

The Effect of Dynamic Feedback on the Control and Recognition of Untreatable Errors of Iranian EFL Learners: A Case of Group Dynamic Assessment

Fatemeh Khonamri

Fariba Irannejad

University of Mazandaran,
Iran

Abstract

The significance of learner errors in the learning process has led to a wide array of studies which have attempted to assist learners in their journey. However, research in the written feedback is inclusive, and still there are controversies over the effectiveness of CF in this skill area. The present study is an effort to explore the effect of group dynamic assessment in the recognition and control of some untreatable errors found in students' writing. It is a case study involving four intermediate EFL writers who receive feedback from their teacher during four sessions of G-DA. The interaction during these four sessions were recorded, transcribed and then analyzed through conversation analysis (CA) in order to investigate the role of G-DA on L1 transfer errors. The CA analysis of the interactions has proved that GDA can be an effective tool for raising students' awareness of such errors in their writing. In order to explore the most frequent type of untreatable errors, 25 essays were collected from the students' exam papers in an essay writing course. Using Keshavrz's (2010) typology, the most frequent types of errors were interlanguage or L1 transfer errors.

Key words: group dynamic assessment (G-DA), zone of proximal development (ZPD), feedback, L1 transfer errors.

Introduction

One of the most prevalent problems in EFL writing classes is that students have difficulty putting their ideas down on paper. As Mourtaga (2004) has observed, students have the ideas in mind but they find it difficult to put them on paper. Having a clear idea is one thing, but communicating the idea coherently in written form of second language is another. Additionally, the findings of the studies in the field have revealed that lack of proficiency in English (as a second language) is not the only source of errors made by students, but rather L1 interference is another source of students' errors. That some of L2 writing errors are caused by L1 transfer or interference by L1 has been proved in the literature (Izzu,1999; Khuwaileh& Al-Shoumali, 2000; Mourtaga,2004) and some categorization also exists for such errors (Hemchua , Saengchan and Schmitt, 2006): e.g., two main categories of lexical errors called formal and semantic errors each with their own sub-

categorization. In facilitating ESL/EFL students to produce effective writing, many teachers and researchers focus on students' writing problems in syntax, lexis and content-related aspects. They mostly provide feedback and investigate the efficacy of it on syntactic and lexical errors improvement. However, many of them, both teachers and researchers, neglect the problem of students' native language and culture interfering in written English. Although L1 interference is not a new concept in second language acquisition studies, it is an important factor to be considered in ESL/EFL writing instruction. Second language literature on the role of corrective feedback is not conclusive with regarding to some cases: firstly few studies in the field of corrective feedback have focused on untreatable errors like L1, they mostly were concerned about the role of corrective feedback, of different types, on accuracy development. Secondly, in those few studies, treatable and untreatable errors are treated in the same way although they belong to different categories. In the present study these gaps are going to be answered by applying DA procedure for improving L1 transfer errors.

Moreover, over the past two decades, the changes in writing instruction and research have led to more focused attention to feedback as a means of assisting students' future writing development (Hyland and Hyland, 2006). In other words, the question of how to respond to students' written errors, have become the driving force for many researchers to think of effective ways to provide feedback, and "what makes feedback effective" have become the key consideration of researchers (Goldstein,2005).

Vygotsky's SCT is among many theories_ like interactionist and skill acquisition theories_ that justifies the significance of corrective feedback. Vygotsky believed that the normal learning situation for a student is a socially meaningful cooperation activity. New cognitive functions and learning abilities originate within this interpersonal interaction and only later are internalized and transformed which became the students' inter cognitive processes. Thus under condition of collaborative or assisted performance, students may reveal certain emergent functions.

Dynamic assessment as a method of providing feedback through which the teacher should negotiate with the learner in order to assess his current level of ability and then help him to improve through negotiated feedback, is in line with the concept of ZPD in sociocultural theory of Vygotsky. One point seen in the literature is that a large number of articles have focused on the priority of direct and indirect, also implicit and explicit feedback over one another without paying close attention to the needs and language proficiency of the participants in those studies. Surely one of the main design problems which led to the contradictory results was "not taking into account the ZPD of the participants" before selecting the type of feedback, a point the teachers should be aware of when they are providing feedback, whether written or oral. This problem may be solved by applying DA, which as mentioned by Xiaoxiao and Yan (2010), as a newly emergent instruction pedagogy grown up from a well-developed set of theories, is not yet widely practiced and is still virtually unknown to many psychologists and educators. According to Thorne (2005,as cited in Xiaoxiao& Yan 2010), DA, a procedure that "unites the goals of better understanding a learners' potential through structured sets of interactions and fostering development through those interactions, is just emergent into socio-cultural-based L2 language research".

Along with so many positive points of this new emergent technique of assessing, it is said to have one negative point which is to be time consuming. According to Poehner (2009) a major challenge to implementing DA in second language (L2) classrooms is that these contexts typically do not permit the one-to-one interactions that have characterized most DA work to date (and ZPD research more generally). Thus, the switch of focus from individual to group DA in this study can be of great importance for ESL/EFL teachers generally and for ESL/EFL writing teachers specifically. Group dynamic assessment applies the same principles of mediation as in individualized interactions but broadens the focus to potentially an entire class and as Vygotsky himself recognized the possibility of constructing a group ZPD by negotiating

mediation with more than one individual (Vygotsky, 1998 as cited in Poehner 2009) the conceptual framework of G-DA can be justified.

Applying DA, whether group or individual, is also of great importance for students, because during the procedure the students have opportunities to take part in an interaction with the teacher and seek for the information they actually need for improvement. While in the common way of providing feedback, like direct or indirect written feedback, the students may not gain some information they need for improving their abilities because the provided feedback is not so clear or is not in line with their actual needs. DA procedure provides a context in which the teacher can assess what students have learnt and what they are ready to learn so it can improve the teaching quality and increase the learning results.

