

The Roles of Collaborative Dialogue in Enhancing Written Corrective Feedback Efficacy

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses findings from a qualitative investigation to identify factors in relation to language-related episodes (LREs) that influence the uptake and retention in the accurate use of subject-verb agreement and prepositions resulting from indirect focused and indirect unfocused written corrective feedback. In relation to these identified factors, the roles of collaborative dialogue were determined through the analyses of the LREs and the interviews with selected participants. The participants in the study who received either focused or unfocused indirect corrective feedback for their written work were required to revise their work collaboratively during the pair talk. Findings from the analyses of the two data sources suggest that collaborative dialogue played a crucial role in enhancing the corrective feedback efficacy in facilitating participants' language learning development. Primarily, collaborative dialogue enhanced learners' focus towards ungrammatical uses in written work. Working collaboratively also provided learners with means to extensively deliberate over the corrections, which led to insightful reflections on their existing linguistic knowledge in response to the corrective feedback that they received for their written work.

KEYWORDS: Collaborative dialogue, language-related episodes, written corrective feedback

Introduction

One of the pertinent issues that has been continuously discussed in the field of second language learning is the role of corrective feedback (CF) and its influence on learners' linguistic development. A good number of studies relate contradictory views on this matter. At one end, some scholars believe that corrective feedback is facilitative for language acquisition. Findings from a number of studies have shown that CF helped the learners to revise their work and write more accurately in subsequent writings (e.g., Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Bitchener, Young & Cameron, 2005; Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 2006). On the other hand, researchers like Truscott (1996) argued that grammar corrections are ineffective and may be detrimental to language learning development (Truscott, 1996; Truscott & Hsu, 2008).

After over a decade of incessant debate, Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum and Wolfersberger (2010) asserted that researchers have been asking the wrong question with regards to the role of CF in language learning. Framing of the inquiries should focus more on how CF can be exploited to help students become better writers, than to ask whether or not CF should be given to the learners' written work. This line of argument is parallel to that of Ferris (2004) who stated that the importance of a study should be put on the types of CF to be employed in different learning instructions that can cater to different learners' needs. White (2003) acknowledges the importance of examining data based on individual performance because depending solely on statistical figures derived from group scores may not be able to provide accurate interpretation in addressing grammar proficiency of diverse learners. Moreover, drawing on suggestions brought forth by Van Beuningen (2010) calling for more qualitative inquiries on CF issues, the present study attempted to examine CF effectiveness from the learners' perspective in relation to influencing factors and the roles that collaborative dialogue play in enhancing the CF efficacy. Thus, the analyses of the interviews and the LREs occurring in collaborative dialogue may shed some light to questions of the present study which primarily attempt to identify factors that influence uptake and retention of the CF and the roles that collaborative dialogue play in enhancing this learning process.

Written corrective feedback, collaborative dialogue and the output hypothesis

Based on previous studies, it can be asserted that attention must be given to the CF (Chandler, 2003) and there should be 'engagement with [the] feedback' to enhance uptake and retention (Lee, 2013). The Chandler (2003) study strongly indicated that improvement in subsequent written work can be evident only when the learners attended to the feedback and revise their writing accordingly, because if no revision was made it can be considered as 'equivalent to giving no error feedback' (Chandler, 2003, p. 280). In other words, learners must demonstrate attentiveness towards the CF provided for it to take effect in their written work.

With the assumption that CF can be more effective when attention is focused on the CF received, a number of studies have incorporated the written CF with other approaches, such as oral conference and metalinguistic explanation (Bitchener et al., 2005), error log

and continuous revision (Hartshorn et al., 2010) and collaborative dialogues (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010). Lee (2013) has also suggested that in order to ‘maximise student learning’, working in pairs to make revisions should be taken into account as the means to enhance learning development.

With regards to collaborative dialogue, one aspect that has mostly been examined is the language-related episodes (LREs) that occurred during the revision process. LRE is defined as ‘any part of the discourse where students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use or correct themselves or others’ (Swain & Lapkin, 1995). A number of studies that involve LREs analysis have been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of learning instructions utilising collaborative tasks in various contexts of language learning (e.g., Philp, Walter & Basturkmen, 2010; Sato & Ballinger, 2012). Storch and Wigglesworth’s (2010) study for instance, looked at the extent of LREs that occur in pair talks and how they influence uptake and retention of language features negotiated in the collaborative dialogue. Findings from that study suggest that the more extensive the engagement in the LREs is, the greater the uptake and retention are of the linguistic forms discussed. Ishii’s (2011) study using turn-based coding system had also analysed collaborative dialogues to explore learners’ learning strategies in improving linguistic accuracy in written work.

