of feedback moves per error type

Table 9 presents the rate at which each error type received feedback. The overall low rate of corrective feedback (33.1%)[10] was much lower than the rate given to Group A (67.1%). This rate was clearly influenced by the low percentage of phonological errors treated (8%), although grammatical errors and lexical errors also received a relatively low rate of feedback. Once again it is important to underline that overall rate of corrective feedback includes corrective feedback provided by the teacher, by peers as well as self correction.

The distribution of the different feedback types is illustrated in Table 10. As with Group A, recasts were the most popular type of corrective feedback, making up 43.3% of all feedback moves. Of these, 38.3% were provided by the teacher, while 5% were provided by a peer. Explicit correction made up 16.7% of the feedback moves. This figure was influenced by the high number of explicit corrections by peers, 15% of the total, whereas explicit correction by the teacher made up only 1.7%. Another interesting figure regards self correction, which makes up 15% of the feedback moves.

Error Type	Feedback moves	Percentage of errors treated
Content	2/3	66.6%
Unsolicited uses of L1	5/8	62.5%
Grammatical	43/118	36.4%
Lexical	8/27	29.6%
Phonological	2/25	8%
Total	**60/181**	**33.1%**
• by teacher	37/181	20.4%
• by peer	14/181	7.7%
• self correction	9/181	5%

Table 9: Group B total: Rate of feedback per error type

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[10] The percentages per lesson were as follows: **lesson 1** 31.8%, **lesson 2** 40%, **lesson 3** 31.7%.

Feedback type	Feedback moves (N=60)	Percentage of FM
Recast	26*	**43.3%**
• by teacher	23	38.3%
• by peer	3	5%
Explicit correction	10	**16.7%**
• by teacher	1	1.7%
• by peer	9**	15%
Self correction	9**	**15%**
Elicitation	5	**8.3%**
• by teacher	4	6.7%
• by peer	1	1.7%
Multiple feedback	5	**8.3%**
• Repetition +recast by peer	1	
• Elicitation + recast	1	
• Elicitation + recast by peer	1	
• Repetition+ explicit correction	1	
• Repetition +recast by peer + explanation by teacher (m. c.)	1	
Repetition	3	**5%**
• by teacher	2	3.3%
• by peer	1	1.7%
Clarification request	2	**3.3%**
Metalinguistic clues	0	**0%**

  * three with confirmation checks
** including attempts

Table 10: Group B total: Distribution of feedback types

Table 11 presents the distribution of feedback types per error type. The highest percentage of errors was treated when questions students had prepared were checked with the whole class (83.3%). This was followed by 75% of errors treated during group work which involved

preparation of questions. There were much lower rates for the other activity types. 39% of errors were treated when students reported to the whole class while corrective feedback followed 22.2% of errors made during pair/group work in which students asked each other questions. When students worked in pairs/groups and tried to guess each other's holidays, only 10% of the errors made were treated. Finally, when the whole class checked the information they had completed after an information gap activity, none of the errors made were treated.

Feedback type	Grammatical (N=43)	Phonological (N=2)	Lexical (N=8)	Unsolicited uses of L1 (N=5)	Content (N=2)
Recast	**13* (30.2%)**	**2**	**6 (75%)**	**5 (100%)**	**0**
• by teacher	10 (23.3%)	2 (100%)	6 (75%)	5	
• by peer	3 (6.9%)	0	0	0	
Explicit correction	**9 (20.9%)**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1 (50%)**
• by teacher	1 (2.3%)				0
• by peer	8** (18.6%)				1 (50%)
Self correction	**7** (16.3%)**	**0**	**2** (25%)**	**0**	**0**
Elicitation	**5 (11.6%)**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
• by teacher	4 (9.3%)				
• by peer	1 (2.3%)				
Multiple feedback	**5 (11.6%)**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Repetition	**2 (4.7%)**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1 (50%)**
• by teacher	2 (4.7%)				0
• by peer	0				1 (50%)
Clarification request	**2 (4.7%)**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
ML clues	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
• by teacher					
• by peer					