By applying DA in the process of providing feedback on students' errors in their writing, the teacher tries to assess the current ability of an individual person and then by providing appropriate instruction help him or her to develop this ability. What is so prerequisite in the concept of DA is that the instruction should be appropriate for the individual learner and in line with the concept of ZPD, proposed in SCT. What DA offers is, a more comprehensive and humanistic approach in which learners are assessed based on their performance (Lantolf, 2009; Anton, 2009) which will help teachers to understand learners' development processes, introduce the necessary interventions in order to help them overcome difficulties and more importantly aid them in their ZPD (Caffrey, Fuchs and Fuchs, 2008, Poehner, 2008). In other words, simultaneous active collaboration with other individuals will reveal the full range of learner abilities and the teacher by resorting to mediation, as the appropriate form of support (Poehner, 2008) will be able to both understand and promote the learners' abilities.

What is so common in the studies on DA is that the teacher interacts with each learner at a time, but actually according to the reality of SL classrooms where mostly more than twenty students are registered, it is not possible for the teacher to spend enough time for interacting with any individual student. Thus in the present study, the efficacy of group-dynamic assessment (G-DA) will be examined, the procedure through which all of the principles of DA are applied but here the addressee of the teacher is a group of learners not an individual one.

Baring in mind the gaps in the literature, the researcher in the present study is going to seek answer to the following research question:

- 1: Can group dynamic assessment help the participants recognize and control L1 transfer untreatable errors in their L2 written productions?
- 2: What percent of EFL students' writings contain different types of L1 transfer errors?

Significance of the study

This study is significant for some reasons: the gaps I have found by reviewing the literature and the implementation of the results for both general and writing second language classroom teachers.

As mentioned in the introduction, most of the studies in the field have focused on the efficacy of different types of corrective feedback on improving accuracy of treatable errors in students writing but a few has concentrated on untreatable errors like the L1 transfer errors. The other point is that a large number of articles focused on the priority of direct and indirect, also implicit and explicit feedback on each other without paying close attention to the needs and language proficiency of their participants. Surely one of the main design problems which led to the contradictory results was a lack of attention to the ZPD of the participants, a point the teachers should be aware of when they are providing feedback, whether written or oral.

The other importance of the work is the application of DA in second language classroom. As was mentioned by Xiaoxiao and Yan (2010), DA as a newly emergent instruction pedagogy grown up from a well-

developed set of theories, is not yet widely practiced and is still virtually unknown to many psychologists and educators. According to Thorne (2005, as cited in Xiaoxiao & Yan 2010, p.8), DA, a procedure that “unites the goals of better understanding a learners’ potential through structured sets of interactions and fostering development through those interactions, is just emergent into social-cultural-based L2 language research”.

According to Poehner (2009) a major challenge to implementing DA in second language (L2) classrooms is that these contexts typically do not permit the one-to-one interactions that have characterized most DA work to date (and ZPD research more generally). So the switch of focus from individual to group DA in this study can be of great importance for ESL/EFL teachers generally and for ESL/EFL writing teachers specifically. (As Group dynamic assessment applies the same principles of mediation as in individualized interactions but broadens the focus to potentially an entire class and as Vygotsky himself recognized the possibility of constructing a group ZPD by negotiating mediation with more than one individual (Vygotsky, 1998 as cited in Poehner 2009) the conceptual framework of G-DA can be justified).

Methodology

Participants

The participants in the first phase of the study were four EFL upper intermediate female learners who were 19-20 years old. They were all undergraduate students of English major studying at the University of Mazandaran. The participants, whose language proficiency was estimated through a proficiency test, had passed an essay writing course with the same instructor in the present study. In the essay writing class which was based on process writing instruction, the students were taught how to identify and write different parts of an essay like introduction, body and conclusion.

After passing the course, the students were invited to participate in the treatment sessions of the present study with the purpose of editing the essays they had written in their essay writing course. At the beginning of the first session, the instructor clarified the purpose of the treatment sessions and explained that they should try to find and edit their L1 transfer errors.

As the second question in this study asks about the most frequent L1 transfer error in upper elementary and intermediate Iranian EFL writers’ writings, a large amount of essays were analyzed for answering this question. So 25 essays of 14 students in the same essay writing course in which the participants of research question one enrolled were collected to be analyzed.

Research design

In interacting with the students, the teacher applied the principles of interactionist DA on the basis of concurrent group DA principles. Based on different interpretations of ZPD, different approaches are introduced for applying DA. Two main approaches are called the interventionist and interactionist approach (Poehner and Lantolf, 2004). Interactionist DA, unlike the interventionist approach in which the mediator has to work based on a priori list of hints, places no restrictions on mediation but instead demands that the mediator do everything possible to help the learner stretch beyond his/her current independent performance, short of giving the answer, although even this might promote development if it occurs at a propitious point in the interaction (Poehner & Lantolf, 2010). In our case, the teacher, who knew how to apply DA and who knew her students well, was not forced to use some limited types of feedback but she tried to do everything to help her students to gain autonomy over the task. The teacher was supposed to provide step by step feedback to the participants, i.e. from more implicit to more explicit, But in the first session, she had to provide mostly explicit feedback since the students were unable to locate the erroneous utterances. This was because students automatically tried to find grammatical errors in the writing piece

under examination and the teacher had to explain the certain type of error which was difficult to recognize in the first glance. But in the second session, as students became more familiar with the DA procedures and the type of errors studied, the teacher's feedback moved more smoothly from implicit to explicit feedback.

