The Effects of Gradual and Indirect Feedback on EFL Learners' Grammar Development and Beliefs

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Abstract

Corrective feedback has received significant attention in English language teaching, and its role has been highly substantial. Considering the importance of corrective feedback in EFL classes, this study aimed at finding the effects of indirect and gradual CF on Iranian EFL learners' grammatical development and their beliefs toward CF. Twenty EFL learners, meeting the criterion of being lower-intermediate in their proficiency, participated in this study and were divided randomly into two groups of indirect and gradual CF. An Oxford Placement Test, Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994) regulatory scale, error correction test, writing tasks, and Corrective Feedback Belief Scale were used as data collection instruments. The indirect group received indirect CF based on cognitive theory and the gradual group received feedback based on Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994) regulatory scale for four sessions. The findings obtained from Mann-Whitney U tests revealed that the gradual group which received CF based on sociocultural theory was better able to overcome the problems related to simple present and present progressive tenses than the indirect group which received indirect CF based on cognitive theory. The findings also indicated that all learners, both gradual and indirect, preferred receiving CF and both groups always preferred to be corrected and likewise, both groups considered the teacher as the main provider of CF. The results of this study suggest that gradual feedback based on learners' ZPD was more effective in improving EFL learners' grammar development. In conclusion, these findings support the idea that social interaction is a prerequisite for cognitive development.

In the process of learning a second/foreign language, committing errors is common. As influenced by Skinner's behavioristic views, second language learners' errors were regarded as evil signs of deficiency in language teaching and learning and teachers and students made every attempt to prevent its occurrence (Keshavarz, 2015). In L2 learning, errors were not seen as a sign of deficiency anymore, rather they were regarded as an indispensable feature of the process. Language educators today believe that actual learning will only take place when learners commit errors and receive good corrective feedback (CF) from their teachers (Ellis, 2009). One of the major concerns and critical aspects of second language (L2) teaching is how to deal with learners' errors. As Alavi and Kaivanpanah (2007) believed, giving appropriate, clear and optimal feedback helps learners develop their language abilities. In other words, feedback plays an essential role since it is considered as vital in improving and consolidating learning (Hyland, 2003). It is also essential for the teachers to see which types of CF are preferred by the students. Thus, some researchers have also studied students' perceptions of CF (Greenslade & Felix-Brasdefer, 2003; Havranek, 2002; McGuffin, Martz & Heron, 1997; Rahimi, 2010; Ranjbar & Zamanian, 2014; Zacharias, 2007).

Both quality and accuracy of students' written performance will improve if their written errors are treated properly (Ferris, 1999, 2004; Hedgcok & Lefkowitz, 1994; Lee, 1997, 2004; Rahimi, 2009). Despite the arguments by Krashen (1982) and Truscott (1999a) regarding the ineffectiveness of the corrective technique, teachers still provide feedback to their students. The problem is that teachers are not always certain how effective their feedback is and how the students perceive it.

Goldstein (2001, as cited in Rami, 2012) stressed that research about CF "has mainly been non-social and non-contextual, focused mostly on texts and

the teachers provide feedback and the students revise" (p. 3). Learning and teaching should be viewed as essentially social activities (Lantolf, 2000) rather than cognitive. In this regard, few studies are carried out in the context of Iran especially about providing feedback within learners' zone of proximal development (ZPD). Most of the CF studies just focused on feedback from the cognitive perspective and few studies considered the effect of CF based on both cognitive and sociocultural theories in a single study. Besides, even though students' beliefs toward CF are viewed as being indispensable in developing their writing abilities (Diab, 2005), until now, few research studies investigated learners' belief toward cognitive and sociocultural CF simultaneously. To fill the abovementioned gap, this study investigated and compared the effects of two types of CF, SCT-based and cognitive-based, on EFL learners' grammatical development. SCT-based feedback entails feedback concerning the learners' ZPD which requires graduated, contingent and dialogic feedback through collaborative negotiation between tutor and tutee, and cognitive feedback operationalizes as indirect written feedback in the form of a hint which asks learners to correct the error. In addition, an attempt was made to see the possible differences in the learners' belief when receiving ZPD-based and cognitive feedback.