 * one with confirmation check
** including attempts

Table 11: Group B total: Distribution of feedback types per error type

Table 12 illustrates the rate of feedback per error during the different activity types. As we can see, the rate of correction of grammatical errors depended on the type of activity. Rates were much higher during accuracy activities (75-100%). Phonological errors were never treated when students asked each other questions or when the whole class checked information with the teacher, and only a low percentage (22%) was treated when students were reporting to the class. The rate of correction of lexical errors was also relatively low, 41.2% when students were reporting back to the class and 25% during pair work. Unsolicited uses of Italian received a high rate (71.4%) when students were reporting. Finally, the two content errors made during pair work were corrected, whereas the error made when checking questions was not.

Activity type	Grammatical	Phonological	Lexical	L1	Content
Whole class (1) (checking questions)	5/5 100%	0	0	0	0/1 0%
Group work (1) (preparing questions)	3/4 75%	0	0	0	0
Whole class (2) (reporting)	25/67 37.3%	2/9 22.2%	7/17 41.2%	5/7 71.4%	0
Pair/ group work (2) (asking for/giving info)	9/34 26.5%	0/9 0%	1/8 25%	0/1 0%	2/2 100%
Pair/group work (3) (guessing a holiday)	1/10 10%	0	0	0	0
Whole class (3) (checking information)	0 0%	0/6	0/1 0%	0	0

Table 12: Group B: Types of errors treated per activity type

Finally, the type of feedback given varied according to the activity type. Feedback given to errors made while checking questions with the whole class included multiple feedback (60%), and explicit correction by peer (20%) and self correction (20%). Errors treated during the reporting of information to the whole class were followed by recasts 59% of the time, by self correction, including two attempts, in 15.4% of the cases, by elicitation 10.3% of the time, while multiple feedback, elicitation and metalinguistic clues each accounted for 5.1% of the corrective feedback given. No corrective feedback was given when the whole class checked the information they had completed after an information gap activity.

As regards pair/group work, feedback given during the preparation of questions was provided equally by recast by peer, explicit correction by peer and self correction (33.3%), with no teacher intervention. Errors treated during activities in which students asked each other questions were followed by explicit correction 66.6% of the time, with explicit correction by peers accounting for 58.3% of the total. Recasts by peer, self correction, elicitation by peer, and repetition by peer each account for 8.3% of the feedback given. Once again, there was no teacher intervention. Finally, when students were guessing each other's holiday, the only error that was treated was through a recast by a peer.

3.1.3. Comparison of corrective feedback given to both groups

As was reported in the previous sections, the overall rate of corrective feedback provided to Group A (67.1%) was much higher than in Group B (33.1%). As regards the distribution of the different feedback types, recasts were the most common feedback types in both groups: 42.8% for Group A (37.8% of the total by the teacher and 5% by peers), and 43.3% for Group B (38.8% of the total by the teacher and 5% by peers) (Table 13). However, the distribution of the other types of feedback was different. For example, in Group A, elicitation accounted for 20.1% of the feedback given, whereas in Group B this figure was only 8.3%. Another difference can be noticed as regards self correction. Only 2.5% of the feedback moves in Group A were self correction, whereas in Group B, self correction accounted for 15% of the error treated.

Feedback type	Group A	Group B
Recast	**42.8%**	**43.3%**
• by teacher	37.8%	38.3%
• by peer	5%	5%
Ex. correction	**11.4%**	**16.7%**
• by teacher	5.7%	1.7%
• by peer	5.7%	15%
Elicitation	**20.1%**	**8.3%**
• by teacher	20.1%	6.7%
• by peer	0%	1.7%
Multiple feedback	**10.7%**	**8.3%**
Self correction	**2.5%**	**15%**
Clarification request	**6.3%**	**3.3%**
Repetition	**3.1%**	**5%**
• by teacher	3.1%	3.3%
• by peer	0%	1.7%
ML clues	**3.1%**	**0%**
• by teacher	2.5%	
• by peer	0.6%	