Poehner (2009) proposes two different approaches to G-DA. In the first, which he refers to as concurrent G-DA, the teacher dialogues with the entire group. To be sure, the teacher may provide mediation in response to an individual, but the interaction shifts rapidly between primary and secondary interactants as one learner's question, struggle, or comment sets the stage for another's contribution. In this way, concurrent G-DA may appear to an observer to be similar to whole class instruction, but of course the absence of extended one-on-one interactions does not preclude development within individuals' ZPDs. In the second approach, cumulative G-DA, the teacher conducts a series of one-on-one DA interactions as the group works toward mastery of a problem. That is, individuals take turns engaging directly as primary interactants with the teacher, with the understanding that each subsequent one-on-one exchange will have the advantage of building on earlier interactions that the class witnessed. In our case, the teacher applied concurrent G-DA. As the episodes provided in the result section show, the teacher interacts with all of the students at once; one of the students may raise a question but the interaction shifts rapidly between primary and secondary interactants regardless of who posed the question or even whose writing is under discussion.

In order to observe the role of group DA in moving the students in line with their ZPD, precise analysis is needed, that's why conversation analysis (CA) has been chosen as the research framework within which the structural organization of talk-in-interaction can be explicated in details (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998). This point is going to be explained more in data analysis section. To sum it up, this study is a qualitative study that has used a case study research design in which four cases have been studied using conversation analysis of interaction between teacher and students in a group interaction.

Data collection tools, procedure and analysis

For answering the first research question, the interaction between the teacher and the group of students was recorded. The discussion made on L1 transfer errors existing in the essays written by the participants provided an atmosphere in which the required data could be collected. So the researcher, as the observer of the treatment sessions, recorded any interaction that occurred during the four 45-minute treatment sessions through an MP3 player. The recorded interaction then was transcribed carefully through the conventions of conversation analysis in order to be analyzed later.

As in all research, conversational analysis begins by setting up a research problem. The data collected for CA is in the form of video or audio recorded conversations. The data is collected without researchers' involvement, often simply by adding a video camera or audio device to the room where the conversation takes place (e.g. medical doctors consultation with a patient). From the audio or video recording, the researchers construct a detailed transcription (ideally with no details left out). After transcription, the researchers perform inductive data-driven analysis aiming to find recurring patterns of interaction in relation to the problem under investigation. Based on the analysis, the researchers develop a rule or model to explain the occurrence of the patterns.

The same procedure occurred in this study; after recording four sessions of interaction which was done through applying the principles of group DA, the researchers transcribed the collected data word by word. Then the transcription were read several times in order to find any important point which could prove or disprove the role of G-DA in enabling the teacher to scaffold the students in their group with regarding to any individual ZPD, i.e. the focus was on the role of G-DA in improving the ZPD of the group while improving the ZPD of any individual simultaneously.

This transcribed data could reveal the role of G-DA in enabling the teacher to explore and promote the group's ZPD while supporting the development of individual learners and also in enabling the participants to identify and correct the L1 transfer errors in their essays. So for understanding the short term and long term effect of the four treatment sessions on the participants' ability to control or avoid the errors in their subsequent written productions, they were to write an essay one week after the last session and one after three months. These essays then were analyzed by the teacher and the researcher in order to identify and count L1 transfer errors and then be compared with the number of L1 errors in the previous essays discussed in the treatment sessions. For identifying L1 transfer errors in the essays written by the participants, the teacher and the researcher applied plausible interpretation of erroneous sentences proposed by Corder (1981). Corder pointed out the teacher who is familiar with the students and their first language can guess the origin of the errors. Then the errors were put under two terms, L1 transfer errors and other type of errors. By other type of errors it means some intra-lingual errors like grammatical ones and also some errors whose sources could not be identified like omission of articles before nouns.

In order to increase the reliability of the result, an EFL teacher whose native language was English was asked to read the essays and underline the structures which she found to be odd or non-native. There was a high correlation between the researchers' and the native speaker's interpretation and identification of the problematic structures.

Short term effect analysis did not reveal any significant sign of decrease in L1 transfer errors but the analysis of essays written three months after the treatment sessions revealed a significant decrease in the number of L1 transfer errors. In order to find the reason, an interview with the participants was held (the results are presented in the following sections).

The second research question asks about the percentage of different types of L1 transfer errors in intermediate Iranian EFL learners' written production. In order to come to the answer, 25 essays written by 14 students of the same essay writing class from which my four main participants took part were collected. These essays then were analyzed by the researcher and the teacher through applying the same plausible interpretation explained before in order to identify L1 transfer errors. Then these errors were classified through using the taxonomy of sources of errors presented in Keshavarz (2010).

Results

The first research question asks about the efficacy of G-DA on improving L1 transfer errors in Iranian EFL students' writings. Although the analysis of the recorded data does not reveal any sign of elimination of such type of errors during the four sessions, it shows some important findings all of which are in line with the efficacy of feedback, DA, and more significantly G-DA on improving not eliminating L1 transfer errors. The result is presented here through explaining some on the spot examples which are some episodes extracted out of the transcribed data:

Episode 1, session 1

01: **T** (read the essay) I like to know about it more and more.

02: (5 s pause)

03: **Z** This is in Persian, حالا ببین

04: **T** exactly. In Persian we say: دوست دارم بیشتر و بیشتر در موردش بدونم

05: I like to know more..., you see I said "I wanna know more about them".

06: If a native speaker of English wants to say this, s/he says so.

07: **M** I like to know more about it?

08: **T** Yes.

In the first episode extracted out of the first session, the first error which is considered to be an L1 transfer error was highlighted; "I like to know about it more and more". This type of error is due to the fact that in Persian it is said "du:stdarambishtarobishtarbedanam", the literal and erroneous translation of which is "I like to know more and more". According to Tarone's classification (1981), the literal translation of the mother tongue structure is a subcategory of borrowing which is a subcategory of communicative strategies. Communicative strategies along with inter-lingual transfer, intra-lingual transfer and context of learning are identified as four sources of errors in the second language context by Brown (2007) and some other scholars like Keshavarz (2010).