Literature Review
Sociocultural Theory (SCT) and CF

Sociocultural theory (SCT) is based on Vygotsky's concepts of scaffolding, mediation, and ZPD. SCT believes that language learning occurs in dialogic and social interaction and it is not as a result of the interaction (Lantolf, 2000). From the SCT perspective, feedback is considered social that needs mutual participation of learners and teachers in constructing meaningful conversations, which leads to development (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994). The purpose of CF in SCT is to assist learners to achieve self-correction by providing implicit to explicit CF strategies. In SCT, the feedback is a dialogic

interaction that allows an expert (teacher) to create a context in which learners can participate actively in their own learning (Anton, 1999). The correction is carried out when the teacher and the learner have a conversation with each other about the errors. It allows the construction of a ZPD – "the distance between the actual developmental levels as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Nassaji & Swain, 2000, pp.35-36). The learners are helped to use linguistic forms that they cannot employ and use independently. Successful ZPDs enable the student to be less dependent.

According to SCT, there is no single and preferable type of feedback and CF should be graduated in order to provide the learner with a minimal level of assistance needed for repair to occur. This includes finding the least explicit type of correction that helps learners to correct their errors by themselves. The SCT emphasizes the roles played by both teachers and learners within the specific pedagogic context of CF (Ellis, 2008). To operationalize the idea of feedback within the learners' ZPD, Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) introduced a scale which showed the gradual nature of the assistance provided by the teacher to scaffold learners in their written work. The scale employed a range of implicit to explicit corrective moves used by the tutor to help learners correct their errors.

Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994) study was purely descriptive, but it paved the way for SCT-based studies on feedback provided to EFL/ESL learners. In a follow-up and often-cited study, Nassaji and Swain (2000) conducted a comparative study and considered whether the ZPD feedback was more effective than the non-ZPD or random feedback. The results indicated that negotiated and ZPD-based feedback led to more learning than random feedback. It was also revealed that more direct and explicit CF led to better results when learners were provided with non-negotiated feedback. Lavasani (2010) also conducted a study on the role of SCT-based feedback in an EFL

context. In doing three writing tasks, learners received a three-stage procedural CF, starting with metalinguistic implicit feedback moved to metalinguistic implicit-explicit feedback and finally, explicit correction was given. The results indicated that learners' errors in their last draft diminished to half in contrast to their second writing.

In another related study, Nassaji (2011) investigated the impact of oral negotiation in fixing learners' written errors. Two types of negotiated feedback, one limited and another unlimited were compared with one non-negotiated direct reformulation, and the results revealed the superiority of negotiated feedback over non-negotiated. These results recommend that while oral feedback with negotiation can have positive effects on learners' accuracy, the degree of its effects may also depend on the type and nature of the linguistic target. Çepni (2016) compared the effects of graduated and explicit feedback on students' writings by investigating interactions that occurred between L2 writers and their teacher. The results revealed that graduated feedback led to more self-correction than explicit feedback.

Cognitive Theory and CF

Language learning is a view from the perspective of cognitive theory as an individual cognitive process which is mainly dependent on learner's cognitive capacity. From the perspective of cognitive theory, there are different types of CF and researchers within this domain are in search of the most effective type of feedback strategy on learners' development. CF strategies in this view can be explicit or implicit (Erlam, Ellis, & Batstone, 2013). Implicit or indirect CF indicates that students have errors but the teacher does not correct them. As indirect CF has the advantage of encouraging learners to reflect on linguistic forms, it is often preferred to direct CF. Indeed, as it enables learners to self-correct, it is more effective for long-term learning and retention (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). In contrast, an 'explicit correction' is defined by Lyster and Ranta (1997, p. 46) as "the

explicit provision of the correct form. As the teacher provides the correct form, he or she clearly indicates to the learner that what the student said was incorrect". Carroll (2001) claimed that explicit CF provides direct guidance to the learners on how to fix their errors, and is likely to be more productive and useful than implicit CF. In this regard, it is desirable and effective for low proficiency learners and as Sheen (2007) suggested, it can be effective for the acquisition of specific grammatical features.