Table 13: Distribution of feedback types per group

However, although these figures are very interesting, I decided to concentrate on a comparison of the same type of activities carried out with both groups. This is because, while the topic of each lesson was similar for each group, the activities carried out were not always the same due to the different proficiency levels. It is therefore more significant to focus on the same activities in order to avoid differences

which could influence the validity of the data. The four activity types compared were:

1. Pair/group work (i): preparing questions
2. Pair/group work (ii): asking each other questions
3. Whole class (iii): reporting
4. Whole class (iv): checking questions

Table 14 presents a comparison of the data regarding the percentage of errors treated in each activity type. The most notable difference between the two groups is the rate of feedback given during pair/group work in which students asked each other questions (ii): 60.5% for Group A and only 19.5% for Group B. This can be partly explained by the fact that students in Group A called on the teacher more often. Another noticeable difference is the percentage of errors treated when the whole class was checking the questions they had prepared (iv): 63.6% Group A and 83.3% Group B. The high number of pronunciation errors which received no corrective feedback in Group A may be one of the reasons for this (see Table 15).

Activity type	Group A	Group B
Pair/ group work (i) (preparing questions)	100% (6/6)	75% (3/4)
Pair/ group work (ii) (asking for/ giving information)	60.5% (26/43)	19.5% (8/41)
Whole class (iii) (reporting)	50% (21/42)	39% (39/100)
Whole class (iv) (checking questions)	63.6% (35/55)	83.3% (5/6)
Total errors treated	60.3% (88/146)	55/151 36.4%

Table 14: Percentage of errors treated per activity per group

Table 15 outlines a comparison between the rate of error correction per type of error during the different activities. For ease of reference, the data for Group A are written in italics. We can see that, except for the activity in which the whole class checked questions, the rate of

Activity type	Grammatical	Phonological	Lexical	L1	Content
Pair/ group work (i) *(p. questions)*	*5/5* *100%*	*0*	*1/1* *100%*	*0*	*0*
Pair/ group work (i) **(p. questions)**	3/4 75%	0	0	0	0
Pair/ group work (ii) *(ask/give info)*	*16/26* *61.5%*	*2/6* *33.3%*	*5/6* *83.3%*	*3/4* *75%*	*0/1* *0%*
Pair/ group work (ii) **(ask/give info)**	6/25 24%	0/6 0%	1/8 25%	0/1 0%	1/1 100%
Whole class (iii) *(reporting)*	*14/23* *60.9%*	*1/12* *8.3%*	*4/5* *80%*	*1/1* *100%*	*1/1* *100%*
Whole class (iii) **(reporting)**	25/67 37.3%	2/9 22.2%	7/17 41.2%	5/7 71.4%	0
Whole class (iv) *(c. questions)*	*22/27* *81.5%*	*8/22* *36.4%*	*2/2* *100%*	*0*	*3/4* *75%*
Whole class (iv) **(c. questions)**	5/5 100%	0	0	0	0/1 0%

Table 15: Errors treated per activity per group

correction of grammar errors is higher in Group A. In fact, if we consider the rate for all the activities, we see a significant difference: 70.4% correction rate for Group A and 38.6% for Group B. As regards phonological errors, a higher percentage of errors were corrected in Group B when students were reporting to the class. Nevertheless, the overall rate of correction of phonological errors is higher in Group A: 27.5% to 13.5%, although both rates are relatively low. Lexical errors are also corrected more often during activities carried out with Group A and their overall of rate of correction is also much higher: 85.7% to 32% in Group B. This is also true for L1 errors, although the difference is not as great: 80% for Group A and 62.5% for Group B. Finally, as regards content errors, overall, the rate is 66.7% for Group A and 50% for Group B. However, since the number of L1 and content errors is very low, these figures may not be very significant.

