

A Case Study of Reactive Focus on Form through Negotiation on Spoken Errors: Does It Work for All Learners?

Vahid Parvaresh, Zohre Kassaian, Saeed Ketabi, Masoud Saeedi

Abstract—This case study investigates the effects of reactive focus on form through negotiation on the linguistic development of an adult EFL learner in an exclusive private EFL classroom. The findings revealed that in this classroom negotiated feedback occurred significantly more often than non-negotiated feedback. However, it was also found that in the long run the learner was significantly more successful in correcting his own errors when he had received non-negotiated feedback than negotiated feedback. This study, therefore, argues that although negotiated feedback seems to be effective for some learners in the short run, it is non-negotiated feedback which seems to be more effective in the long run. This long lasting effect might be attributed to the impact of schooling system which is itself indicative of the dominant culture, or to the absence of other interlocutors in the course of interaction.

Keywords—error, feedback, focus on form, interaction, schooling.

I. INTRODUCTION¹

THE role of negotiation and its effects on language development has recently been given special attention in second language pedagogy [1]-[7]. Pica [8] defines negotiation as interactional strategies which are used in order to search a solution to a problem in the course of communication. It is generally believed that negotiation contributes to language learning first by helping the learners to receive and comprehend the language in a better way, and second by helping them to produce a more acceptable language [10]. In language learning contexts two types of negotiation are usually distinguished: meaning negotiation and form negotiation. In the former the main purpose is to make input more comprehensible and, thereby, solve the communication problems. In this way, those side sequences to the conversational interaction such as asking for clarification or reformulating the produced errors fall into this category [11], [12]-[14]. Form negotiation is, on the other hand, triggered when an interlocutor wants to push the other toward producing a formally correct utterance [15]-[18]. Although it

may be generally assumed that an important source of negotiation in language learning comes from feedback, which is defined as the reactive information which the learners receive in regard to the linguistic and communicative success or failure of their utterances [19], as argued by Nassaji [20], there is not yet a universal agreement among SLA researchers that such focus-on-form activities have any direct impact on L2 *accuracy*. This paper is, in fact, an attempt to add to the findings of reactive focus-on-form studies by investigating whether or not such focus-on-form activities have any impact at all on L2 language learners' accuracy. This study will, moreover, try to see what kind of reactive focus on form will benefit the learners more if it is found that reactive focus-on-form really works.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The role of human mediator is defined in Vygotsky's [21] theory through the notion that each psychological function appears twice in development, once in the form of actual interaction between people, and the second time as an inner internalized form of this function. As a result, one of the major concerns of the sociocultural studies inspired by Vygotsky has been to elucidate how the activities which start as an interaction between the child and the adult become internalized as the child's own psychological functions [22].

Mercer and Littleton [23] briefly summarize the major assumption behind the Vygotskian paradigm in the following way:

Rather than being predominantly based on direct encounters with the physical world, for Vygotsky the construction of knowledge and understanding is an inherently social activity. Thus the child's interactions with other people, notably those who are more advanced and capable members of the society in which the child is growing up, mediate the child's encounters with the world-to-be-learned-about. The sense-making resources of society are gradually made available to the child through participating in the cultural life of the community... Cognitive development is a kind of apprenticeship served by the child

¹Vahid Parvaresh is with the English Department of the Faculty of Foreign Languages of the University of Isfahan, Iran (Corresponding author: email: vparvaresh@gmail.com)

Assistant Professor Zohre Kassaian is with the English Department of the Faculty of Foreign Languages of the University of Isfahan, Iran.

Assistant Professor Saeed Ketabi is with the English Department of the Faculty of Foreign Languages of the University of Isfahan, Iran.

Masoud Saeedi is with Payam-e-Noor University, Iran.

under the tutelage of adults whereby these 'cultural tools' become part and parcel of the child's own mental resources: a process of internalizing the knowledge gained.

Following this line of argument, Vygotsky's general paradigm has been realized in a number of instructional programs [24]-[26]. The focal point of these programs lies in the formation of learning activities. Accordingly, practitioners usually distinguish specially designed learning activities from learning in a generic sense. Learning in a generic sense is a part of many human activities such as playing and practicing practically. Although an important component of these activities, learning, however, does not constitute their goal. What distinguishes learning as a special kind of activity is its focus on changes produced in the learner. The goal of a learning activity is to make the individual a competent learner [22].

An example from Mercer and Littleton [23] might clarify what is usually meant by classroom feedback through interaction. It comes from an English primary school where a pair of children aged 6 to 7 are writing about mythical beasts and fairies on the computer, selecting words from a list provided on the screen. The writing which they will produce is intended to be read by younger children in the school. Eight pupils in the class are working on this task in pairs, and the teacher guides their activity by monitoring each pair in turn. In the sequence below, we see the teacher making a sort of intervention in the activity of two girls, Carol and Lesley.

Teacher: (Standing behind the pair of pupils) So what are you going to put in this one?

(points to the screen)

Carol and Lesley: (muttering, inaudible)

Teacher: Come on, think about it.