In the first line of this interaction the teacher reads the sentence. Then in 2, She pauses for 5 seconds in order to indicate there is a problem in the sentence. None of the three participants start talking till the writer, Z, jokes about the sentence and says "it is surely an L1 error". The teacher then asked her if she had the Persian sentence in mind when she was writing the erroneous utterance the answer to which was positive. The analysis of the following episodes reveals that this type of explanations on the origin of the errors can make the students conscious about the existence and dominance of such an error in their utterances. In this short extract, as this is the first interaction on the identified error, the teacher does not let students think more and come to the answer by themselves, so a real G-DA does not happen.

The participation of M (Mina), another student, is mentionable in this episode because it reveals that even if the writing of one of the student is under discussion, the writer is not the only one who interacts with the teacher but the other students listen carefully and participate actively when an issue arises; they have an active role in their learning process; This is a factor which according to SCT can improve the quality of their learning.

Episode 2, session 1

01: **T** (Reading) before studying teaching English I [have]...

02: **M** [This is] in Persian in some way

03: **Z** We say English language, don't we?

04: **M** Not exactly, the sentence is written totally in Persian.

05: **Z** I wanted to represent TEFL.

06: (2 seconds pause)

07: **T** look, as your friend aptly recognized, this is written in Farsi structure; در رشته ی ا قبل از اینکه خوندن آموزش انگلیسی رو شروع کنم.

08: **Z** Yes, I had this structure in my mind.

09: **T** you should know that there are some specific words to use when you want to talk about a major.

10: Now make a guess.

11: **M** Before starting TEFL majoring (she stopped here , lowered her voice to a whisper)

12: **Z** This is in Farsi or correct at the end?

13: **T** (laughing)

14: **M** Here we can't use "before".

15: **T** No, no problem with "before". I mean *teaching English language* is problematic.

16: **R** Teaching English as a foreign language.

17: **T** Before studying...

18: Tell me what you mean by "studying teaching English"? do you mean before choosing TEFL as your major?

19: **Z** We don't say "English language" in English?

20: **T** no, not in this context. What she means to say is that she is now studying in a major that teaches her how to teach English. This is TEFL.

21: **Z** Aha

22: **T** But you shouldn't say "before studying"

23: when you say "studying" it means in a short period of time you wanna study it, but if it is your major, this sentence is incorrect and it is certainly Persian structure.

24: it means you thought in Persian that: قبل از اينکه آموزش زبان انگليسي بخونم

25: **Z** Yes.

26: **M** Should it be "before starting"

27: **T** Before starting my major in TEFL.

28: **Z** Oh, should it be like this?

29: **T** OK.

30: **M** We just should think.

31: **SS** (laughing)

The first error results from the fact that in Persian the word /khandan/ is used for both studying and reading. According to Keshavarz (2010) this type of inter-lingual error called cross-association happens when there are two or more words in the target language for which there is only one word in the learner's mother tongue. As a result, the learner may use that single word in two senses in the target language.

The second error in this sentence is the result of the literal translation of /amuzeshenglisi/ from Persian for TEFL. Although the writer was familiar with the word TEFL, she uses the wrong equivalent because of the dominance of L1 in the process of her thinking.

In the second episode which occurred immediately after the first one, one of the students, M, instantly identified the L1 transfer errors in the sentence. In line two, she shows that she understands the problem but she is not sure yet. Unlike the first episode, the teacher remains silent in order to let students to negotiate and move in their group ZPD and solve the problem as much as they can. In line 7, when the teacher guesses her students cannot move by themselves, she participates in the conversation to provide some explicit explanation about the problem. At first, she reveals the source of the erroneous utterances, then she explains how to avoid such an error. In 10, she lets students think and come to the answer by themselves through applying the points mentioned. M tries to find the correct equivalent, the teacher remains silent until she realizes that M cannot continue anymore. At this point, the teacher recites the wrong utterance in the sentence which leads the third student, R, to participate and come to the correct answer in 16. In 18, the teacher asks the writer to clarify her exact intention of writing such a sentence. This was a question the answer to which could help the teacher to provide the appropriate feedback on the error. Through providing appropriate feedback by the teacher, M is able to come to the correct form in line 26, and in 30 the same student says: "we just need to think more" which shows that she is becoming aware of the causes of the errors and their abilities in dealing with them.

In this episode, the immediate sign of identifying the L1 transfer error may, but not surely, reveal that the students are becoming aware of the existence of such errors and their sources. According to inter-language theory proposed by Selinker, being aware of an error is the first step in dealing with it and can help the learners avoid fossilization of the error.

Although M identified the error, she could not come to the correct equivalent, and it is in such a case that the teacher can guess the ZPD of the individual student. At this point, the teacher who was silent, participated in the conversation and taught the students how to deal with the problem through strategy training. Through G-DA the teacher has the opportunity to provide a large amount of information to her students, an opportunity which is missed in the usual way of providing feedback "WCF", in which a teacher mostly corrects the problematic words or structures or just defines the nature of them.

In line 8, Z's confirmation of the teacher's guess reveals that the teacher as a native speaker of Persian and nonnative speaker of English can guess the sources of the errors made by her students. A large number of such cases in these four sessions of interaction can provide more evidence on Corder's (1981) suggestion that a teacher who is familiar with the student and his or her native language can guess the origin of the errors.

Line 18 reveals another merit of DA; through interaction the teacher is able to ask questions and come to a clearer idea about her students meaning and background knowledge, so she can provide the most appropriate feedback to them. This is another positive point which is missed in WCF in which the teacher is not able to interact with the students unless this is a dynamic WCF.

Episode 3, session 4

01: **T** (reading) it is important to keep healthy and playing soccer is a good way to do this.

