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STUDY OF DEMOTIVATED VS. MOTIVATED EFL LEARNERS' PREFERENCES TOWARDS TEACHERS' ORAL ERROR CORRECTION

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to compare the possible differences between demotivated vs. motivated EFL learners' preferences toward teachers' oral error correction, including the necessity, frequency, timing, type, method, and delivering agent of error correction. To this end, 141 Iranian EFL learners at the departments of foreign language in Zabol and Sistan and Baluchestan universities participated in this study. The learners' preferences for error correction questionnaire, the demotivation questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations were used to collect the data. The results of independent sample t-tests indicated that there were no significant differences between the two groups regardless of their demotivation level toward oral error correction. The findings revealed five suggestions: firstly, errors should be corrected and sometimes to be corrected. Secondly, correcting errors "after the student finishes speaking" was the most appropriate time among the two groups. Thirdly, "serious spoken errors that may cause problems in listeners' understanding" and "frequent errors" should be corrected more than other errors. Fourthly, "elicitation" and "explicit feedback" were the most popular methods of corrective feedback among the two groups. Finally, teachers were the most preferred person to deliver corrective feedback. Furthermore, the results of the observation data showed that what students received as error correction in oral classes were not in line with what students preferred to be corrected. Pedagogical implications for providing oral error correction have also been discussed.

Keywords: *oral corrective feedback, demotivated learners, motivated learners, preferences, EFL learners*

INTRODUCTION

If the strategies used to correct errors don't meet students' preferences subsequent negative attitudes may emerge. This is why teachers should consider students' preferences for being corrected (Hyland, 2003). The role of oral corrective feedback in foreign language learning has been a highly problematic task which most language teachers and students are faced. There is a controversy among researchers on whether error correction would be beneficial or rather harmful in developing second language learning (Krashen 1982; Park 2010). According to researchers (Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Park, 2010), the positive effects of error correction improve the quality of language learning and foster students' motivation to continue learning. On the other hand, the negative effects of error correction may prevent language development, because error correction may result in some misunderstanding between teachers and students that could make the state of anxiety and demotivation. As Song (2005) stated there are many reasons that cause some

students become demotivated such as teachers' behaviors and teaching methods, inadequate school facilities, learners' reduced self-confidence, and the course books used in language classes. To Song (2005), the most important factor is the way teacher correct students' errors. Any mismatches between teacher practices and students preferences could be the source of students' demotivation (Kern, 1995) as cited in (Rastegar & Homayoon, 2012). The findings of some studies that were conducted by different researchers (Schulz, 2001; Hamouda, 2001; Firwana**,** 2010; Abedi, 2015, Farahani & Salajegheh, 2015) indicate that there are some differences between the teachers' teaching practices and the learners' preferences toward error correction. According to Nunan (1988, p.177), "one of the most serious blocks to learning is the mismatch between teacher and learner expectations about what should happen in the classroom." Many foreign language researchers believe that such a gap between teachers and students' preferences is harmful and can affect learning consequences (Green, 1993; Schulz, 2001).

The possibility of such disparity force teachers to take into account students' preferences to be sure that what they use as a correction method is consistent with what learners prefer to receive (Schulz, 1996; 2001; Diab, 2005). If successful language learning is based on matching the preferences of teachers and students, it is more significant for teachers to recognize the perceptions of demotivated and motivated learners on oral error correction because this can help teachers to know how different learners prefer to be corrected in speaking classes and how they should correct students to increase language learning and to lower their demotivation level. Although, teachers should be familiar with learners' preferences for corrective feedback and in spite of a few studies that have conducted on learners' preferences toward error correction, what seem to be neglected is the preferences of EFL learners toward oral error correction with reference to their demotivation level. Therefore, this research will investigate the preferences of demotivated vs. motivated students toward oral error correction that would be an important subject matter for researchers.