Lesley: A dragon?

Teacher: A dragon. Right. Have you got some words to describe a dragon?

Carol: [No.

Lesley: [No.

Teacher: (Reading from the list on their screen and pointing to the words as she does so)

'There is a little amazing dragon.' They could say that, couldn't they?

Carol: [Yes.

Lesley: [Yes.

(Carol and Lesley continue working for a short while, with the teacher making occasional comments)

Teacher: Now let's pretend it's working on the computer. You press a sentence and read it out for me Lesley.

Lesley: (pointing to the screen as she reads) 'Here (pause) is (pause) a (pause) wonderful (pause)'

Teacher: Wait a minute.

Lesley: 'princess.'

Teacher: (turning to Carol) Right, now you do one. You read your sentence.

Carol: (pointing to screen) 'Here (pause) is (pause) a little (pause) princess.'

Teacher: Good. What do you need at the end of the sentence, so that the children learn about [how

Lesley: [Full stop.

Teacher: Full stop. We really should have allowed some space for a full stop. I wonder if we could arrange

(pause). When you actually draw the finished one up we'll include a full stop. You couldn't actually do

it. We'll put it there. (She writes in a full stop) So that when you, can you remember to put one in? So

what are the children going to learn? That a sentence starts with a?

Lesley: Capital letter.

Teacher: And finishes with?

Lesley: A full stop.

Teacher: And it's showing them? (she moves her hand across the screen from left to right) What else is it showing them about sentences? That you start? On the?

Lesley: On the left.

Teacher: And go across the page. (She again passes her hand from left to right across the page)

This sequence includes some examples of the kinds of strategies commonly used by teachers while interacting with children. Selecting particular themes, the teacher elicits responses from the pupils that draw them along a particular line of reasoning on those themes. Additionally, the teacher cues some of those responses heavily through the form of her questions (for example, 'That a sentence starts with a...?'). In pursuing this line of reasoning, the teacher has to elaborate the requirements of the activity; and in fact goes on to *redefine* those requirements (in relation to the inclusion of a full stop). The teacher also defines the learning experience as one that is shared by him/her and the children through his/her use of 'we' and 'let's'.

What is interesting is also how the teacher uses talk, gesture and the shared experience of the piece of work in progress to draw the children's attention to crucial points. The nature of the intervention is to remind pupils of some specific requirements of the task in hand, and as a result guide their activity along a path that is in accord with his/her predefined curriculum goals for this activity. One can, of course, interpret the use of questions as attempts to reduce the degrees of freedom of the activity so as to ensure that its demands did not exceed the capabilities of the children and that the possible directions and outcomes of their efforts were constrained to accord with the specific goals the teacher had set. The sequence might illustrate a teacher using dialogue to provide scaffolding for the children's learning specially since here Carol and Lesley could not have succeeded without the teacher's interventions, but did successfully complete the activity with his/her help [23].

Transferring the notion of interaction into second language pedagogy, SLA researchers have for a long time acknowledged the importance of language as it occurs in

interaction between human beings for the very purpose of making more competent L2 learners. Such researchers have especially been interested in understanding how the adjustments that learners make in their speech that result from overt prompts from other interlocutors in interaction might lead to a more successful acquisition of second language [12], [27]-[30].

Elaborating on social aspects of interaction between second language learners, Swain [31], for example, provides an interesting example of how some actual language learning can be seen to be occurring in the dialogues of second language learners and also how a profitable focus of analysis of language learning and its associated processes may be dialogue within its social and interactionist context. Her example includes two language learners (originally named as G and S) engaged in a task which requires them to choose among a set of alternative applicants and their descriptions a person who is more suitable to get the scholarship:

G: let's speak about this exercise. Did you read it?

S: Yes.

G: Okay. What are we suppose to do?

S: We have to speak about these people and ummm justify our position ... you know our decision ... our decisions about actions in ummm the past.

G: No. I think not just the past. We have to imagine our situation now. We have to give our opinions now.

S: So, for example, I choose Smit because he need it. No ... it's a conditional. I would give Smit ... I would choose Smit because he need the money. Right. I WOULD give ...

G: Needs it.

S: Yes, because he need it.

G: Yes, but no. He needs. 's', you forgot 's'. He needs.

S: Did I? Let me listen the tape. (Listens to the tape). Yes ... yes. He needS. I have problem with 's'. I paying so much attention to conditionals I can't remember 's'. Can you control ... your talking?

G: It's a big problem. I still must remember 'had had'. But we try....

In this example, G corrects S's 'need' to 'needs it'; but, interestingly enough, S responds to G's utterance by saying 'Yes, because he need it', not understanding that G is reacting to a grammatical error. G, therefore, preserves with her focus on form, going on to give the correct form again, telling S how to correct it: 'He needs. "s", you forgot "s".' This focuses S's attention although with skepticism (she plays back the tape) toward the erroneous form. S hears the error, corrects it, and tries to give an explanation for her error by saying 'I paying so much attention to conditionals I can't remember "s".'

