NEGATIVE EVIDENCE THROUGH CLASSROOM INTERACTIONAL FEEDBACK IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: EFFECTIVE FOR DELAYED LANGUAGE CONTEXTS?

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INTRODUCTION

Negative evidence means the information about what is incorrect and not possible in a given language: it is received in the form of various feedback types on non-target like use of target language and needed to make corrections and to reformulate learners' language more target-like. In Second Language classroom contexts, learners are exposed to *negative evidence* through diverse forms of Classroom Interactional Feedback *(CIF)*. Recent *Second Language Acquisition (SLA)* research has focussed prominently on verbal *negative evidence*, with studies documenting significant advantages for learners exposed to this type of interaction. Although these researchers have suggested that their findings imply a facilitative role of *negative evidence*, most of these studies have moved two significant concerns to the periphery: they are whether verbal *negative evidence* has any long-term effects - in retention, i.e. effective for delayed language contexts and whether *negative evidence* facilitates learners in the acquisition of any type of language element. This paper is a section of a broad study which examined the efficacy of verbal *negative evidence* in *SLA* (both for immediate language contexts and delayed language contexts), provided through diverse types of *CIF*: this paper discusses the findings of two of the research questions of the broad study - "Is *negative evidence* provided through *CIF* effective for learners' delayed language learning contexts?" and "Is *negative evidence* provided through *CIF* equally effective in the acquisition of different language elements?" The objective is to determine whether learners have actually acquired language gain from *negative evidence* given through *CIF*, to be used in delayed language contexts and to explore whether the *CIF* episodes facilitate learners equally in the acquisition of different language elements such as verbs, determiners and the like.

METHODOLOGY

Employing the case study approach, an action research was conducted, examining a second Language classroom over a period of 15 weeks. Participants were six, 23-24 year old female university undergraduates (Sri Lankan) from a similar linguistic background and a male teacher who had much experience in teaching English as a Second Language. The design employed to collect data was twofold - a pretest-posttests design and observation of classroom sessions. The findings of this paper are based on the classroom observation data collected through the researcher's direct observation, audio and video recording, transcribed verbatim and the marks of pretest and two posttests. Data was analyzed descriptively, statistically using *the Friedman test* and comparing *CIF* episodes and test scores with overall language gain. The difference between the average marks of the Pretest and the Posttest 2 for each grammar component was considered as learners' language gain to be used for delayed language contexts: this language gain evinces the efficacy of *negative evidence* provided through *CIF*. Further, the *CIF* episodes targeting each grammar components were also compared in relation to language gain to explore if *CIF* facilitates the acquisition, equally, of different language elements.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

	Pretest	Posttest 1	Posttest 2	Average Posttests	Average Gain
Mean	25.67	55.00	55.83	55.42	29.75
Standard Deviation	3.93	9.80	10.07	9.85	10.43

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the pretest, the posttest 1, the posttest 2, average marks of posttests and average gain

| Test	No. of students	Estimated Median	Sum of Ranks
Posttests(average)	06	53.75	12.0
Pretest	06	27.25	6.0

P-Value = 0.014, Grand Median = 40.50

Table 2: The results of the *Friedman test*

Table 1 shows an overall language gain through the values of mean and *standard deviation*. This overall gain was needed to be explored further to verify the efficacy of *negative evidence*. As Table 2 indicates, the median score of the Pretest has almost doubled in the Posttests (27.25: 53.75) while the sum of ranks in the Pretest exactly doubled in the Posttests. The grand median is significantly high, at 40.50. The *P-Value* (*Probability Value*) is also less than 0.1 level, at 0.014, rejecting the null hypothesis that the median score of the Pretest equals the median score of the Posttests. All these statistically indicate a significant language gain in students Although a significant positive difference between the average marks of the Pretest and the Posttest 2 across almost all the grammar components was noticed (Table 2 and Figure 1), the comparative study showed that the language gain of each grammar component varies. A possible explanation can be drawn from Ellis' (1986) views on *Universal Grammar*: he explains that, similar to children's acquisition of language, adults also manifest a developmental route in *SLA*