Therefore, this issue encouraged the researchers to carry out a study to fill the gap in the related literature and pave the way for the better understanding of oral error correction. To this aim the following research questions are presented:

1. Are there any differences between preferences of demotivated vs. motivated EFL learners toward teachers' oral error correction regarding necessity, frequency, timing, type, method, and delivering agent of error correction?
2. What are the strategies of oral error correction used by EFL teachers and whether the strategies have any effect on students' demotivation or not?

METHOD

The study used mixed-method research designs by applying two questionnaires, a semi-structured interview, and classroom observations to triangulate the data. Combination of both quantitative and qualitative analysis would provide the most comprehensive picture of the data in the present study. Data from questionnaires can be combined with data from interview and observation to strengthen interpretations and gather more practical and reliable data (Griffe, 2012).

The participants in this study are 141 intermediate EFL students consisting of 62 males and 79 females who were studying at the departments of

foreign language in Zabol and Sistan and Baluchestan universities and 15 EFL teachers teaching in these universities. The participants selected randomly from fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh semester who are majoring in English Teaching and Translation. The participants' age ranged from 20 to 26 years old, while the teachers' years of teaching experience ranged from 4 to 18 years.

The data collected were then analyzed by using SPSS software. Based on the students' responses to the demotivation questionnaire, students were classified as demotivated or motivated group. Regarding the division of learners into demotivated and motivated group, the highest score of the demotivation scale was added to the lowest score of scale and then divided by two to gain the cut-off point. 70 students were divided into a demotivated group and 71 students divided in motivated group. After dividing the learners into two groups on the basis of the cut-off point criteria, independent sample t-tests was performed in order to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between two groups regarding their preferences toward teachers' oral error correction.

The next step was analyzing and categorizing semi-structured interview items. Students' responses were recorded and noted down and then transcribed and analyzed until the major themes are extracted. Based on this analysis, the most important and recurrent themes were categorized and interpretations were made by emphasizing differences and similarities between the group samples.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Necessity of error correction

Item 1 of the questionnaire was related to the necessity of oral error correction. Table 1 shows the mean responses of demotivated group (M =3.986) and motivated group (M = 3.817) that indicate there was no significant difference between preferences of the demotivated and motivated students toward necessity of oral error correction. Demotivated students were more willing to receive error correction than motivated students.

Interviews data indicated students from both the demotivated and motivated groups unanimously agreed with the necessity of error correction and expressed error correction helps them to identify their mistakes and prevent them from not making the same error again. Most of students agreed in receiving error treatment. Majority of students explained that they learned more when their errors were corrected.

Table 1. *Comparison of responses on the necessity of error correction*

Groups	N	Mean	Std deviation	T-value	P
Demotivated	70	3.98	0.732	.165	>0.05
Motivated	71	3.81	0.703		

*Note *< 0.05*

Frequency of receiving corrective feedback

The second question asked students how often they want their teacher to give corrective feedback on their spoken errors. Regarding the differences between the two groups on their opinions about the frequency of oral error correction, the results in Table 2 indicate that there was not a significant difference between the demotivated (M= 3.343) and motivated students (M= 3.465).

The results of interview didn't reveal any differences among the demotivated and motivated students. Majority of students in both groups expressed that they prefer their teachers to correct them sometimes and usually when they make an error, for example, student 3 told:

"*I would like my teachers not always but sometimes correct my errors because if errors aren't corrected, those errors might fossilize and if errors are corrected always cause I lose my confidence to speak.*"

Table 2. *Comparison of responses on the frequency of error correction*

Groups	N	Mean	SD	T-value	P
Demotivated	70	3.34	1.075	.498	>0.05
Motivated	71	3.46	1.053		

Note *< 0.05

Timing of error correction

Regarding the timing of error correction, there were no significant differences among the demotivated versus motivated students toward the appropriate time to correct students' oral errors. The comparison of responses on the timing of error correction is showed in the following table.