However, while the input-interactionist researchers used expert-learner and learner-learner interactions as a way to collect the data for their studies, the focus of this research is, following Hellerman [32], on an individualist, cognitive orientation of learners' acquisition of an individual linguistic

competence that results from interaction and not on the social aspects of the interaction in its own right with the basic assumption that one of the key features of interaction is that it provides learners with an opportunity to attend to matters of linguistic form in the context of meaningful communication [33]. In fact, although case studies have recently attracted a lot of attention in applied linguistics [34], no *individual* case study has up to this point been undertaken to probe into the functions and effects of reactive focus on form through negotiation on *spoken* errors.

Moreover, as argued by Dörnyei [24], Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei [35], and Yin [36], a large number of case studies in applied linguistics have been conducted using more than one participant with the main focus being on *written* not spoken errors. In one seminal study for example, Leki [37] investigated how ESL students would acquire the *written* forms needed for their academic discipline and also how their experience in their non-ESL courses helped shape their acquisition of those forms. In a more recent study, Nassaji [20], too, investigated the effects of reactive focus on form through negotiation on the *written* errors of 10 learners of English, and arrived at the conclusion that negotiated feedback was more effective in helping students identify and correct their L2 writing errors than non-negotiated feedback.

It is also worth mentioning that although individual case studies ranging from the one conducted by Butterworth and Hatch [38], who examined the grammatical development of a 13-year-old Colombian learner of English, to Swain and Lapkin [29], who investigated the nature of language proficiency from the perspective of one single participant have at times been conducted, the presence of an individual study dealing with the effects of interaction on *spoken* errors is felt [39], [40].

Besides, as claimed by Mackey [19], even those researchers who have provided evidence for the beneficial effects of interaction in language classrooms have, in fact, done so in the short term not in the long term, i.e., after the classroom instruction comes to an end.

In short, the focus of this study is on those occasions where learners make use of interactional opportunities to attend to linguistic elements of their communication. Such occasions have been, following Loewen [41] and Nassaji [20], referred to as reactive form-focused episodes (RFFE). For this reason, we examined the role of negotiation in addressing spoken errors produced by an adult EFL learner in an exclusive private EFL classroom. The following three questions were therefore formulated and put into test:

1. How frequently is corrective feedback provided through negotiation?
2. Are language learners more likely to benefit from feedback that involved negotiation than feedback without negotiation?
3. Is the success of feedback dependent on the amount of negotiation?

III. PROCEDURE

Method

This research is, in fact, a case study, which may be understood as the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is – at least in part – to shed light on a larger class of cases. The underlying logic behind case studies in general is the fact that at a certain point it will no longer be possible to investigate several cases intensively. In other words, the fewer cases there are, and the more intensively they are studied, the more a work merits the appellation case study. This case study, therefore, rests implicitly on the existence of a micro-macro link in social behavior with the assumption being that sometimes in-depth knowledge of an individual example is more helpful than fleeting knowledge about a larger number of examples [42].

Context of the study

This study attempts to probe into the role of negotiation in addressing spoken errors in an exclusive private EFL classroom devoted to speaking practice for IELTS preparation held in Isfahan, Iran. A 28-year-old higher intermediate adult Iranian learner of English named Hadi attended this preparatory class two times per week for about two and a half months. The class was taught by a language teacher who had more than ten years of teaching experience and also a native-like proficiency. An important feature of the class was that it was commenced three months after Hadi had taken an IELTS test but had not received the desired mark in speaking. In other words, this class was intended to increase Hadi's speaking ability since he had been able to perform well on the other three skills. For this reason, it can be argued that the activities of this class were not influenced or determined by the activities in other classes. The class time was therefore solely devoted to speaking practice with most of the discussion topics and ideas coming from the books Cambridge IELTS [43] and Insight into IELTS [44].

Data collection and coding

This speaking class was observed and audio-recorded by one of the researchers for 11 times during the course producing a total of 900 minutes of data on which the initial transcription and coding was based. This initial transcription and coding was done by the researcher who had observed and audio-recorded the class with the focus of attention on "reactive form-focused episodes (RFFE)." The boundaries of an episode were also marked, following Nassaji [20], by attention to the erroneous form, which was called a 'trigger', and the correction of the form, which was called the 'resolution'.

The RFFEs were classified into two major categories of negotiation absent and negotiation present. The former category included those instances where Hadi's spoken errors were corrected on the spot by the teacher unilaterally. The latter category, on the other hand, included those instances where the errors were corrected through negotiation. This latter category was also divided, based on the amount of exchanged negotiation, into two categories of limited and extended negotiation [45], [46]. Moreover, negotiations were

also classified into three categories of successful, partially successful, and unsuccessful. Successful utterances were those in which Hadi was able to rectify the whole mistake. Partially successful utterances were those in which he was able to rectify only one part of the error; and unsuccessful utterances, in turn, were those for which Hadi either did not give any answer or gave an incorrect one. The following excerpts might clarify the essence of the classification:

Negotiation absent

Hadi: And I realized it come to the Iranian market (*Trigger*).