Language Component	CIF targeting grammar item (count)	CIF %	Pretest Marks (average)	Posttest 2 Marks (average)	Language Gain (count)	Language Gain %
Present continuous	12	13.95	8.17	21.33	13.17	43.17
Adjectives	8	9.30	1.83	4.50	2.67	8.74
Prepositions	7	8.14	3.50	5.67	2.17	7.10
Simple present	14	16.28	1.83	3.67	1.83	6.01
Passive	12	13.95	0.67	2.33	1.67	5.46
Reported	2	2.33	0.67	2.33	1.67	5.46
Used to	3	3.49	0.33	2.00	1.67	5.46
Conditional	9	10.47	0.17	1.50	1.33	4.37
Present perfect continuous	3	3.49	1.17	2.50	1.33	4.37
Pronouns	3	3.49	2.00	3.17	1.17	3.83
Present perfect	1	1.16	0.67	1.67	1.00	3.28
Simple past	2	2.33	1.17	2.00	0.83	2.73
Nouns	7	8.14	1.33	2.00	0.67	2.18
Adverbs	2	2.33	0.67	0.50	-0.17	-0.55
Determiner	1	1.16	1.50	1.00	-0.50	-1.64

Table 2: Data of *CIF* episodes, test marks and language gain
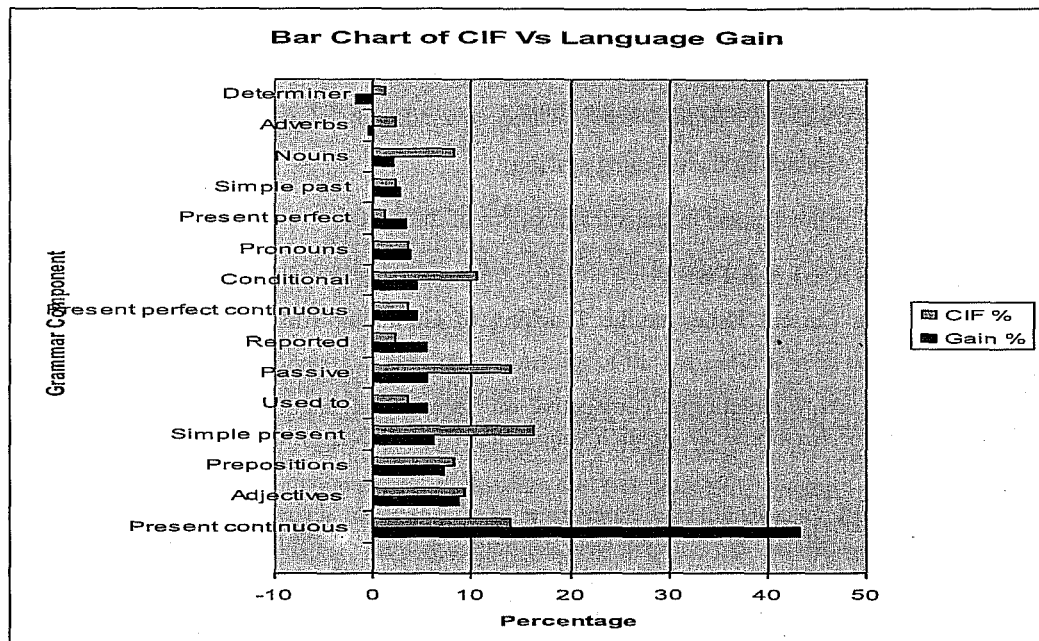
Figure 1: *CIF* Vs. Language Gain

This considerable positive difference between the Pretest and the Posttest marks, in relation to almost all the grammar components tested in this study (except determiners and adverbs), further supports the view that *negative evidence* provided through *CIF* facilitates learners in their delayed language contexts. Regarding the issue of *CIF* and *SLA*, the findings shed some light on the relationship between attention, comprehension, retention and Second Language learning. First, *negative evidence* given through *CIF* draws learners' attention to the *input*: then, the negotiation of meaning through interaction helps learners to comprehend the *input*. This comprehended *input* gained through *CIF* is retained for future use. However, there still remains a question regarding why the two grammar components - determiners and adverbs - failed to reveal any effects of *negative evidence* given through *CIF*. The potential clarification is the comparatively low rate of attention given to these two grammar components during classroom interaction. It is also reasonable to assume that the increase in the language gain was promoted by the *output*, because *modified output* is what intervened in processing the grammar *input* provided through *CIF*. As *the Output Hypothesis* predicts, producing *output* may have enhanced the learners' awareness of the inadequacies of their grammar knowledge which then prompted them to comprehend the relevant grammar elements.

CONCLUSION

Although the degree of language gain slightly varies, the results indicate a significant overall language gain in relation to almost all the grammar components tested in the study. This considerable language gain appears to indicate a significant facilitative role of *negative evidence* provided through *CIF* episodes (extraneous variables were controlled in the study, to a great extent): as language gain is measured in relation to the Posttest 2 marks, the results underscore the efficacy of *negative evidence* given through *CIF* for learners' delayed language contexts. Thus, conclusion of this study has implications for the design of classroom interaction in educational settings for second language teachers, teacher trainers and material developers, particularly at the Sri Lankan University level.

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