Table 3. *Comparison of responses on the timing of error correction*

Timing	Groups	N	Mean	SD	T-values	p
As soon as errors made	DE	70	2.32	1.201	.842	>0.05
	MO	71	2.36	1.031		
After finishing speaking	DE	70	3.87	0.947	.660	>0.05
	MO	71	3.94	0.998		
After the activities	DE	70	3.52	1.046	.121	>0.05
	MO	71	3.26	0.940		
At the end of class	DE	70	2.48	0.989	.967	>0.05
	MO	71	2.47	0.969		

*Note *< 0.05*

As table 3 shows that there were no significant differences among the demotivated versus motivated students toward the appropriate time to correct students' oral errors. Of four categories of timing of error correction, "after the student finishes speaking" among both the demotivated group (M=3.871) and motivated group (M= 3.944) received highest mean as the most appropriate time to correct students' oral errors. "After the activities" received the second most appropriate time of oral correction among both groups of the students. Then, "as soon as errors are made" received the lowest mean from the demotivated (M=2.329) and motivated group (2.366).

From interview among 20 EFL students, most of them wanted their errors to be corrected "after the student finishes speaking". For example, in this respect Student 6 said:

> "when we are speaking in class, our teacher interrupts us immediately and not let keep on our speaking. I feel it would be better if teacher correct me at the end of my speaking".

Then, Student 18 told:

> "It is better correction to be at the end of speaking because this

technique is more effective and it helps you without any stress learn the reason of erroneous utterance. And this method leads us be motivated and keep on our communication without any interruption."

Student 12 stated:

> *"I don't like immediately correction because if teacher correct me as I speaking I will be confused and distract my attention, so I can't keep up my speaking." Student 17 told: "I think it's good if the teacher corrects after the students finish their speaking and it is not good to correct when I am speaking because sometimes you speak so fast it causes you forget where the error is".*

While the majority of the interviewed students from two groups preferred *after the student finishes the speaking* a few of learners, for example, three students in demotivated group liked "*at the end of the class"* teachers correct their errors. As student 7 said:

> "As soon as I start talking, the teacher cuts me and corrects me. I feel fear in the class and cause I lose my self-esteem. So I don't like to talk in the class when immediately teacher corrects me, he should cuts me at the end of class, this method causes other students don't recognize my mistakes since in front of other students cause I embarrassed and feel shy."

Therefore, the interview responses indicate students, regardless of demotivation level, had high preferences for delayed correction than immediate correction. One justification for the findings may be students have not any motivation to immediate correction because it interrupts students' speaking and it discourages students to continue their speaking. These findings are in line with Kaivanpanah, Alavi, and Sepehrinia's (2012) study that stated majority of students prefer delayed correction over immediate correction. Delayed correction provide an opportunity for teachers and students to complete the negotiation of meaning before engaging in the negotiation of form (Rolin–Lanziti, 2006) as cited in (Farahani & Salajegheh, 2015).

Types of errors that should be corrected

For the fourth question relating to the five types of errors, there were no significant differences between the preferences of the demotivated and motivated group regarding types of errors that should be treated. Of the five types of errors, serious spoken errors that may cause problems in a listener's understanding in both the demotivated group (M= 3.700) and motivated group (M = 3.803). Frequency of errors among the demotivated (M=3.700) and motivated group (M =3.662) had the highest mean among the responses. Infrequent errors in demotivated (M=2.771) and individual errors in motivated group (M=2.789) received the lowest mean.

Table 4. *Comparison of responses on the types of errors that need to be treated*

Types of errors	Groups	N	Mean	SD	T-value	*p*
Serious errors	DE	70	3.70	1.095	.550	>0.05
	MO	71	3.80	0.935		
Less serious	DE	70	2.91	0.944	.723	>0.05
	MO	71	2.85	0.899		
Frequent	DE	70	3.70	1.095	.823	>0.05
	MO	71	3.66	0.909		

Infrequent	DE	70	2.77	1.119	.557	>0.05
	MO	71	2.87	0.925		
Individual	DE	69	2.97	1.163	.292	>0.05
	MO	71	2.78	0.844		