Teacher: It would come. You need a different form. I realized that it would come to the Iranian market (*Resolution*).

Limited negotiation/unsuccessful

Hadi: I think poverty happens people cannot buy things (*Trigger*).

Teacher: There is a problem in this sentence. Can you fix it?

Hadi: Poverty is people cannot buy things.

Teacher: No. Poverty happens when people cannot buy things (*Resolution*).

Limited negotiation/partially successful

Hadi: I want to know why is managing so poor in my country (*Trigger*).

Teacher: Any problem in the sentence?

Hadi: I want to know why is management so poor in my country

Teacher: Let me put it this way, I want to know why management is so poor in my country (*Resolution*).

Limited negotiation/successful

Hadi: I like buy a new scanner for my brother (*Trigger*).

Teacher: I like buy?

Hadi: I like to buy (*Resolution*).

Extended negotiation/unsuccessful

Hadi: I don't think. This is wrong (*Trigger*).

Teacher: Can you fix it? I think that you want to disagree with me. Am I right?

Hadi: Yes

Teacher: what did I say?

Hadi: All actors can play different roles.

Teacher: OK. You said you don't think. You don't think what?

Hadi: I don't think what you said.

Teacher: Great. So in this way you can show what it is that you are disagreeing with.

Hadi: Yes

Teacher: But, still you can improve it. Can't you? Think about it.

Hadi: I don't think it.

Teacher: No, the correct form is "I don't think so" (*Resolution*).

In the first example, the teacher unilaterally rectifies the error. Therefore, it is an example of negotiation absent. In the second episode, the teacher tries to push Hadi to correct his

erroneous form but immediately supplies the correct answer after Hadi's initial unsuccessful attempt. As a result, this is regarded as an example of limited negotiation with no success. In the third situation, the teacher pushes the learner to correct the mistake and when Hadi corrects only one part of the error he supplies the other part. Thus, it is an example of limited negotiation with partial success. In the fourth situation, Hadi can correct the erroneous form immediately after the teacher's first attempt and this is why it has been regarded as an example of limited negotiation with success. In the final extended and unsuccessful scenario, the teacher tries to push the learner toward producing the correct form by employing more than one elicitation-response sequence although Hadi is finally not able to correct the mistake. Moreover, in order to ensure the reliability of the coding, 10 percent of the transcribed data was randomly selected and was re-coded by one of the other researchers. And the inter-rater reliability of 91 percent was obtained.

It should also be acknowledged in passing that there seems to be a nearly complete lack of documentation of the approach to data collection, management, analysis and inference in case study research in contrast to other research strategies in other kinds of research where authors devote considerable time and effort to document the technical aspects of their research. Case studies have become in many cases a synonym for free-form research where everything goes and the author does not feel compelled to spell out how he or she intends to do the research, why a specific case or set of cases has been selected, which data are used and which are omitted, how data are processed and analyzed, and how inferences were derived from the story presented. Yet, at the end of the story, we often find important lessons derived from the case [47].

Final error correction test

Learning usually implies "a fairly permanent change in a person's behavioral performance" [48]. Consequently, in order to determine if Hadi was able to again rectify the errors which he had committed even after the course had come to an end, those triggers which had received only one kind of feedback (no-negotiation, limited, or extended) were readministered to him in the form of an error correction test about one month after the completion of the course.

IV. RESULTS

Analyses were based on calculating the total number of RFFEs, their types, successful corrections of errors by the learner himself in the course of interaction and in the final error correction test. Tables 1, 2, and 3 display the results of such analyses. Table 1 summarizes the frequency and percentages of different feedback types. As it is shown in this table, in total 159 RFFEs were identified out of which about 60 percent involved negotiation and about 40 percent involved no negotiation. The results of chi-square test showed the difference between these two types of feedback to be significant ($X^2=6.84$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$), suggesting that in this course feedback with negotiation occurred significantly more often than feedback with no negotiation. Out of negotiated

feedbacks, about 71 percent involved limited negotiation and about 29 percent involved extended negotiation. The results of the analyses revealed that feedback with limited negotiation occurred significantly more than the feedback with extended negotiation ($X^2=16.66$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$).

TABLE I
THE FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGES OF FEEDBACK TYPES

Feedback type	Frequency	Percent
Negotiated	96	60.4%
Non-negotiated	63	39.6%
Total	159	100%
Limited negotiation	68	70.8%
Extended negotiation	28	29.2%
Total	96	100%

The learner's success in correcting the erroneous form during limited and extended negotiation feedbacks has been presented in Table 2. As the table shows, feedback involving extended negotiation resulted in 89.2 percent successful and partially successful responses whereas feedback involving limited negotiation resulted in 70.5 percent successful and partially successful response; but the results of the two-way chi-square showed this difference not to be significant ($X^2=5.56$, $df=2$, $p>0.05$).