A considerable amount of L2 research has been conducted to scrutinize the effects of different types of CF strategies and to find the most effective strategy in eradicating learners' errors. Ferris and Roberts (2001), in an experimental study, examined learners' revision of grammatical errors and revealed that those who received both underlining and coding performed better than those who were given just underlining. In addition, both groups significantly outperformed the control group, and it was concluded that less explicit feedback was as effective as corrections coded by error type in helping students self-edit. In the same line to compare the effects of different CF types, Shintani, Ellis, and Susuki (2014) found that direct correction is more effective than metalinguistic feedback, especially for complex syntactic structures. In a more recent study, Karim and Nassaji (2018) considered the short-term and long-term effects of two types of indirect and one type of direct comprehensive CF on L2 learners' revision accuracy and a new piece of writing, and found that all the CF groups significantly outperformed the control group in their revision of writing.

Shirazi and Shekarabi (2014) investigated the impact of indirect and direct CF on the writing performance of a group of Iranian learners who were learning Japanese as a second language. Direct feedback as well as three types of indirect feedback including underlining, translation, and coding were used to see which CF type makes a difference in students' correct usage of prepositions, noun phrases, and adjectives during one semester. The results showed higher accuracy for experimental groups in the use of all linguistic

features, and just the direct CF boosted the linguistic features of learners' written performance, with indirect CF had no or little role. Jamalinesari, Rahimi, Gowharyb, and Azizifar (2015) compared the effectiveness of indirect and direct CF on learners' writing and found that indirect feedback was more useful and effective than direct feedback in improving learners' writing.

In a relatively recent and more related study comparing the effects of SCT and cognitive CF on learners' errors, Erlam, Ellis, and Batstone (2013) assigned 15 students to graduated (n= 7) and explicit groups (n = 8). Learners in the graduated group received graduated feedback based on SCT and the explicit group was provided with explicit or direct feedback in accordance with the cognitive-interactionist theory. The results revealed the superiority of graduated feedback in helping learners fix their errors and self-correct, while explicit feedback was less effective and successful in achieving a resolution and promoting self-correction. Although self-correction was promoted through graduated feedback, no evidence of a reduction in the level of assistance was found over time. Moreover, explicit CF led to less self-correction, but it was achieved at a faster rate.

Students' Beliefs on CF

Many English language teachers provide their students with feedback to aid their language development, and as Schulz (1996, 2001) emphasized, students' beliefs and perceptions towards teaching methods have a chief effect on their achievement. Therefore, it is vitally important for teachers to know their students' beliefs and preferences for CF to maximize the potential positive effect of CF on language development. According to Ferris (2004), considering students' perceptions is essential because researches on students' beliefs and preferences about CF indicate that students feel unsatisfied when their preferences and expectations are not met. Other researchers confirm the importance of examining students' beliefs and preferences to provide them

with the type of CF that is satisfying for them. Brown (2009) also states that students' perceptions and beliefs may be indispensable for effective second language acquisition and finding a clear picture of students' beliefs and perceptions can lead them to acquire correct forms. Therefore, some studies attempted to uncover EFL/ESL learners' beliefs toward CF, some of which are reported and reviewed in this section.

The results of the majority of CF belief studies reveal that learners have a positive attitude toward receiving CF, but there are some differences considering who should provide CF and which errors should be corrected. Lim (1990), for instance, found that Singapore students had a positive attitude toward peer correction and they preferred their grammar errors to be corrected first, then vocabulary, spelling, the organization of ideas, and punctuation errors. Her findings revealed that students wanted to have an active role in fixing the error, but they indicated that the teacher had the central role in correcting the students' errors. Hedgcock and Lefkowitz's (1994) survey study compared ESL and EFL students' preferences for receiving feedback and found that both groups had a positive attitude toward written CF. Another survey study conducted by Grami (2005) revealed that Saudi university students strongly desired to receive CF from the teachers and believed that CF was essential and quite useful.