*Note *< 0.05*

The interview result revealed, among the motivated learners, five students favored to serious spoken errors, five favored to frequent errors that received highest mean among motivated learners. Among the demotivated learners, six students believed in serious spoken errors that had the highest mean responses and three students responded to frequent errors. As student 15 stated: "*the purpose of speaking is understanding and fluency, if I don't understand what others say it makes me confused and I don't have any willingness to listening."* Student 10 told*: "I like my teacher correct serious spoken errors that interrupt understanding and comprehension, in speaking, accuracy isn't important so there is no need to correct grammatical words but it is better to correct content words that hint to comprehension and meaning."* Student 5 told*: "it is better if my teacher corrects global errors since if they aren't corrected will cause misunderstanding. But for local errors, it is not necessary to correct them. Even with local errors we understand the main point of communication."*

For "*frequent spoken errors"*, most of students believed these errors should be corrected because these errors become a habit and will be fossilized. As student 1 states: *" the errors most of times occur are more important than infrequent errors, so these errors should be corrected because it will cause a bad habit and will be fossilized and after that it takes many times to be corrected."* Student 14 told*: "it would be better if my teacher correct frequent errors, because if they aren't corrected, they stick in the mind and recognizing these errors from the right forms are difficult."*

These findings show that both groups did not like if their teachers correct all errors, most of them were eager teachers to correct serious errors that cause misunderstandings and also frequent errors that cause fossilization in class. As Burt (1975 cited in Park 2010) states correcting global errors clarify the intended message more than the correction of several local errors.

Methods of corrective feedback

Of the eight types of corrective feedback, elicitation was the most effective method of corrective feedback among both the demotivated and motivated groups. "Explicit feedback" among both the demotivated and motivated group received as the second most effective method of correction. Then, "Metalinguistic feedback" among both groups ranked as the third effective methods of error correction. "Repetition" in the demotivated (M= 3.457) and "recast" among the motivated learners (M= 3.507) ranked as the fifth effective methods of error correction. "No corrective feedback" was the least favorite method among the students in the demotivated and motivated groups. The qualitative results suggested that students of both groups had almost similar preferences for types of feedback. Students more favored elicitation that ranked in the first place, followed by explicit feedback, then metalinguistic cues, and finally clarification request.

Table 5. *Comparison of responses on the methods of corrective feedback*

Methods	Groups	N	Mean	SD	T-value	*p*
Clarification	DE	70	3.357	0.979	.098	>0.05
	MO	71	3.070	1.060		
Repetition	DE	70	3.457	0.988	.532	.0.05
	MO	71	3.352	1.001		
Implicit	DE	70	2.943	1.166	.531	>0.05
	MO	71	3.056	0.969		
Explicit	DE	70	3.729	0.883	.533	>0.05
	MO	71	3.817	0.798		
Elicitation	DE	70	3.871	1.006	.110	>0.05
	MO	71	4.127	0.877		
No corrective feedback	DE	70	2.557	0.987	.314	>0.05
	MO	71	2.746	1.227		
Metalinguistic	DE	70	3.686	0.956	.376	>0.05
	MO	71	3.535	1.053		
Recast	DE	70	3.371	1.038	.443	>0.05
	MO	71	3.507	1.054		

*Note *< 0.05*

In the case of the students who had a preference for explicit feedback they expressed that they liked explicit explanations such as Student 8 stated: "*explicit feedback helps us to remember the reason behind the error, this method cause errors stick in our mind and remember it whenever it occurs. Therefore this method is more memorable."* In the case of the students who had a preference for elicitation method, Student 15 suggested: *"I want to have an opportunity to repair my errors by responding to the teacher's request that cause I fix my ill-formed utterances."* Student 4 told: "*I think elicitation is an essential method for correction of oral errors, it facilitates self-correction."*

Majority of students ranked explicit feedback and elicitation over implicit feedback since directly correction points to place of errors, reasons of errors, and how to correct errors. Regarding elicitation as most effective method of corrective feedback, Lyster and Ranta (1997) found that elicitation is most effective error correction technique regardless of learners' level of proficiency. These findings were like the findings of Ur's (2012) study in which explicit correction was the most favored corrective feedback strategy.