TABLE II
RESPONSE SUCCESS ACCORDING TO THE TYPES OF NEGOTIATION

	Unsuccessful	Partially successful	Successful	Total
Limited Negotiation	20 (29.4%)	9 (13.2%)	39 (57.3%)	68 (100%)
Extended Negotiation	3 (10.7%)	8 (28.5%)	17 (60.7%)	28 (100%)
Total	23 (23.9%)	17 (17.8%)	56 (58.3%)	96 (100%)

The final table shows the learner's performance on the final error correction test. As the table shows, the learner was more successful in correcting his own errors when he had received the feedback that involved no negotiation than feedback with negotiation (73.8 percent and 30.3 percent respectively). The results of a two-way chi-square test revealed this difference to be significant ($X^2=17.09$, $df=2$, $p<0.05$). As it is shown in the table, there was not a noticeable difference between limited and extended kinds of negotiated feedback on Hadi's success in correcting his own errors (68 percent or 66.7 percent respectively). The two-way chi-square test also confirmed this observation further ($X^2=1.18$, $df=2$, $p>0.05$).

TABLE III
RESPONSE SUCCESS ACCORDING TO THE TYPES OF
NEGOTIATION IN THE FINAL ERROR CORRECTION TEST

	Correct	Incorrect	Partially correct	Total
Negotiated	13 (30.3%)	27 (62.8%)	3 (6.9%)	43 (100%)
Non-negotiated	31 (73.8%)	11 (26.2)	0 (0%)	42 (100%)
<i>Total</i>	44 (51.7%)	38 (44.7%)	3 (3.6%)	85 (100%)
Limited Negotiation	17 (68%)	5 (20%)	3 (12%)	25 (100%)
Extended Negotiation	12 (66.7%)	2 (11.1%)	4 (22.2%)	18 (100%)
<i>Total</i>	29 (67.4%)	7 (16.3%)	7 (16.3%)	43 (100%)

V. DISCUSSION

Bateston [49] considers communicative processes as feedback systems within which each participant's contribution is determined by and, at the same time, determines those of other interlocutors. But although in recent years many researchers have turned their attention toward investigating classroom interaction [7], [50], [51], much attention has been directed toward the theoretical side rather than how interaction actually works in the process of language learning [1], [2], [41]; and, moreover, as claimed by Mackey [19], even those researchers who have provided measures of support for classroom interaction have not, in fact, investigated the effects of interaction and feedback in the long term, that is, after the course has finished.

This study was, being in agreement with the above-mentioned discoveries, an attempt to investigate the role of negotiation through reactive focus on form on spoken errors in an exclusive private EFL classroom solely devoted to speaking practice. This case study was, in fact, an attempt to investigate (a) how frequently corrective feedback is provided through negotiation; (b) whether language learners are more likely to benefit from feedback that involved negotiation than feedback without negotiation; and finally, (c) whether the long-term success of feedback depends on the amount of negotiation.

The findings revealed that in this exclusive private EFL classroom negotiated feedback occurred significantly more often than non-negotiated feedback, suggesting perhaps the dominance of one of the basic tenets of communicative language teaching, namely learner-centered and experience-based view of second language teaching and learning [52]-[54]. The results also showed that there was no significant difference between feedback involving extended negotiation and feedback involving limited negotiation as far as the

learner's success in correcting his own errors was concerned. Moreover, it was also found that, in the long run, the learner was significantly more successful in correcting his own errors when he had received non-negotiated feedback than negotiated feedback. Finally, it was also revealed that there was not a significant difference between limited and extended kinds of negotiated feedback on Hadi's later success in correcting his own errors.

The question which occurs to mind at this juncture is why negotiation appeared not to be significantly more effective in the long run. In other words, what needs to be explained is the fact that the learner seemed to be more receptive of non-negotiated feedback than negotiated one. One tentative answer can be the practices through which his attitude toward language and language learning has been shaped during school years. In some societies like Iran EFL teachers' roles have always been nothing but presenting grammatical points and out-of-context vocabulary items and then test the students accordingly. For example, in one recent study [55] it was observed that Iranian high school EFL teachers stick to narrow and reductionist views of communicative competence, emphasize sentence making, structure teaching, and word memorizing, while they ignore broader views of communicative competence which foreground activities like summarization, comprehension, and production. In that study the writer summarizes the results of observing several high school EFL classes and interviews with the teachers involved in those classes in the following way:

...though some of the teachers spoke in the L2 for teaching and communication, they spent most of the class time on sentence-level activities, structural exercises, and decontextualized activities which demanded that the learners memorize syntactic structures and vocabulary items.