Katayama (2007) explored the issue more and examined students' attitudes toward oral corrections, their preference for correction of different kinds of oral errors and their preferences for specific correction methods, and revealed that students showed a preference for correction of pragmatic errors over other types of errors and had positive attitudes toward teacher CF. Students wanted and preferred their teacher to give an indication which might help them to notice the error and correct them. Rahimi (2010), likewise, examined the feedback preferences of learners' on several grammatical features as well as their beliefs toward feedback types used by the teacher. Also, the effect of their writing ability on their views about the significance of

teachers' feedback on various errors was examined. Results indicated that most of the learners valued and expected feedback from teachers on transitional words, sentence structure, verb tenses, adverbs, punctuation, prepositions, and spelling, respectively. Moreover, it was revealed that their views about the significance of teachers' feedback on various error types were impacted by their level of writing ability.

Unlike studies that examined just students' beliefs toward CF, Zacharias (2007) explored both students' and teachers' beliefs towards CF, and the findings of this mixed-method study showed that generally students and teachers have a noticeable preference for teacher feedback. Students also showed a strong desire for feedback directed to linguistics forms and believed that feedback on the form was more effective. Moreover, it was indicated that teacher feedback contributed significantly to students' emotional and affective states. Ranjbar and Zamanian (2014), similarly, attempted to investigate learners' and teachers' preferences for error correction on writing in the EFL context of Iran. They also aimed to find the possible relationship between the most preferred type of feedback and the participants' personality type. The results indicated no relationship between participants' personality type and their opinions about the method, delivering agents of error correction, as well as the features of the language to be corrected. Both teachers and students agreed that grammatical errors in writing should be corrected, and error identification which provided the correct form along with an explanation was the favorite CF type. However, considering the agent of error correction, there were different opinions among teachers and students; students believed errors should be corrected by teachers, while teachers preferred students to fix their own mistakes. Likewise, Roothooft and Breeze (2016) studied EFL teachers' and students' attitudes to oral CF and found that students preferred to be corrected, expressed much more positive attitude toward explicit types of CF than their teachers, experienced positive emotions when receiving CF and reacted positively to receiving immediate CF on their oral production.

The Present Study

Previous studies on CF were mainly focused on finding the most effective CF strategy/type in treating learners' errors in a non-negotiated manner and few studies examined the effect of ZPD-based negotiated feedback on learners' development. Moreover, the vast body of research on CF explored the impact of different CF types from the vantage point of a single theory, either cognitive or SCT, and few considered the effect of CF based on both theories in a single study. Furthermore, language teachers can give more effective feedback to their students by observing their beliefs and preferences for CF, but the available literature did not examine students' beliefs on CF based on both cognitive and SCT in a single study. To fill these gaps, the present study investigated the impact of two types of CF, one based on the cognitive theory which is called indirect and another based on SCT which is called gradual, on the development of two grammatical features, namely simple present and present progressive tenses, in EFL learners. In addition, their beliefs towards these two types of CF were examined and compared to see any belief difference between learners who receive indirect and gradual CF concerning the necessity, frequency, and provider of feedback.

In this regard, the present research aims to find answers to the following questions:

1. Are learners receiving gradual CF significantly different from the learners receiving indirect CF in developing the knowledge of English simple present and present progressive tenses?
2. Are learners receiving gradual CF significantly different from the learners receiving indirect CF in their beliefs towards the necessity and frequency of CF?
3. Are learners receiving gradual CF significantly different from the learners receiving indirect CF in their beliefs towards the providers of CF (Teacher CF, self-correction, peer-correction)?

Method

Participants

The participants of this study were 31 Iranian EFL students, male and female, from Iran Language Institute (ILI), located in Ramian, Golestan province. As a random selection of participants was not feasible and intact EFL classes were selected, the study employed a quasi-experimental research design that used pretest, treatment and posttest procedure after assigning groups randomly to gradual and indirect CF groups. After taking the OPT, twenty learners meeting the criterion of being lower-intermediate in their proficiency were selected as the final participants. The learners' ages ranged from 11 to 15 and they were assigned randomly to one of the two groups: Indirect CF group (n= 10), and the gradual CF group (n =10).