02: **M** do we say keep healthy?

03: **T** no, keep healthy

04: **Z** be healthy?

05: **T** um?

06: **Z** do not we say be healthy?

07: **T** yes, yes sorry. Be healthy.

08: **F** no, I mean keep, I mean remain, aha stay healthy

09: **T** yes, very good, to stay healthy.

10: **F** I could correct myself, how good!

11: **T** ok, any other problems?

12: (4 seconds pause)

13: **M** way?

14: **T** no, to do this.

15: **Z** isn't it correct?

16: **T** , to do this refers to what?

17: **F** keep healthy

18: **M** [stay healthy]

19: **T** ok,. You mean playing soccer is a good way to بهش برسین

20: **F** [yes]

21: **T** so what? What do we use?

22: **SS** to ...!!!

23: **M** achieve

24: **T** very good, to achieve it. It is important to stay healthy and playing soccer is a good way to achieve it.

25: **SS** (laughing)

The last episode is extracted out of the last session of the treatment. The essay under discussion is written by F.

Two errors have occurred in this sentence: "keep healthy for stay healthy" and "to do this for to achieve this". The reason for the occurrence of the first error is that in Persian the equivalent of "keep" can be used for "staying healthy" as well as other usages so this is a cross-association error which is transferred from L1. The second error "to do this" is a literal translation of the Persian equivalent /barayeanjame in kar/.

This extract is a good example of DA in which the teacher scaffolds the students step by step to achieve a goal, here the correct form of two errors. In line 2, M can identify the problem but she is not sure about it. The teacher accepts the identified error but she does not provide the correct form to assess the ZPD of the group and see if there is anyone who can come to the answer without extra scaffolding. In 4, Z provides a

correct form but as this alternative is not the exact meaning of the writer, she rejects it in 8 and tries to clarify her meaning, an effort which leads her to come to the correct word and modify the sentence herself. This self-correction can show the level of her ZPD; her ZPD is surely upper than the ZPD of a person who is not able to correct herself.

In 11, the teacher asks about any other errors in the sentence. 4 seconds wait time leads M to guess wrongly. So in 14, the teacher identifies the error without any more explanation. In 16 she provides another hint for the students to come to the answer but when they do not do so, she clarifies the origin of the error by providing some explicit explanations in 19. This explicit clue leads M to come to the answer in 23.

This extract is also a good example of G-DA in which all of the students participated and developed the ZPD of group through the teacher's scaffolding.

Discussion of the research question

During these four sessions there was no sign of elimination of L1 transfer errors. Even there was no sign of systematic improvement of students in identifying the supposed errors. For example in the second episode which occurred in the beginning of the first session, one of the students was able to immediately identify the L1 transfer error but in the last episode which occurred in the last session none of the students could identify the error till the teacher directly pointed to that.

Considering Ferris's comment that the feedback which is provided on untreatable errors should be combined with strategy training and direct correction, in the present study DA was hypothesized to prepare an appropriate atmosphere in which the teacher is not only able to provide different types of feedback_ arranged from implicit_ in line with the needs of the students but also she can teach them some strategies to help them to get rid of the errors or at least to avoid them. But this hypothesis did not hold true. The reason could be related to the feature which differentiates untreatable errors from treatable ones; Untreatable errors unlike treatable ones that are rule governed, are those for which there is no hand book or set of rules students can consult to avoid or fix those types of errors like word choice or sentence structure(1991). In spite of the awareness raising of students on the existence and dominance of inter-lingual errors in their speech, this procedure was unable to help students get rid of the errors in the four sessions of treatment.

The second language literature on the role of DA on improving in different skills of L2 like listening (Donato,1988; Ableeva,2008; Alavi et al.2012) and writing (Isavi,2012; Hartshorn et al.,2010; Xiaoxiao,2010) and also on acquiring different elements of L2 grammars (Nassaji&Swain,2000; Poehner,2009; Lantolf&Poehner,2010) have proved the efficacy of DA. Although some of the studies did not discuss in terms of DA, all of them applied the process of DA in which the teacher tried to simultaneously assess what students were able to do alone and what they were able to do by the others' help through step by step scaffolding. The same result has been reached in the present study; it is applicable to make an interactional atmosphere in which a group of students participate and each of them improves their ZPD while the ZPD of the group is improved. In this, all of the students not just the writer, participated in the interaction and tried to find and solve the problem. As we can see, the last episode declared that their friends' mistakes are theirs too and they do commit such an error in their own writing, so they can benefit from the interaction.

The qualitative analysis of the four sessions and also the interview with the students immediately after the sessions and after three months have proved that the only merit of applying G-DA as a way of feedback on the upper intermediate students' L1 transfer errors was consciousness raising of the students on the errors. But one should bear in mind that consciousness raising on the origin and dominance of L1 transfer errors is a great advantage because according to inter language theory proposed by Selinker if the learners are not

helped to be aware of the sources of language transfer errors in the early stages of language learning, the error continues to appear in performance regardless of further exposure to the target language; in other words, it is fossilized in the inter language of the learners.

In this study the teacher was able to help her students to be aware of the sources of this type of errors by both providing feedback and more metalinguistic explanation on them through applying G-DA. Although G-DA had no specific short term effect on L1 transfer errors but indirectly it showed some important long term effect through awareness raising.

Short term and long term effect of consciousness raising

Most of the studies concerned about the short and long term effect of CF have compared the efficacy of direct and indirect CF to examine which one leads to more long term effect. The results are different and inconclusive; for example Ferris (2006), Hendrickson (1980) and Lalande(1982) proposed that for writing development, indirect WCF may be more valuable for the long term than direct CF. Lalande (1982) and James (1998) argued that direct WCF is preferable because it requires reflection and problem-solving on the part of the learner, leading to more long-term growth in writing/self-monitoring ability. On the other hand, three recent studies by Van Beuningen et al. (2008, 2012) and Bitchener and Knoch (2010b) reported that, even though there were positive short-term effects for both direct and indirect feedback, direct error correction had a more significant long-term effect than indirect CF. The superior long-term effect of providing L2 writers with meta-linguistic feedback was also reported by Sheen(2007) in her study of intermediate L2 writers.