Table 16 outlines the type of corrective feedback given to each group during the different activity types. Data for Group A are in italics. What is noticeable here is that a wider variety of feedback moves is seen in activities carried out with Group A. For example, when students were asking for and giving information (ii), all the different types of feedback were used, except for repetition. We can also see that there is more teacher intervention in both types of pair work activities in Group A, due to the fact that students asked for the teacher's help more often. As regards activities carried out with the whole class, once again we see a much wider range of feedback moves when students were checking their questions in Group A, although it is true that the teacher did use multiple feedback moves with Group B. As regards the reporting phase (iii), Group B has a very high rate of recasts (59%) compared to 33.3% in Group A. Another difference is the rate of self correction, which is much higher for Group B. In fact, we only see self correction by Group A students on two occasions in pair/group work (ii).

Feedback type	Pair/ group work (i) A	Pair/ Group work (i) B	Pair/ group work (ii) A	Pair/ group work (ii) B	Whole class (iii) A	Whole class (iii) B	Whole class (iv) A	Whole class (iv) B
Recast	*16.7%*	**33.3%**	*26.9%*	**12.5%**	*33.3%*	**59%**	*34.3%*	**0**
by teacher	*16.7%*	0	*26.9%*	0	*33.3%*	59%	*31.4%*	
by peer	*0*	33.3%	*0*	12.5%	*0*	0	*2.9%*	
Elicitation	*33.3%*	**0**	*26.9%*	**12.5%**	*14.3%*	**10.3%**	*20%*	**0**
by teacher	*33.3%*		*26.9%*	0	*14.3%*	10.3%	*20%*	
by peer	*0*		*0*	12.5%%	*0*	0	*0*	
Exp. Corr.	*50%*	**33.3%**	*19.2%*	**50%**	*0*	**0**	*8.6%*	**20%**
by teacher	*0*	0	*15.4%*	12.5%			*8.6%*	0
by peer	*50%*	33.3%	*3.8%*	37.5%			*0*	20%
Multiple feedback	*0*	**0**	*11.5%*	**0**	*19%*	**5.1%**	*17.1%*	**60%**
Clarific. request	*0*	**0**	*3.8%*	**0**	*14.3%*	**5.1%**	*8.6%*	**0**
ML clues	*0*	**0**	*3.8%*	**0**	*4.8%*	**0**	*5.7%*	**0**
by teacher			*3.8%*		*1*		*2.9%*	
by peer			*0*		*0*		*2.9%*	
Repetition	*0*	**0**	*0*	**12.5%**	*14.3%*	**5.1%**	*2.9%*	**0**
by teacher				0	*14.3%*	5.1%	*2.9%*	
by peer				12.5%	*0*	0	*0*	
Self correction	*0*	**33.3%**	*7.6%*	**12.5%**	*0*	**15.4%**	*2.9%*	**20%**

Table 16: Comparison of type of feedback per activity type per group

3.1.4. Teacher interview

One of the main points that the interview highlighted was that the teacher believes corrective feedback is useful and necessary, although she feels that teachers should provide such input in a way that does not interfere with the flow of conversation. In fact, while watching the videos, she often pointed out how she tried not to interrupt. Moreover, she said that she used to provide more feedback when she started teaching, but realized that at times it was disrupting. She also said that how much she corrects also depends on the type of activity being carried out (e.g. focussed on fluency vs accuracy).

Moreover, while watching the videos, she realized that many times she had not made herself quite clear and was surprised that students sometimes seemed to have understood when in fact they had not. This highlights the importance of being aware that even if teachers provide the correct form, students may not always pick it up.

The teacher also noticed that she used the board to focus on errors less than she thought and that she didn't go over the errors made at the end of the class as much as she thought she did. She feels that peers should also provide corrective feedback, but worries that they may sometimes interrupt too much. She believes it is important to correct beginners more than intermediate students in order to help them learn the correct forms right from the start and not risk confusing both the student who makes an error as well as the other students.