Target Structure

The study's target structures were simple present and present progressive tenses. The simple present tense is the first tense structure learned by EFL learners and like any form which is learned for the first time, it posed difficulty for learners. In addition, for EFL learners who are struggling to produce accurate structures, learning simple present tense as the first tense structure seemed essential and vital. Present progressive was also selected as it was usually introduced to the learners after simple presents, and the idea of using this tense for actions that are in process posed difficulty for EFL learners. These target structures were also selected after consulting with some EFL teachers who were teaching the same proficiency level students.

Instruments

Oxford placement test. An Oxford Placement Test (2001) was used in this study to determine the English language proficiency of the participants and to select homogeneous learners. It consisted of 60 multiple-choice items measuring grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension. Students were

required to complete the test in 60 minutes by selecting the best answer from among the four options. The reliability of the test estimated in a pilot study, using seventy similar students, turned out to be .82 using KR-21 formula, which is a high reliability index.

Aljaafreh and lantolf (1994) regulatory scale. To operationalize the idea of feedback within the learners' ZPD, Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) proposed a regulatory scale which is a practical and comprehensive guide for teachers. It was based on three mechanisms of effective help within the ZPD, which were graduated, contingent and dialogic. Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) believe that feedback is dialogic and social in nature, and "in this framework, error correction is considered as a social activity involving joint participation and meaningful transactions between the learner and the teacher" (Nassaji & Swain, 2000, p. 35).

The13-level scale initiates from the most implicit and continues to the most explicit levels of help. The implicit levels show that learners are in the self-regulation phase, while those explicit levels demonstrate that learners are other-regulated. In level 0 as the first move, no help is actually provided. From level 1 the collaborative help starts and the learner is engaged in the process as a social partner. The tutor starts providing implicit levels of help from level 2, and gradually and step by step moves to more explicit help. If the learner is able to fix the problem and correct the error at any point, the feedback process terminates and no more level of help is given. Likewise, if those implicit levels fail to achieve the desired outcome, more explicit levels will be provided. For instance, if all implicit feedback moves such as reading a section aloud, narrowing down the place of error and indicating the nature of error failed in resolving the problem, the tutor moves to the most explicit level which is offering the correct form. Thus, feedback given at the end of the scale is completely direct and explicit, revealing that the learner is totally other-regulated.

Error Correction Test (ECT). An ECT was designed by the researchers to investigate the effects of indirect and gradual CF on the correct use of simple present and present progressive tenses as the target grammatical structures of this study. It was used as both pretest and posttest and consisted of 20 items, among which, 16 contained present progressive and simple present errors and the rest were distractors included errors related to the article, subject-verb agreement, and use of past and future tenses. Each item contained two related sentences, one of which was underlined and erroneous. Learners were required to find the error and fix it in the sentence. The idea of using ECT was taken from Sheen (2007), and it was piloted to a similar group of participants to check its comprehensibility and the time needed to complete the test.

Writing tasks. Four writing tasks were used in this study, and the learners were asked to write short paragraphs using simple present and present progressive tenses in their writings:

1. The learners were asked to make simple present and present progressive sentences using a table in their coursebook containing four characters, their activities, and time markers of simple present and present progressive. They were given enough time to write. Then, their papers were collected.

2. They were asked to write a paragraph about their everyday activities, their family members, what they were doing in the class and their family members at home at the moment.

3. The learners were asked to write an imaginary email to their teacher, close friend or pen pal, and were required to use simple present and present progressive in their emails.

4. The last writing task was a picture composition. The learners were supposed to look at the reading part of lesson one in their coursebook and the pictures in the lesson, making a story in 20 minutes using simple present and present progressive tenses.