To put it differently, although in our exclusive private language class the teacher tried to guide the learner toward producing a correct form of language more thorough negotiation than without using any kind of negotiation, the learner seemed to have internalized those on-the-spot non-negotiated feedbacks more permanently. Therefore, it can be argued that it was the effects of schooling that hampered him from grasping the negotiated points. In other words, the learner's lack of success in utilizing the negotiated feedbacks in the long term might be attributed to the practices in the school years. In fact, the school system might itself be regarded as the result of another powerful force, the force of culture. In the view of people in Iran teachers are mostly associated with pure power, authority and knowledge. And perhaps this is why the learner in this study has benefitted from the non-negotiated kind of feedback which might be indicative of the authoritarian role of the teacher. His behavior seems to fit, as claimed by Quinn [56] "a preexisting and culturally shared model." This preexisting and culturally

shared model has also been taken more seriously by Archer [57], who contends that language activity:

constructs (resists and re-creates) particular social and psychological phenomena (such as identities and attitudes). Thus language does not reflect an objective, external reality, but rather it is a constitutive medium, through which identities are negotiated, contested, asserted and defended.

Hadi started his out-of school second language learning when he had already experienced the traditional language teaching classes offered by the Iranian school system. In other words, his attitudes had been impregnably formed by the school system. This observation is far from being implausible since in one specific study Parvaresh [58], using metaphor analysis, revealed how one Iranian adult EFL learner's ways of looking at his teacher and his language learning did not change across time; an inflexibility which the writer attributes to the ways in which the learner's attitude towards language and language learning had been shaped by the school system before attending the language class.

In other words, the results of such studies together with the current study suggest, contrary to Graman [59], who contends that focus on form represents a kind of social and political repression, draining the classroom of significance while alienating students and silencing their voices, that at least for some adult learners focus on form through non-negotiated feedback is not only beneficial but also necessary.

This long-lasting effect of schooling on learners' have led scholars like McCarty [60] to ask for the help of all the stakeholders in the educational systems:

Changing reductionist and discriminatory literacy practices requires structural and institutional changes that, on the surface at least, seem beyond the reach of individual educators. Yet educators are critical participants within the educational system who have the power to change it. How teachers interact with students; teachers' attitudes, expectations, and sense of responsibility for student learning; and the overt and symbolic messages they convey, all profoundly influence literacy practices and potentials in the classroom and beyond.

Our participant's attitude had been shaped by the school system prior to the private language instruction. He seems not to have been able to pick up elements which were presented by a different method from the one used in his school years. This is why today educationalists warn language teachers not to hamper the students' desire for learning. They argue that the desire to actively participate in classroom activities should be an essential aspect of language classrooms. Educational goals should require students to be motivated and to have a

positive attitude with teachers attempting to create amusing and pleasurable learning environments. Such environments can, as claimed by Ayton [61], result in "loosely supervised and less regulated activities that supply the children with opportunities to claim some control over their work as the teachers position them as professional, competent pupils during schoolwork activity."

Still another reason might be the presence of other interlocutors in the feedback process. In fact, research has shown that in non-private non-exclusive language classrooms usually other language learners help the learner who has committed the linguistic error in adopting a resolution [1], [54]. In this way, it can also be suggested that the learner's lack of success in utilizing the negotiated types of feedback in the long run is in fact because of the lack of other interlocutors in the language classroom who might have made the attempt more memorable. In conclusion, this study argues, as Spada [62] does, that the motto "CLT means no explicit feedback on learner error" is, in fact, a misconception. Some learners, whatever the reason, do need explicit non-negotiated corrective feedback in order to become more successful language learners.

VI. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The case study approach is an essentially artistic process [42]. Men who can produce good case studies, accurate and convincing pictures of people and institutions, are essentially artists; they may not be learned men, and sometimes they are not even intelligent men, but they have imagination and know how to use words to convey truth. The product of a good case study is insight, and insight is the unknown quantity which has eluded students of scientific method. That is why the really great men of sociology had no "method." They had a method; it was the search for insight. They went "by guess and by God," but they found out things.

Case studies have a number of characteristics that make them attractive. As mentioned by Duff [34] and Gerring [42], when done well, case studies have a high degree of completeness, depth of analysis, and readability. Additionally, the cases may generate new hypotheses, models, and understandings about the nature of language learning and other processes involved. In this way, this study can call for language researchers to investigate the hypothesis which was set forth as one explanation for the better effects of non-negotiated feedback compared with the negotiated feedback regarding the retention of grammatical forms. In other words, this study can encourage other researchers to investigate the effects of non-negotiated feedback in societies with the same or different kinds of schooling system. Such knowledge generation is possible by capitalizing on either unique or typical cases in theorizing about particular phenomena that challenge current beliefs. Still another case study can investigate such a phenomenon using more than one participant and hereby test the tentative explanation put forward in the previous section, which attributed the transient

effects of negotiated feedback to the presence of only one interlocutor -the teacher- in the course of interaction.

Besides, longitudinal case study research helps to confirm stages or transformations proposed on the basis of larger (e.g., cross-sectional) studies and provides developmental evidence that can otherwise only be inferred.

However, it should also be taken into consideration that case studies are usually criticized because of their so-called lack of generalizability [35]. A good response to such a view has been provided by Gerring [42] who believes that although a case study, strictly speaking, must generalize across a set of cases, the breadth of an inference is obviously a matter of many degrees. No case study denies the importance of the case under special focus, and no case study forswears the generalizing impulse altogether. Therefore, the particularizing/generalizing distinction should be rightly understood as a kind of continuum, not a dichotomy since case studies typically partake of both worlds. This particularizing/generalizing distinction helps the researchers categorize different studies or different moments within the same study.

