Abstract

A quasi-experimental study along with a survey was conducted to investigate the beneficial effects of three different types of corrective feedback (CF), namely recast, prompt (i.e., clarification request), and explicit correction with metalinguistic information, on Iranian EFL learners’ learning of definite and indefinite articles and also to examine EFL teachers’ and learners’ preferences for and beliefs about different aspects of CF. For the purpose of the quasi-experimental study, 75 male elementary EFL learners, aged 18 to 24, comprising 4 intact classes in a public language institute in Iran participated in the study. The four classes were randomly assigned into three treatment groups and one control group. During the intervention, each experimental group engaged in doing communicative tasks (i.e., narrative type) for 3 sessions and the learners in each group were provided with one specific type of CF in response to their errors, while the control group only engaged in communicative tasks. The participants’ knowledge of articles was measured in pre-tests one week prior to the outset of intervention and in post-tests which were administered two weeks after the last treatment using an untimed grammaticality judgement task and a timed written picture description task. Results of repeated-measured ANOVA with subsequent ANOVA and post-hoc test on the untimed grammaticality judgement task and ANCOVA on timed picture description task with post hoc comparisons indicated that explicit correction with metalinguistic information group outperformed the other groups in both measures of the study. The researcher concludes that CF contributes to improvement in the knowledge of usage and the ability to use the language and explicit CF with metalinguistic information which results in deep level of understanding and entails longer time-outs from interaction works better than recasts and clarification requests for elementary learners in the EFL context of Iran. The survey study was carried out through two 16-item Likert-scale questionnaires. 215 adult male and female EFL students, aged 23-28, and 50 male and female EFL teachers aged 27-51, in 4 different public and private language institutes in Iran who were randomly selected participated in the survey. The results of the survey study revealed that a strong majority of EFL learners have positive attitudes towards error correction, prefer error correction during fluency work, believe that error correction results in better performance in recognition and production tests, and ignoring errors is irritating for them. Second, the Chi-square Tests of Independence conducted on teachers’ and learners’ responses to questionnaires
showed that teachers’ and learners’ preferences for and beliefs about certain aspects of error correction were significantly different. While a high percentage of teachers preferred to avoid correction in front of the class, preferred to avoid correction during fluency work, believed that ignoring learners’ errors had no negative effect on learners’ feelings, and were of the opinion that error correction causes anxiety, a lower percentage of EFL learners had similar preferences and views. The findings of the survey point to the need for both minimizing the mismatch between teachers’ and learners’ preferences and views and adopting necessary action towards bridging the gap between CF research and teachers’ preferences for correction in some respects.