Corrective Feedback Belief Scale (CBFS). Corrective Feedback Belief Scale (CBFS) adapted from Fukuda (2004) was used to investigate learners' beliefs on CF. The reason for using this questionnaire was that it was comprehensive and suitable regarding the purpose of this study. The reliability of CBFS was estimated to be 0.86 based on Zhang and Rahim (2014), indicating acceptable internal consistency for this instrument. The questionnaire had two sections: The first section was designed to collect demographic information of participants such as their gender, proficiency level, and age; and the second section included items in a Likert format designed to investigate learners' beliefs toward the necessity of CF, types of CF, and providers of CF. The scores were based on a 5-point Linkert scale, ranging from" strongly agree" (5) to " strongly disagree" (1). Since the students were not perfect in English, the Persian version of the questionnaire was used to avoid any potential confusion, misunderstanding, or misinterpretation of items. The internal consistency reliability of the Persian version of the questionnaire turned out to be 0.88 using Cronbach alpha.

Data Collection Procedure

The data of the study was collected from ILI, and to observe the ethical consideration, the purpose of the study was explained to the manager of the institute and participants of the study. In the first phase, an OPT was administered to thirty-one learners for the purpose of appointing homogeneous students, and 20 of them who obtained the scores of 28-36 were taken as lower-intermediate level learners and selected as the final pool of participants, which were then randomly divided into two groups: Indirect CF group (N=10) and gradual CF group (N=10).

In the second phase, an ECT was administered to both groups as a pretest to obtain the learners' current level of knowledge of present progressive and simple present tenses.

The treatment lasted for four sessions of 75 minutes for each group; two sessions were devoted to each grammatical feature. Inspired by previous studies on CF, it was believed that two sessions of these types of focused CF would be enough to help learners find the errors and eradicate them. After being trained in using present progressive and simple present tenses, the learners in both groups were asked to write at least one paragraph using simple present and present progressive tenses. The writing tasks used for both groups were the same, but the type of feedback they received was different, as one group was given indirect CF based on cognitive theory, and the other received CF based on ZPD.

For the indirect CF group, just a mark (×) was put next to the incorrect sentence without providing any comments and or explanations about the errors and the correct form. In the next session, the papers were returned to the learners and they could review their papers and correct their errors. In the gradual group, the teacher provided gradual feedback on the grammatical errors and helped the learners step by step in a dialogic way based on 13 levels of the regulatory scale adopted from Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) that moved from the most implicit to the most explicit. Unlike indirect feedback, which was provided in a non-negotiated manner, the feedback provided in the gradual group was negotiated and the tutor followed the steps proposed in the regulatory scale completely. It means the tutor started from the implicit feedback, which is level 0, and moved toward the explicit levels step by step, if there was a need and if learners needed more explicit levels of feedback. The feedback provided for this group followed the three mechanisms of effective help within the learners' ZPD, which stated that help should be graduated, contingent, and dialogic.

At the end of the four sessions of treatment, both groups were given the ECT assessing whether the treatment was successful in enhancing the learners' ability to use simple present and present progressive tenses. After the ECT posttest, Corrective Feedback Belief Scale was used to investigate the

learners' beliefs on the necessity of CF, the frequency of providing CF, and the provider of CF.

Data Analysis

For ECT scoring, the distractor items were ignored and one point was awarded for each sentence containing an error that the learner had successfully corrected. For the CBFS questionnaire, the participants' scores were calculated quantitatively on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from" strongly agree" (5) to "strongly disagree" (1). The descriptive statistics of both groups' scores on ECT and CBFS were reported and the SPSS software (version 22) was used to analyze the results inferentially. Therefore, to investigate the possible differences between the two groups, the test of normality and Mann-Whitney U tests were utilized.

Results
Use of Simple Present and Present Progressive Tenses

To analyze the quantitative data of the study, first, the normality of the data was checked. As the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test revealed that the collected data for both groups was not normal and as the study used a small sample size, Mann-Whitney U tests were utilized to compare the performance of learners from pretest to posttest. Descriptive and inferential statistics of both groups in the pretest and posttest of ECT are presented in table 1. The table indicates the positive effect of both indirect and gradual feedback on learners' performance from pretest to posttest. A Mann-Whitney U test on pretest scores of indirect and gradual groups revealed no difference in the performance of the two groups, p=.90.