3.2. Discussion of results

3.2.1. Group A

The overall rate of corrective feedback provided by the teacher, peers and self correction was 67.1%. The teacher provided feedback for 57.8% of all of the errors made. This figure is similar to the findings in Lyster and Ranta (1997) and Lyster (1998), 62% and 61% respectively, but slightly higher than the rate in the study by Lyster and Panova (2002), which was 48%. What is interesting is that while peers play a role in the correction of errors (11.3% of the feedback was provided by peers), self correction accounted for only 2.5% of the moves. In fact students only self corrected 4/237 errors made (1.7% of total errors): 2

grammatical errors, 1 lexical error and 1 phonological error. This could mean that learners are not yet ready, or confident enough, to try and correct their own errors unless they are pointed out.

As regards the percentage of errors treated for each error type, unsolicited uses of L1 were followed by corrective feedback 93.7% of the time, while they only made up 6.7% of the total number of errors. However, this is not surprising since this type of error stands out much more than the others. Moreover, many of these errors (11/16) were made during the presentation of the first activity, in which the teacher was focusing on specific holiday-related vocabulary. On the other hand, only 43.1% of phonological errors received feedback, although they were the second most common type of error.

Recasts were the most popular type of feedback (42.8%), followed by elicitation (20.1%). Only 1 recast out of 68 was also a confirmation check, implying that it is a combination of feedback rarely used by the teacher. This is unfortunate because confirmation checks might help students notice errors more easily. Both recasts and elicitation were also often used in multiple feedback moves, confirming that they were the preferred type of feedback used by the teacher. In fact 10/17 multiple feedback moves contained recasts, while 14/17 contained elicitation. The third type of feedback provided was explicit correction (11.4%). This last figure is influenced by the number of explicit corrective moves by peers (5.7% of the total). In fact, when peers correct each other, they seem to prefer explicit correction. This preference might be due to the fact that since many students prefer to be explicitly corrected (Kaufmann 1993, cited in James 1998), they might find it useful to provide this type of feedback as well.

Turning to the distribution of feedback types per error type, it is interesting to see that recasts were the most common for all types of error except for content errors, which (perhaps predictably) were followed mostly by elicitation (71.5%). It should also be highlighted that all of the different types of feedback were used when correcting grammatical errors. This might be due to the fact that when one type of feedback did not work, the teacher tried other types. For example:

> (36) S: She was born Catanzaro.
> T: She was born Catanzaro?   (repetition)
> S: Catanzaro.

        T: Preposition?   (metalinguistic clues)
        S: In Catanzaro.

The findings also show that the percentage of errors treated is influenced by the pedagogical focus of the lesson. Not surprisingly, errors made during activities which focused on accuracy received more corrective feedback. However, the activity in which the questions students had prepared were checked presents a relatively low rate of correction (63.6%) compared to the other activities carried out with the whole class which also focused on accuracy (91.2%). This lower rate is due to the fact that the teacher felt it was more important to focus on the grammar and therefore corrected a low percentage of phonological errors (36.4%). Moreover, this rate (63.6%) was also lower than the rate of correction for errors made during the preparation of questions in groups (68.4%), although they were both accuracy activities. This shows that these students received a relatively high percentage of error feedback during group work and that, once again, explicit correction played an important role in the feedback given. This is true even when the feedback is only an attempt, because it nevertheless makes students think about the language and prompts a revision (see James 1998). An example of this is the following excerpt:

     (37) S1: When you born?
          S2: No, when was you born?
          S1: No, mi sembra sbagliata. [=No, it seems wrong]
          S2: Allora [=Then], when was born you?
          S1: Ok.

S2 later calls the teacher for confirmation:

     (38) S2: (Calls teacher) When was you born?
          T: Remember. I was, you (gestures back), you …
          S2: were?
          T: yes.
          S2: When were born you?
          T: When <u>were</u> you <u>born</u>?

Although it is the teacher who finally provides the correct form, the students are carefully focusing on the language.