Delivering agents of error correction

The sixth category asked the demotivated and motivated students about their preferences for providers of error correction and there were no significant differences toward delivering agents of correction among the two groups. Of the three types of providers of error correction, teachers were the most favored agent in both groups and students themselves were the second favored agent among both groups. Classmates were the least favored agent among the students both in the demotivated and motivated groups. Most of students believed that teacher has the correct answer and their classmates are unable to correct their errors. In this regard, student 14 told: *"How can my classmate correct me when he is a student like me?!! He cannot correct me because he has limited knowledge. The teacher knows better and is full of academic knowledge."* Student 16 told*: "teachers*

have a majority of methods for correcting errors of students and know how to correct in an appropriate way and in specific situation and context."

Further, a few of them preferred self-correction, for instance, Student 11 stated*: "when my classmate corrects me, she can tell me I correct your errors I have more knowledge than you. I feel uncomfortable when my classmate corrects me, it is better if I correct the errors by myself."* While most of students emphasized on teacher-correction since teacher has the correct answer, two of them in the demotivated and motivated group liked to be corrected by their classmates as student 5 stated: "*I would like my classmates correct me because I feel relax, and my learning will be better."* The results are consistent with the findings of previous studies which indicated learners preferred teachers to other correctors (Kaivanpanah *et al.,* 2012; Katayama, 2007).

Table 6. *Comparison of responses on the delivering agents*

Agents	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t -values	p
Classmates	DE	70	2.657	1.306	.646	>0.05
	MO	71	2.761	1.357		
Teachers	DE	70	4.229	887	.836	>0.05
	MO	71	4.197	0.904		
Students themselves	DE	70	3.700	1.147	.186	>0.05
	MO	71	3.437	1.204		

Note *< 0.05

Classroom observation

For gathering practical data to observe which technique is useful for students to increase their motivation and which technique is harmful, eight speaking classes of different teachers were observed.

As it was observed, regarding timing of oral error correction most of the teachers immediately corrected oral errors followed by delay correction. When teachers corrected students' errors immediately and as soon as errors were made, students didn't have any willingness and have no motivation to communicate. For example, they feared to continue to speak because of possibility of making more mistakes, and when they keep up their conversation, most of them changed volume of their voice; either they speak slowly or very fast. Some of students avoided their eye contact with the teacher. Therefore, students' quietness and apparent inactiveness may be a manifestation of language demotivation. But, when the teachers corrected after students finished their speaking or when the main point of their sentences was completed, students showed their agreement with teachers by shaking their head. So, this is an indication that this method can be more satisfying for students and can cause students' motivation to increase.

Regarding types of errors, most of teachers corrected pronunciation errors frequently followed by grammatical errors and then pragmatic errors. When teachers corrected pragmatic errors, students continued their speaking with high motivation but when teachers corrected students' pronunciation and grammatical errors, they become nervous and continued speaking showing no willingness. According to Renko (2010), pragmatic errors are less embarrassing than grammatical and pronunciation errors.

Classroom observation demonstrated that teachers used recast

more frequently and students repaired recast less than explicit and metalinguistic feedback. As the researcher observed, recast was not useful for error correction because in most of classes when teachers recast students' errors, they confused to attend teachers' intention. This can indicate students' preference of direct feedback rather than indirect and it seems direct feedback has less effect on increasing students' anxiety and demotivation. Clarification request were ambiguous and unclear since the students couldn't recognize what errors they committed and in addition, clarification request caused students to become demotivated since they didn't understand the purpose of request. For example, when one student committed a pronunciation error the teacher said: *what!!!!* Or *I am sorry…I don't understand your answer please repeat it again.* Regarding metalinguistic correction, most of students liked this method because when teacher gave a clue that their utterances were erroneous, for example when one student erroneously used past tense in place of present tense, teacher gave a clue that you speak about present tense then student recognized his error and revised it. Generally, explicit and metalinguistic feedback lead students to have more motivation to keep up their conversation than clarification request and recast. As the researcher observed regarding explicit feedback, students recognized why they committed an error and by shaking their head showing their agreement with teachers. This can be an indication that explicit feedback lead students have high motivation to speak.