To determine the effect of different CF procedures, another Mann-Whitney U test was run on both groups' posttest scores. The mean score of the posttest in the gradual group is greater than that of the indirect group, and the p-value obtained from the Mann-Whitney U test (.00) is less than .05 ($P <$

.05). So, it can be stated that there is a statistically significant difference between the performances of two groups in the posttest. The gradual group which received CF based on SCT was better able to overcome the problems related to two features of the grammar (simple present and present progressive tenses) on the posttest than the Indirect group which received indirect CF based on cognitive theory.

Table 1.

Descriptive and Inferential Statistics (Mann-Whitney U) for Pretest and Posttest of ECT

	Pretest			Posttest		
Groups	Mean	SD.	Sig.	Mean	SD.	Sig.
Indirect	1.30	1.33		5.70	4.02	
Gradual	1.10	.737	**.90**	13.10	3.28	**.00**

Beliefs About the Necessity and Frequency of CF

To prevent any bias in participants' responses and to collect appropriate and reliable data, the CBFS was just administered to both groups at the end of the study to investigate their belief on CF. Shapiro-Wilk test of normality on the scores of both groups in all aspects of learners' belief shows that the data are not normally distributed; therefore, the Mann-Whitney U test, as a kind of non-parametric statistical procedure, would be appropriate for mean comparison.

The descriptive and inferential statistics of the two groups concerning the necessity of CF are shown in Table 2. The mean and standard deviation of the indirect and the gradual groups are 4.70, .48 and 4.80, .42, respectively. To see whether the difference between the mean scores of the two groups is statistically significant, the Mann-Whitney U test was conducted on the scores of the learners. As table 2 shows, the p-value (.615) in the sig (2-tailed) is higher than .05, which shows no significant difference between the two groups considering the necessity of CF.

Table 2.

Descriptive and Inferential Statistics (Mann-Whitney U) for Beliefs of Two Groups towards the Necessity of CF

Groups	Mean	SD.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Indirect	4.70	.48	
Gradual	4.80	.42	**.61**

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of the indirect and gradual groups along with the results of the Mann-Whitney U test for the frequency of CF. The mean comparison which was done using the Mann-Whitney U test shows that the p-value (.655) in the sig (2-tailed) is higher than .05. Thus, it revealed no meaningful difference between the two groups concerning the frequency of providing CF; in this regard, it can be said that both groups wanted their errors to be corrected most of the time.

Table 3.

Descriptive and Inferential Statistics (Mann-Whitney U) for Beliefs of Two Groups towards the Frequency of Providing CF

Groups	Mean	SD.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Indirect	4.50	1.26	
Gradual	4.40	1.07	**.65**

Beliefs of Two Groups towards the Provider of CF

Table 4 summarizes the results obtained from descriptive and inferential statistics related to the provider of CF. The mean scores of participants' answers for different providers of CF indicated that teacher CF received a higher score than self-correction and peer-correction in both groups, which means that learners in both indirect and gradual groups prefer to receive feedback from the teacher. They consider the teacher as the primary and salient source of providing CF. In addition, results obtained from the Mann-Whitney U test revealed no meaningful difference between the beliefs of

indirect and the gradual groups toward the provider of CF (teacher, self-correction, and peer-correction).

Table 4.

Descriptive and Inferential Statistics (Mann-Whitney U) for Beliefs of Two Groups towards the Provider of CF

Groups	Indirect		Gradual			
Provider of CF	Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.	p-value	p
Teacher	4.80	.42	4.90	. 31	**.54**	(P> .05)
Self-correction	2.30	.82	2.00	1.24	**.24**	(P> .05)
Peer-correction	2.30	.82	2.00	1.24	**.68**	(P> .05)

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the effects of two different types of CF, one based on cognitive theory and another based on SCT, on EFL learners' correct use of simple present and present progressive tenses, as well as to compare their beliefs toward the necessity, frequency, and the provider of CF.