According to Guenette (2007), the contradictory results in the same field and on the same issue may be because of the dissimilarity among the participants of different studies. As was mentioned by Bitchener (2012): " it is clear that further research is needed to clarify the relative effectiveness of all types of indirect and direct feedback when given to L2 writers of different proficiency levels".

In the present study, G-DA provided an atmosphere in which the students could benefit from all types of direct and indirect CF along with metalinguistic explanation on the supposed error type. Although the applied technique did not lead to any significant short term effect like the elimination or reduction of L1 errors in the students writings _the writings written by the participants immediately after the treatment sessions_ but the interview with the participants immediately after the treatment sessions and also the analyzed interaction between the teacher and students have proved that they became totally conscious about the existence and dominance of L1 transfer errors in the process of their production in L2. As was proposed by all of the participants, they have never been concerned about these errors in their writing. "I was just concerned about developing different parts of my writing, and writing down whatever was in my mind and writing accurately" one of the participants said.

As strategy training for avoiding L1 transfer errors, the teacher provided different information during the four sessions all of which led to awareness raising in the participants. Firstly she explained that the pattern of thought of the people of any language is different, for example Iranian people prefer to talk more, use larger sentences, connect different sentences through conjunctions and explain more. But native speakers of English are totally different; they tend to use shorter sentences and talk directly without any more explanation. Then she mentioned that this is the reason why your writings are full of redundancies and repetition of similar ideas. And as a strategy training, she suggested reading on a topic before writing about it. All of the participants in an interview conducted three months after the treatment sessions claimed that these type of meta-linguistic information could help them to think more on the pattern of their thought and try to control it during their writing. Two of them said that they have tried to avoid the sentences they guessed to originate from L1 through using internet, asking their friends or an expert like a teacher. The

other one said she has a notebook in which she writes different chunks which she receives as inputs from the environment like the teacher or books. As an example she said that for concluding an essay she used to say "as you saw_ the literal translation of Persian structure_ or as was mentioned above, but now she uses some chunks like 'to sum it up'. One of them also mentioned that instead of spending time on free writing or outline preparing, she first reads some articles on the topic and then starts writing. She said that this can help her to collect some collocations and chunks related to the topic and then write fast and easily without being concerned about the readers' misunderstanding of her meaning.

This delayed interview was held when the researcher analyzed the writings of the participants written after three months. The number of L1 transfer errors was significantly reduced and also in two of the writings it was eliminated. So in order to find the reason, the researcher held an interview the result of which was briefly presented above.

In order to examine the short term and long term effect of G-DA, the only result of which was awareness rising, the students were asked to write an essay one week after the last session and also an essay after three months, then they were compared with the essays written before the treatment sessions.

Through applying the plausible interpretation of erroneous sentences proposed by Corder (1981), the teacher and the researcher identified L1 transfer errors in the students' essays. The results reveal that long term effect is more than short term effect, as the number of L1 transfer errors has decreased significantly in the essays they wrote after three months.

errors	number	percentage
Inter-lingual	40	65%
Other types of Errors	21	35%

Table 4.1 Frequency of errors before the treatment

Errors	Number of errors	Percentage of errors
Inter-lingual	25	55%
Other type of errors	20	45%

Table 4.2 Frequency of errors one week after the treatment

Errors	Number of errors	Percentage of errors
Inter-lingual	9	32%
Other type of errors	19	68%

Table 4.3 Frequency of errors seven months after the treatment

As the tables show, the number of inter-lingual errors was reduced in the long run in comparison to short run effect of awareness raising. In these tables, other type of errors refers to intra-lingual errors like overgeneralization, grammatical errors like subject verb disagreement and also some errors the origin of which could not be identified like omission of articles before nouns.

Research question 2

The second research question asks about the most frequent L1 transfer error in upper elementary student writers' writings.

In order to prevent the researcher's prejudice on categorizing the errors, she applied the sample-based categorization. In sample-based categorization, the researcher should first collect the data errors _ here through plausible interpretation_ and only after the initial interpretation and analysis of errors should s/he establish an appropriate taxonomy (Keshavarz,2010).

In the late 60s and early 70s empirical studies emerged with the realization that many kinds of errors, in addition to those due to mother tongue interference, were apparent in learners' language. Observations by scholars such as Richards (1971, 1974a) initiated numerous investigations into sources of errors other than mother tongue interference as was claimed by CA. Richards (1971) points out that the limitation in certain rule-learning strategies gives rise to errors which are not caused by L1 interference, but by wrong application of learning strategies. The sources of these errors are discovered within the structure of the target language itself, and some of them result from faulty teaching techniques. He calls these types of errors inter-lingual and developmental.

There are some categorizations of errors in the literature of second language like Dulay and Burt (1972), Corder (1975). Corder (1975) distinguishes three types of errors with respect to their sources: 1) inter-lingual errors, 2) intra-lingual errors, 3) errors which are caused by faulty teaching technique.

After an initial interpretation and analysis of the errors, in the present study the researcher applied the categorization provided by Brown (2007). Brown (2007, p.265) identifies four sources of errors: 1) inter-lingual transfer 2) intra-lingual transfer 3) context of learning 4) communication strategies.