In the other types of activities (Whole class (1, 2, 3), pair/group work (2)), regardless of the pedagogical focus, recasts were the most popular form of feedback, followed by elicitation, although the percentages vary. In the presentation activities, recasts accounted for 66.1% of the feedback, although the teacher used a wide variety of feedback types.

Let's now turn to the question of whether teachers correct different kinds of errors depending on the type of activity. As expected, grammatical errors had a higher rate of correction during accuracy activities, especially in those carried out with the whole class (92.3% and 81.5%), although the rate of correction of grammar was not low during the fluency activities (61.5% and 60.9%). As regards phonological errors, these had a low correction rate, regardless of whether the activity was carried out in groups or with the whole class or whether the focus was accuracy or fluency. The only exception is for the rate of correction of phonological errors made during the presentation phase, where the correction rate was high (77.7%). Lexical errors were corrected 100% of the time during accuracy activities, and between 80-83.3% during fluency activities. Both L1 errors and content errors had a 100% correction rate in activities carried out with the whole group, regardless of the pedagogical focus. L1 errors presented a lower rate of correction during pair/group focusing on fluency (75%). Finally, the one content error made when students were asking and giving information, was not corrected. However, the low number of content errors makes it difficult to consider this a general trend.

3.2.2. Group B

The overall rate of error correction for Group B was quite low, which reflects what the teacher said about providing more feedback to beginners. The teacher, in fact, provides feedback for only 20.4% of the errors made, with another 12.7% being provided by peers or self correction, for an overall total of 33.1%. It is interesting to note, that unlike what was seen in Group A, lexical errors received a rather low percentage of correction (29.6%). However, it was the low rate of corrective feedback given to pronunciation errors (8%) that had the greatest effect on the overall percentage of errors treated.

As with Group A, recasts were the most popular form of corrective feedback. Three of the 26 recast moves were also confirmation checks, which is a higher percentage than the one in Group A, although it is still relatively low. After recasts, the type of corrective feedback most used was explicit correction. This is quite significant because, once again, this figure was greatly influenced by peers whose explicit correction made up 15% of the total corrective feedback. Overall, both peer and self correction made up a considerable part of the corrective feedback provided, 23.3% and 15% respectively. Therefore, compared to Group A, students are beginning to take a more active role in correcting themselves and each other, which is what should be aimed for. In one of the lessons, peers even provided more feedback than the teacher. In fact, they provided 58.3% of the feedback moves, while teachers provided 25%, the remaining 16.7% being self corrections. Overall, students self corrected 9 of the 181 errors they made, 7 of which were grammatical errors and 2 were lexical. Although these only represent 5% of the total errors made, it is higher than the figure in Group A. Two interesting examples are the following:

(39) S: He traveled by train and he went in Bologna, in summer. It was very hot and he had sunbath, sunbathe in Piazza Maggiore.
T: He sunbathed.
S: He sunbathed in Piazza Maggiore.

In this case the student manages to correct the lexis, although he uses the wrong tense, which he then corrects after the teacher's recast.

(40) S1: Where did you go for your last holiday?
S2: I go…
S1: No, <u>last</u>.
S2: I last... I went to Paola.

Although the feedback given by S1 was not clear at first, it nevertheless prompted a correction.

As regards the distribution of feedback types per error type, recasts were once again the most common type of corrective feedback, except for content errors, which were followed by either explicit correction or

repetition. As with Group A, a wide variety of feedback types were used to correct grammatical errors, whereas phonological errors and unsolicited uses of Italian were always followed by recasts, and lexical errors were also followed by self correction.