The findings indicated that the learners of the gradual group performed better than the learners of the indirect group in the correct use of simple present and present progressive tenses, which means that provision of CF within the learners' ZPD had a significant effect on their performance. The co-construction of meaning in a social and interactive manner resulted in better learning and development in the part of learners receiving gradual and dialogic CF. This finding supports the effectiveness of SCT-based and ZPD feedback which provides a sociocultural context for learning. Thus, the results suggest that mediated help and scaffolding within the learners ZPD was more beneficial for EFL learners than indirect feedback provided in a non-social and non-interactive way. It is, therefore, consistent with Vygotsky's SCT in that knowledge is socially mediated and is acquired in a collaborative, communicative and interactive process between and among teachers and

learners (Vygotsky, 1986). Likewise, Erlam, Ellis, and Batstone (2013) compared the impact of graduated and direct CF on learners' errors and the results revealed that graduated feedback was more useful and effective in helping learners fix their errors. Furthermore, Çepni (2016) in a replication study examined the effect of gradual and direct CF on students' past tense and article errors and the results indicated that the graduated feedback was more effective in students' self-correction.

Another finding of the study which uncovered and compared gradual and indirect groups' belief toward CF revealed no meaningful difference between two groups regarding the necessity of CF. The results indicated that the learners in both groups, regardless of the type of CF, were in favor of receiving CF. It shows that learners themselves are aware of the importance of feedback in improving their language repertoire in the learning process. These results are similar to the findings of related studies in that learners wanted their errors to be corrected and had positive beliefs toward the necessity of providing CF (e.g., Gram, 2005; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Katayama, 2007; Kahraman & Yalvaç, 2015; Lim, 1990; Papangkorn, 2015; Roothooft & Breeze, 2016).

Furthermore, the results show that both groups believed that their errors should always be corrected and there was no difference between the two groups concerning the frequency of providing CF. The results of this part are consistent with the findings of Papangkorn (2015), where the learners wanted to be corrected always. Also, regardless of the types of CF, they mostly preferred their errors to be corrected by the teacher as the prime and main source of providing CF, and there was no belief difference about the choice of correctors between the two groups. It means that all the learners who received CF, either based on SCT or cognitive, believed that the teacher is the best person who can help them in correcting their errors and improving in the process of L2 learning. This finding is in contrast with the findings of Donato (1994), who found that learners themselves are also able to scaffold each other in as effective and helpful way as teachers are able to do. However, the results

of this part parallels the findings of previous related studies in that learners considered teachers as the leading provider of CF (e.g., Grami, 2005; Li, 2004; Lim, 1990; Katayama, 2007; Papangkorn, 2015; Rahimi, 2010; Ranjbar & Zamanian, 2014; Zacharias, 2007).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that the gradual feedback based on SCT was better for learners than indirect CF based on cognitive theory. It is also possible to conclude that learners had positive beliefs toward CF, were in favor of receiving CF and the teacher was viewed as the main provider of CF. The findings also support the idea that language learning happens in the social context and social interaction is a prerequisite for cognitive development. In addition, the results of this study lend support to the interaction and negotiation in the learning process, specifically negotiation within the learners' ZPD. The type of collaborative negotiation provided in this type of feedback help learners to move from inter-mental functioning to intra-mental functioning, which is a transition from dependency to independency.

The findings of the present study could have pedagogical implications for English teachers, policymakers, and material developers. English teachers should be aware of the different strategies of CF, identify the most preferred strategies, and employ the proper strategy that can be effective in enhancing learners' language knowledge. Teacher education programs should present workshops and training that aim at guiding teachers on how to increase EFL learners' writing accuracy by providing different CF strategies in EFL classes. Material developers can provide English teachers with specific guidelines and procedures in teachers' guidebooks for better use of different types of CF to improve EFL learners' writing accuracy.

Future studies can scrutinize the effect of these CF strategies on other grammar structures. In addition, the variables of age and gender of the participants can be taken into account in future studies. Adding a delayed

posttest to the design of future studies would be useful in testing the long-term effects of different types of feedback.

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