REFERENCES

- [1] R. Ellis, *Learning a Second Language through Interaction*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2000.
- [2] R. Ellis, "Investigating form-focused instruction," *Language Learning*, vol. 51, no. 1, pp. 1-46, 2001.
- [3] D. Ferris, and B. Roberts, "Error feedback in L2 writing class: How explicit does it need to be?" *Journal of Second Language Writing*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 161-184, 2001.
- [4] M. H. Long, "Native speaker non-native speaker conversation and the negotiation of comprehensible input," *Applied Linguistics*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 126-141, 1983.
- [5] K. McDonough, and A. Mackey, "Communicative tasks, conversational interaction and linguistic form: An empirical study of Thai," *Foreign Language Annals*, vol. 33, pp. 82-91, 2000.
- [6] R. Oliver, and A. Mackey, "Interactional context and feedback in child ESL classrooms," *The Modern Language Journal*, vol. 87, no. 4, pp. 519-533, 2003.
- [7] P. Seedhouse, "Different perspectives on language classroom interaction," *Language Learning*, vol. 51, no. 1, pp. 55-100, 2004.
- [8] T. Pica, "Research on negotiation- What does it reveal about second language learning- Conditions, process, and outcomes?" *Language Learning*, vol. 44, no. 3, pp. 493-527, 1994.
- [9] R. Lyster, "Differential effects of prompts and recasts in form-focused instruction," *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 399-432, 2004.
- [10] R. Ellis, *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: OUP, 1989.
- [11] R. Ellis, and G. Barkhuizen, *Analyzing Learner Language*. Oxford: OUP, 2005.
- [12] R. Ellis, S. Loewen, and R. Erlam, "Implicit and explicit corrective feedback and the acquisition of L2 grammar," *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 339-368, 2006.
- [13] M. P. Garcia-Mayo, and T. Pica, "L2 learner interaction in a foreign language setting: are learning needs addressed?" *Interactional Review of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 35-58, 2000.
- [14] R. Lyster, and H. Mori, "Interactional feedback and instructional counterbalance," *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 269-300, 2006.
- [15] S. Fotos, and H. Nassaji, (eds.), *Form-focused Instruction and Teacher Education: Studies in Honour of Rod Ellis*. Oxford: OUP, 2007.
- [16] M. Ishida, "Effects of recasts on the acquisition of the aspectual form of -te (ru) by learners of Japanese as a foreign language," *Language Learning*, vol. 54, no. 2, pp. 311-394, 2004.
- [17] M. H. Long, and P. Robinson, "Focus on form: Theory, research, and practice," in *Focus on Form in Classroom Second Language Acquisition*, C. Doughty and J. Williams, Eds. Cambridge: CUP, 1998, pp.15-42.
- [18] J. Philp, "Constraints on noticing the gap: Non-native speakers' noticing of recasts in NS-NNS interaction," *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 99-126, 2003.
- [19] A. Mackey, "The role of conversational interaction in second language acquisition," in *Conversational Interaction in Second Language Acquisition*, A. Mackey, Ed. Oxford: OUP, 2007, pp. 1-26.
- [20] H. Nassaji, "Reactive focus on form through negotiation on earners' written errors," in *Conversational Interaction in Second Language Acquisition*, S. Fotos and H. Nassaji, Eds. Oxford: OUP, 2007, pp. 117-131.
- [21] L. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978.
- [22] Kozulin, "Psychological tools and mediated learning," in *Vygotsky's Educational Theory in Cultural Context*, A. Kozulin, B. Gindis, V. Ageyev and S. Miller, Eds. Cambridge: CUP, 2003, pp. 15-38.
- [23] N. Mercer, and K. Littleton, *Dialogue and the Development of Children's Thinking: A Sociocultural Approach*. London: Routledge, 2007.
- [24] Z. Dörnyei, *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: OUP, 2007.
- [25] Y. Karpov, and J. Bransford, "Vygotsky and the doctrine of empirical and theoretical learning," *Educational Psychologist*, vol. 30, no. 2, pp. 61-66, 1995.
- [26] J. Lompscher, "Problems and results of experimental research on the formation of theoretical thinking through instruction," in *Learning and Teaching on Scientific Basis*, M. Hedegaard, P. Hakkarainen, and Y. Engestrom, Eds. Aarhus: Aarhus University, 1984, pp. 293-358.
- [27] M. R. Hawkins, *Language Learning and Teacher Education: A Sociocultural Approach*. UK: Multilingual Matters, 2004.
- [28] M. H. Long, *Problems in SLA*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Laurence Erlbaum, 2004.
- [29] M. Swain, and S. Lapkin, "Focus on form through collaborative dialogue: Exploring task effects," in M. Bygate, P. Skehan, and M. Swain, Eds. *Researching Pedagogic Tasks: Second Language Learning, Teaching and Testing*, New York: Longman, 2004, pp. 99-119.
- [30] L. Van Lier, "The relationship between consciousness, interaction and language learning," *Language Awareness*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 128-145, 1998.
- [31] M. Swain, "The output hypothesis and beyond: Mediating acquisition through collaborative dialogue," in *Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning*, J. P. Lantolf, Ed. Oxford: OUP, 2000, pp. 97-114.
- [32] J. Hellerman, *Social Actions for Classroom Language Learning*. UK: Multilingual Matters, 2008.
- [33] L. Ros-Feldman, "Interaction in the classroom: Does gender influence learning opportunities?" in *Conversational Interaction in Second Language Acquisition*, A. Mackey, Ed. Oxford: OUP, 2007, pp. 53-79.
- [34] P. A. Duff, *Case Study Research in Applied Linguistics*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2008.
- [35] K. Bardovi-Harlig, and Z. Dörnyei, (eds.), "Special issue on themes in SLA research," *AILA Review*, vol. 19, 2006.
- [36] R. K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, CA, USA: Sage Publications, 2003.
- [37] Leki, I, "Coping strategies of ESL students in writing tasks across the curriculum," *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 235-260, 1995.
- [38] G. Butterworth, and E. Hatch, "A Spanish-speaking adolescent's acquisition of English syntax," in *Second Language Acquisition: A Book of Readings*, E. Hatch, Eds. Rowley, MA. Newbury House, 1978, pp. 231-245.
- [39] L. George, and A. Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005.
- [40] L. Van Lier, *The Ecology and Semiotics of Language Learning: A Sociocultural Perspective*. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004.
- [41] S. Loewen, "Uptake in incidental focus on form in meaning-focused ESL lessons," *Language Learning*, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 153-187, 2004.
- [42] Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. Cambridge: CUP, 2007.
- [43] V. Jakeman, and C. McDowell, *Cambridge IELTS*. Cambridge: CUP, 1996.
- [44] V. Jakeman, and C. McDowell, *Insight into IELTS*. Cambridge: CUP, 1999.
- [45] T. Pica, "Do second language learners need negotiation?" *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 48-72, 1996.
- [46] S. M. Gass, and E. Varonis, "Task variation and nonnative/nonnative negotiation of meaning," in *Input in Second Language Acquisition*, S.