Regarding providers of error correction, as the researcher observed most of students preferred teacher correction than self-correction and peer-correction. When teachers corrected students, they felt relaxed than when their classmates and students themselves corrected them. Based on the observation, when the teachers corrected students, they continued speaking with more willingness but when the teacher asked their classmates to correct other students they looked unhappy and nervous, for example they frowned and grumbled that why others corrected them. On the other hand, when teachers asked students to self-correct their errors most of them were silent and remained fully quiet because they were afraid of making another error while answering and correcting themselves. Therefore, they didn't have any motivation to self-correction.

CONCLUSION

Data analysis showed that, regardless of demotivation level, both groups of demotivated and motivated had similar preferences and there were no significant differences among preferences of demotivated and motivated learners toward necessity, frequency, timing, types, methods of error correction and delivering agents of error correction. The learners in both groups preferred to receive corrective feedback when they make errors, regardless of their demotivation level. Regarding the frequency of errors, over 50% of both the demotivated and motivated group wanted their errors to be corrected sometimes. Regarding the time of oral errors, delayed correction was preferred as the appropriate time of oral error correction. This was also reported in the study of Rolin-Lanziti (2006) who believed delayed correction provides an opportunity for teachers and students to complete the negotiation of meaning before engaging in the negotiation of form. Among the types of errors that needed to be corrected, serious spoken errors and frequent errors were preferred as the most important types of errors.

Of the methods of corrective feedback, direct methods such as "elicitation", "explicit correction", and "metalinguistic" were the three most effective methods for both demotivated and motivated learners. While, "no corrective feedback" and "implicit correction" were the least effective methods for both demotivated and motivated learners. These findings are inconsistent with Long's (2007) claim who suggests recasts are the most effective type of corrective feedback than explicit feedback in facilitating second language learning. For "delivering agents of corrective feedback", most of the learners in both demotivated and motivated groups considered teachers as the main source of error correction whereas, peer correction received the lowest mean among both groups as least effective source of corrective feedback. These results are consistent with the findings from some previous studies (e.g., Kaivanpanah et al., 2012; Katayama, 2007) which indicated that learners preferred teachers to other correctors. Based on the observation data, it can be concluded that what students received as error correction in oral classes were not in line with what, when and how students preferred to be corrected. Therefore, according to Kern (1995) any mismatches between teacher practices and student preferences especially in the context of error correction can be the sources of students' anxiety and demotivation.

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Monkey

A guy walks into a bar with his pet monkey. He orders a drink and while he's drinking, the monkey jumps all around the place. The monkey grabs some olives off the bar and eats them. Then grabs some sliced limes and eats them. Then jumps onto the pool table, grabs one of the billiard balls, sticks it in his mouth, and to everyone's amazement, somehow swallows it whole.

The bartender screams at the guy "Did you see what your monkey just did?". The guy says "No, what?" "He just ate the cue ball off my pool table-whole!". "Yeah, that doesn't surprise me," replied the guy. "He eats everything in sight, the little bastard. Sorry. I'll pay for the cue ball and stuff." He finishes his drink, pays his bill, pays for the stuff the monkey ate, then leaves.

Two weeks later he's in the bar again, and has his monkey with him. He orders a drink and the monkey starts running around the bar again. While the man is finishing his drink, the monkey finds a maraschino cherry on the bar. He grabs it, sticks it up his butt, pulls it out, and eats it. The bartender is disgusted. "Did you see what your monkey did now?" he asks. "No, what?" replies the guy. "Well, he stuck a maraschino cherry up his butt, pulled it out, and ate it!" said the bartender. "Yeah, that doesn't surprise me," replied the guy. " He still eats everything in sight, but ever since he swallowed that cue ball, he measures everything first..."

(Source: http://www.study-express.ru/humour/funny-stories.shtml, picture: www.google.co.id)