Turning to percentage of errors treated in the different activity types, there is a significant difference between activities which focus on accuracy, those which focus on fluency, and the activity which focuses on comprehension. As regards both accuracy and fluency, there is also a difference between activities carried out in groups and those carried out with the whole class, with a higher percentage of errors being corrected during the 'whole class' activities. Finally, during the activity carried out to check if students had correctly completed the information gap, none of the errors made were treated. The teacher explained that she was concentrating on whether or not the content was correct and therefore disregarded the other types of errors. As expected grammatical errors were corrected more often during accuracy activities. Of the 24 phonological errors made only 2 were corrected. This was when students were reporting to the class (22.2% correction rate), otherwise the pronunciation errors were ignored. Lexical errors were corrected more often during the reporting activity (whole class) than when students were asking each other questions, implying that the type of classroom organization may affect the rate of feedback of these errors. As regards L1 errors, they received a high rate of correction (71.4%) when students were reporting, although it was not as high as expected. Once again, the number of content errors is too small to be able to establish a trend.

Finally, the type of feedback also varied according to the activity type, but unlike Group A, there was no type of feedback that was much more popular.

3.2.3. Comparing proficiency levels

As mentioned above, the main difference between the two groups, considering all of the data, is that Group B has a much lower rate of corrective feedback and a higher participation rate by students in both peer and self correction. However, it is important to verify this trend by analyzing activities which were the same for both groups.

The analysis of the four different types of activities carried out by both groups shows that the overall rate of correction is indeed much higher in Group A (60.3%) than in Group B (36.4%). These figures confirm the teacher's affirmation that she tends to correct beginners more often.

In both groups the percentage of errors corrected was affected by the pedagogical focus of the lesson, where more corrective feedback was given during accuracy activities. As regards pair/ group work (i) (preparing questions), a low number of errors was made in both groups (Group A: five grammar errors and one lexical error; Group B: four grammar errors), but the percentage of correction was the highest: 100% for Group A and 75% for Group B. The reason for the higher percentage in Group A was that there was some teacher intervention, whereas in Group B there was none. The second highest percentage of correction was in the whole class (iv) (checking questions) activity. However, there was quite a difference between the two groups (Group A 63.6%, group B 83.3%), due to two main factors: the low rate of phonological errors corrected in Group A, which can be explained because the teacher was concentrating more on the grammar, and the much lower number of errors made by Group B students (6 vs. 55) which could have made them more salient to the teacher.

As regards the fluency activities, the differences are quite significant, especially in pair/ group work (ii) (asking for/ giving information), where the rate of corrective feedback in Group A is three times higher than Group B's (60.5% to 19.5%). There are two possible reasons for this. First of all, the students in Group B produced much more language and as a consequence also more errors. In fact, in Group A students used Italian to carry out most of the activity. Secondly, there was also much more teacher intervention in Group A whereas in Group B only 1/8 feedback moves was by the teacher. Another interesting difference is that a much wider range of feedback was provided in Group A, in fact the only technique that was not used was repetition. Finally, in whole class (iii) (reporting), we again see a higher rate of corrective feedback in Group A (50% to 39%). This can be explained in part by the fact that students in Group B produced longer sentences which the teacher was hesitant to interrupt and, at the same time, wanted to reinforce correct lexis used.

4. Conclusion

This case study has highlighted the wide variety of feedback techniques used to push students to produce the target form, although recasts are the most common. Furthermore, it has shown that there is a significant difference between the rate of feedback provided to the two groups. Moreover, although self correction is low in both groups, it is higher in the pre-intermediate group, implying that these learners are beginning to play a more active role in correcting their errors. Finally, the study has looked at the role played by the students themselves in providing corrective feedback to each other, which could be the topic for further research. In that case, in addition to focusing on peer correction, it would be interesting to investigate the difference between learner uptake and type of feedback as well as to compare uptake in the different groups.

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APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTION SYSTEM

T: teacher

S: student (S1, S2 used to signal that two different students are speaking)

Ss: several students speaking at once

…   pauses of a few seconds

( )   used for writer's comments

[=]   used for translations in English

/ /   phonemic transcription, used only when words are pronounced incorrectly.

XXX   incomprehensible

" "   anything read rather than spoken

____   word is given extra stress

-      used to indicate that there is a longer pause between each word