Before analyzing the collected data, the researcher presupposed that all of the wrong words, phrases, clauses and sentences which reflect a certain structure or culture of L1 should be labeled under the umbrella of inter-lingual transfer errors. But the subcategories of four sources of errors introduced by Brown revealed that most of the L1 errors should be put under the category of communication strategies. By definition, inter-lingual errors result from the transfer of phonological, morphological, grammatical, lexico-semantic, and stylistic and cultural elements of the learner's mother tongue to the learning of the target language (Keshavarz,2010). Phonological transfer which occurs only in oral production should be put away in the present study as the data is written production of L2 students.

Transfer of morphological elements: refers to the transfer of morphological features. For example, the following erroneous sentence results from the fact that in Persian nouns do not agree in number with quantifiers. And consequently the plural morpheme is omitted: ***there are three clever student in our class.*** As it was not possible for the researcher to identify the most probable source of these errors, she put them under the category of other types of errors consisting of intra-lingual and developmental errors, and the errors whose sources are not clear.

Transfer of grammatical elements: refers to the transfer of grammatical feature of mother tongue. Consider the following erroneous sentences extracted out of the data in the present study: "***people are eating better foods todays.***" This type of error is due to the fact that in Persian the present tense and the present progressive aspect have one single syntactic representation. Hence, Persian learners of English usually confuse these two and use them interchangeably. As the participants of the present study are upper

elementary L2 learners, it is obvious that they know the grammar of present and present progressive tense but because of the dominance of their L1 structure they use word for word translation of L1 structure. As these types of errors mostly reflect the literal translation of L1 structure, it is put under the category of literal translation which according to Tarone (1981) is a sub category of communication strategies.

Transfer of lexico-semantic elements: errors in this category may be divided into two sub categories: 1) cross-association, and 2) false cognate. Cross-association, an important case in the present study, refers to cases where there are two or more words in the target language for which there is only one word in the learner's mother tongue. As a result the learner may use the wrong alternative in a specific situation. The following errors are made by some of the participants in the present study: "it is interesting to see the reflection of light on the river level" for on the surface of the river, "the summer is finished" for the summer is over, "you can use some techniques to absorb all the students' attention to the speaker" for to attract the students' attention to the speaker. As we can see in the following table, this type of error is the most frequent type. The second sub category, false cognate, refers to a word which has the same or very similar form in the two languages, but which has a different meaning in each. No false cognate, or false friend as was named by Newmark(1988), has been found in the data of the present study.

Transfer of cultural elements: refers to the transfer of cultural features of the learner's mother tongue. In Persian, for example, titles such as Mr. and Mrs. Can be used before a professional title so the following error may happen: "Mr. teacher is coming". No transfer of cultural element has been found in the written production of the participants in the present study.

Communication strategies are another source of errors in foreign and second language context. They are used when the learner is forced to express himself with the limited linguistic resources available to him. In other words, these strategies refer to the learner's tactics to bridge the gap between his limited linguistic knowledge and his communication needs by using elements which are not linguistically appropriate for the context (Keshavarz,2010). Tarone (1981) proposes the following classification of communication strategies: 1) paraphrase 2) borrowing 3) appeal for assistance 4) mime 5) avoidance 6) prefabricated patterns 7) appeal to authority. In line with the purpose of the present study, the second sub-category, borrowing, is gone into detail here. Borrowing refers to a word, phrase or sentence which has been taken from one language and used in another language (Richards et al., 1985, cited in Keshavarz,2010). Borrowing can be discussed under two headings: 1) language switch: the learner uses the native-language term without bothering to translate. 2) literal translation: the learner translates word for word from the native language. As we can see in the following table, the literal translation of native language on the word, phrase and sentence structures are the most frequent L1 transfer errors. The following literal translation errors have been committed by the participants of the present study: " before teaching the new lesson, teachers should make an introduction" for teachers should warm up, "finally, when I went to high school, I went to institute and continued there my English", "teachers should keep their students attention", "I became knowledgeable about English there". All of these examples reflect the certain structure of Persian as the native language of the present work.

For answering the second research question, 20 essays _about 30 pages_ of upper elementary student writers were collected. These essays were analyzed through applying Corder's(1981)plausible interpretation of erroneous sentences in order to obtain the sources of the errors. The following two tables present the most frequent errors, and the most frequent L1 transfer errors_based on the mentioned description_ respectively.

Error	percentage	example
L1 transfer errors	67%	1) for being fluent in English academically one should dominate upon all the three skills. 2) first they need teacher`s or a classmate`s help to regulate themselves according to the class climate .
Other type of errors	33%	1) If they do poor in something they feel somehow guilty and want to compensate it. (wrong conditional sentence). 2) Speaking has got some features such as it needs interaction, gaining automaticity, and being familiar with the style of language. (wrong parallelism) 3) Let`s suppose you have find a person to talk with. (wrong verb form) 4) Let`s to go into the details that “what makes speaking difficult?” (wrong verb group) 5) you should go there and see how eye-catching is its wonderful nature and ancient and historic (monumental. subject verb disagreement). 6) in laser surgery surgeon can do its job without any cutting (omission of article, disagreement in a noun group)

Frequency of errors

L1 transfer errors	percentage	example
Literal translation	68%	Parents are models of children. When I went to high school, I went to institute and continued there my English.
Cross-association	32%	You can walk alongside the birds take a seat near them and see their flying above your head. Teachers should create an objective .

Frequency of L1 transfer errors

As the frequency analysis has proved the most frequent errors in the written production of Iranian students of EL are L1 transfer errors. The result of the frequency analysis has proved that both teachers and researchers should be more concerned about L1 transfer errors not just about grammatical errors which are less frequent in L2 writing.

Also, the second table shows that literal or word for word translation of L1 structure on the word, phrase and sentence level is the most frequent L1 transfer errors in the written production of Iranian students of EL. So the EL teachers should inform their students about the dominance of the error and teach them some strategies to avoid the error.