- Gass and C. Madden, Eds. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House., 1985, pp. 60-77.
- [47] Z. Maoz, "Case study methodology in international studies: From storytelling to hypothesis testing," in *Evaluating Methodology in International Studies: Millennial Reflections on International Studies*, F. P. Harvey, and M. Brecher, Eds. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002, pp. 455-475.
- [48] R. D. Gross, *Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behaviour*. UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987.
- [49] G. Bateson, *A Theory of Play and Fantasy: Steps to an Ethology of Mind*. New York: Ballantine, 1972.
- [50] L. Van Lier, "Case study," in *Handbook of Research Methods in Second Language Teaching and Learning*, E. Hinkel, Ed. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005, pp. 195-209.
- [51] S. Fotos, "Integrating grammar instruction and communicative language use through grammar consciousness rising tasks," *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 28, no. 3, pp. 323-351, 1994.
- [52] Breen, and C. N. Candlin, "The essentials of a communicative curriculum in language teaching," *Applied Linguistics*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 89-112, 1980.
- [53] Canale, and M. Swain, "Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing," *Applied Linguistics*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1-47, 1980.
- [54] S. Yuqin Zhao, and J. Bitchener, "Incidental focus on form in teacher-learner and learner-learner interactions," *System*, vol. 35, pp. 431-447, 2007.
- [55] A. Nazari, EFL teachers' perception of the concept of communicative competence. *ELT Journal*, vol. 61, no. 3, pp. 202-210, 2007.
- [56] Quinn, "The cultural basis of metaphor," in *Beyond Metaphor: The Theory of Tropes in Anthropology*, J. W. Fernandez, Ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991, 56-93.
- [57] L. Archer, *Race, Masculinity, and Schooling*. Glasgow: McGraw-Hill Education, 2003.
- [58] V. Parvaresh, "Metaphorical conceptualizations of an adult EFL learner: Where old concepts are impregnable," *Novitas-ROYAL: Research on Youth and Language*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 154-161, 2008.
- [59] T. Graman, "Education for humanization: Applying Paolo Friere's pedagogy to learning a second language," *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 58, 1988, pp. 433-448.
- [60] T. L. McCarty, "Literary practices in diverse classroom contexts," in *Language, Literacy, and Power in Schooling*, T. L. McCarty, Ed. Mahwah, New Jersey: Laurence Erlbaum, 2005, pp. 127-133.
- [61] K. Ayton, *An Ordinary School Child: Agency and Authority in Children's Schooling*. Linköping: UniTryck, 2008.
- [62] Spada, N. "Communicative language teaching: Current status and future prospects," in *International Handbook of English Language Teaching*, J. Cummins and C. Davidson, Eds. New York: Springer, 2007, pp. 271-288.