

**THE ROLE OF CLASSROOM
INTERACTIONAL FEEDBACK IN
FACILITATING SECOND LANGUAGE
ACQUISITION**

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in
TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Post Graduate Institute of English
The Open University of Sri Lanka

2009



70032

Abstract

The role played by Classroom Interactional Feedback (CIF) in second language acquisition has been the focus of concern to teachers and researchers in the last decade. Research, on the subject of CIF has grown steadily, investigating the effects of different CIF types and their relationship with the immediate acquisition of language. However, existing research results are inconsistent: little research has focussed on how CIF affects long-term learning: furthermore, no research refers to CIF observed in Sri Lankan language context.

This study investigated the types and frequency of classroom interactional feedback (CIF) and their relationship with learners' acquisition of language: it investigated the facilitative role of CIF for learners' short-term learning and long-term learning. In this action research, English as a second language classroom was closely observed while its learners were exposed to classroom interaction: it followed on six, 23-24 year old female university undergraduates (Sri Lankan) over a period of 15 weeks. In order to collect data, a twofold design was employed: a pretest-posttests design and observing classroom sessions. The test paper focused on grammar and incorporated 3 different test techniques. After completing 15 hours of teaching sessions, two posttests were held in the 9th week and in the 15th week respectively. All the classroom sessions were audio and video recorded and the researcher also observed the sessions. The findings, thus, are based on the different CIF types transcribed verbatim and the scores of the three language tests.

The findings of classroom observation revealed that there is a positive correlation between CIF and the immediate acquisition of language although the degree of success varies: the degree of success differs according to the type of CIF but not according to the frequency of CIF. Frequency distribution of CIF types indicated that the CIF types, which prompt learners' self-repair, are preferred to reformulative CIF types. When learners were given opportunities to reformulate or modify their non-target-like utterances by themselves, without implicit or explicit model, the results indicated a high rate of language acquisition. CIF types such as elicitations, confirmation checks and clarification requests which push learners strongly to modify their language output indicated significant positive results than the CIF types which did not involve active participation from learners. Statistical tests on test scores also showed that there is a positive relationship between the modified language output and CIF for the acquisition of language, even for long-term learning. The overall results indicated a high language gain due to classroom interactional feedback. The results are discussed particularly in relation to the hypotheses of Swain (1995) and Long (1996) which claim that implicit feedback which can be obtained through negotiated interaction facilitates second language learning. The research implies the significance of CIF types and concludes by creating clines of CIFs to be promoted in the Sri Lankan L2 teaching context, especially at university level.