Discussion of research question two

The second research question in the present study asked about the most frequent L1 transfer errors in intermediate and upper intermediate Iranian EFL learner writers' essays. Based on the taxonomy presented in Keshavarz (2010), two types of L1 transfer errors were identified: literal translation, and cross-association _ definitions are presented in the previous section. The frequency analysis explained in the previous section, proved that literal translation of Persian language on the level of word, phrase and sentence is the most frequent L1 transfer error type.

This is worth mentioning that, identifying the L1 transfer errors was so difficult in nature. Although L1 transfer is not a new trend in studies on second language acquisition, it is still hard to define, classify and identify. Identifying second language (L2) errors is crucial for any error studies for theoretical and pedagogical purposes. However, the very act of detecting such errors seems to be intuitive and hence inexplicable. The only systematic and imitable method available is probably the error identification procedure suggested by Corder (1973). It has several weaknesses (see Ellis 1994, for a critical evaluation), but nevertheless it can be useful for diagnosing errors. Interpretation is a fundamental requirement in the procedure, and two kinds of interpretations are particularly useful: 'authoritative' and 'plausible'. In the case of authoritative interpretations, learners are asked to re-express their intentions in their first language (L1), which they previously expressed in erroneous L2 constructions. These L1 utterances containing their original intentions are later translated into L2 to arrive at correct versions of the erroneous constructions. In the present study, the application of the DA procedures made it possible to make use of authoritative interpretation, especially whenever the instructor was not sure of the source of the error. However, since the writers of the erroneous constructions are not always available, teachers and/or error-investigators have to rely on plausible interpretations, in which case investigators themselves reconstruct the original intentions of the writers contained in idiosyncratic utterances by focusing on the particular context of language production.

Arguably, the error analyst may or may not be successful in correctly reading the mind of L2 learners in their erroneous utterances. In fact, deviation from their original intentions is expected because 'interpretation is less than a precise science' (Obaidul,2007,p. 108).

This kind of interpretation and identification of errors, especially when we are talking about L1 transfer errors, is based on intuition and experience because by L1 transfer error we mean the transfer of L1 thought pattern to L2 production; this transfer is something that happens in the mind of a learner which is not observable. This makes the identification of L1 transfer errors so difficult.

Nevertheless, in the second phase of the study where the researchers had to go through sample essays to identify and categorize the most frequent types of errors, we agreed with Corder's speculation that "It is fair to assume that we can make a correct plausible interpretation of the great majority of the erroneous sentences produced by learners, particularly if we are familiar with them and with their mother tongue" (1981, p. 43).

So many of SL researchers, in language transfer domain, (Sadeghi,2009; Naderi,1997; Seddighi,2010; Bennui, 2008) have tried to identify the dis/similarities between their native language and English as a second language, through applying contrastive analysis principles in order to help their SL teachers to identify the areas of difficulty for their ESL/EFL learners. In an article, Lu (2010) analyzed the common errors in university students' writing. He mentioned native language transfer on sentence, discourse and word level, as one of the most important and obvious sources of errors in the process of SL learning. The same result has been achieved in the present study. As the table 4.4 shows L1 transfer errors are the most frequent errors in the written production of the participants in this study.

Most of these studies have tried to categorize the most common L1 transfer errors in their participants' output_ mostly in form of written production. For instance in Izzu's study (1999) whose participants were Japanese ESL learners, L1 transfer on preposition use was so evident. In another study by Sadeghi(2009), a comparative analysis of Persian, as L1, and English, as L2, collocations with respect to lexis and grammar was investigated. He mentioned that : " teaching experience at schools, private language centers, and universities in Iran suggests that a significant part of EFL learners' problems with producing the language, especially at lower levels of proficiency, can be traced back to the areas where there is a difference between source- and target-language word partners" (p100).

The question posed in the second research question was another effort to shed further light on the most common L1 transfer errors in written production of Iranian upper elementary students. These types of studies have some immediate implications for both SL teachers and also material developers who should take into account the probable areas of difficulty for each group of learners with different native languages.

Conclusion

The main purpose of the present study was to examine the impact of a new approach to corrective feedback on EFL learners' errors. An important feature of this study was the innovative approach it took toward the way through which feedback was provided and also the choice of target errors, L1 transfer errors. In this approach, the teacher did not provide written feedback to any individual, even she did not participate in a one to one interaction with any of them, instead of this, she provided feedback to a group of the participants through applying group dynamic assessment during a classroom interaction.

According to Ferris et al. (2012) there is a specific gap in the recent research on the role of different types of feedback that is so obvious and it is almost startling: the lack of careful consideration of individual learner characteristics as they receive, process, and apply WCF. It means that a direct feedback which is useful for an individual, may not be appropriate for another individual. In the present study, the teacher was able to provide different types of feedback -arranged from more implicit to more explicit- with considering the needs of the students in different stages of language learning through applying DA.

DA proponents have shown a strong preference for one-to-one, mediator-learner procedures (Poehner, 2009). As was mentioned before, this feature is a major challenge to implementing DA in second language (L2) classrooms because these contexts, due to the number of the students, typically do not permit the one-to-one interactions between a teacher and any individuals. So some of the researchers (Donato, 1988; Gibbons, 2003; Poehner ,2009; Alavi et al., 2011) have tried to move from a one-to-one model of teaching and assessment to a group-focused approach. All of these classroom-based studies have proved how collective scaffolding (Donato, 1994) could pave the way for establishing distributed help among learners within the social space of the class in the course of which secondary and primary interactants mutually benefit from each other's contributions (Alavi et al., 2011, p.28).

The conversation analysis in the present study also showed the applicability of G-DA in our second language classrooms and also its efficacy on providing an interactional atmosphere in which the students not only can benefit from the interaction between them and the teacher, but also they can benefit from each other's contribution.

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