The key concept of Swain’s (2005) output hypothesis is that learners are actively engaged in the process of language learning and collaborative dialogue can be viewed as the means to achieve this condition. Swain (2005) outlines the output hypothesis by proposing three functions that the theory serves: noticing, hypothesis testing and metalinguistics. Noticing is important because it provides learners with the information of the gap in the learners’ interlanguage system. Furthermore, hypothesis testing involves learners to produce modified output and ‘stretch’ their interlanguage system to find out the target-like use of the linguistic form in question. This stage is significant because this is where learners, as implied by Ferris (2006), will be most encouraged to be involved in ‘deeper internal processing’ and enhance the uptake and retention of the targeted linguistic forms into their interlanguage system. This leads to the third function of the output hypothesis, that is, the reflection on learner’s metalinguistic knowledge. The resolution of the hypothesis testing and the reflection of the learner’s linguistic knowledge will be the formation of a new or enhanced linguistic acquisition as well as the realisation of the gap that exists in the learner’s interlanguage system.

In relation to the issue reviewed above, the present study’s aim to explore the CF issue from the learners’ perspectives would hopefully render some insights on the learners’ engagement with feedback and the process that were involved in responding to the CF that they received. Hyland (2010) indicates the scarcity of studies that have been carried out investigating the learners’ strategies and learning processes that take place which may increase CF efficacy in order to “achieve full learning potential” (Hyland, 2010, p. 179).

It is hypothesised that collaborative dialogue plays a crucial role in enhancing the written corrective feedback that learners received leading to uptake and retention. Thus, it is the

intention of the present study that through the analysis of the LREs and interviews, factors that influencing uptake and retention can be identified and the roles of collaborative dialogue can be ascertained as to the manner this approach may enhance language learning development.

The study

Research Questions

This study aimed to identify factors that influenced uptake and retention of the CF on subject-verb agreement (SVA) and preposition in written work. Incorporating collaborative dialogue as part of the treatment process, this inquiry was investigated from the learners' perspectives in investigating the roles that collaborative dialogue plays in enhancing CF efficacy. The following research questions guided the present study: (1) What are the factors in relation to the Language-Related Episodes (LREs) that influence uptake and retention of the written corrective feedback on subject-verb agreement and prepositions in written work?; and (2) What are the roles of collaborative dialogue in enhancing the effectiveness of written corrective feedback in relation to the identified influencing factors?

Participants

The study was conducted at a technical university in the East Coast of Malaysia involving 90 undergraduate students who were enrolled in the fourth level of English language proficiency course. In order to fulfil the academic requirements, students at the university are required to complete four levels of English language course and in general, they are placed at the intermediate proficiency level. The average number of years of the participants' formal English language lesson is 13.5 depending on whether they enrolled in a Diploma programme or a Foundation course after high school at the age of 18. Three groups of 30 participants each were randomly assigned as the focused indirect CF (FCF), unfocused indirect CF (UFCF) or the control group.

Design and procedures

Throughout the 12 weeks, the participants were required to write five 200-word descriptions on graphic prompts of technological theme, of which 30 minutes were allocated for each task. The participants were required to identify salient information in the graph to write the description which comprises an introductory sentence, discussion of the important information and a concluding remark. The selection of these written tasks considered two main aspects; (i) this instrument elicited sufficient use of SVA and prepositions; and (ii) it was the form of written task that the participants were familiar with, so that the instructions and requirements of the tasks can be fully understood by the participants.

The pre-test took place in week 2 and followed by Writing Task 1 (WT1) in week 3. WT1 was returned the following week to the participants with either the UFCF or FCF.

The group that received FCF were given feedback on only subject-verb agreement and preposition errors. For example:

SVA

* users prefer to using a Mozilla web brouser

Even though there are other errors in the sentence, feedback was only provided for the selected linguistic forms. In the example, the selected error is subject-verb agreement, and the part where the error occurred was underlined and indicted by the symbol SVA above the underlined phrase to inform the learner of the error type.

The participants in the UFCF group, in addition to the two targeted structures, they also received feedback on other linguistic features that were adapted from Azar's (1992) guide for correcting writing errors. Below is the example of the indirect unfocused feedback:

SVA P A SP M/S

*The users prefer at use a Mozilla web brouers

Apart from SVA and prepositions, feedback on article (A), singular/plural(SP) and spelling (M/S) were also provided for the sentence in the example. The feedback was more comprehensive and learners were provided with a much extensive range of corrections for their written work. Learners were provided with only the indication of the errors committed by underlining the selected parts and informing the types of errors committed. The correct forms, however, were not provided with the feedback.

Upon receiving their writings with the CF, they were given five minutes to look through their work on their own before they started working with their partner. The participants were given the freedom to choose their own partner for the pair talk to ensure that they were comfortable discussing their written work. The LREs were elicited from the two pair talk sessions. These sessions took place in the multimedia language laboratory and each student had an access to the computer for recording purposes. 30 minutes were allocated to discuss each written work. However, they were allowed to extent their discussion if necessary. Once they have finished discussing both written work and had saved the recording on the computer, all the notes and the written work were collected. Immediately after that, the participants completed Writing Task 2. The writings were returned with the CF the following week and the same procedures took place. The immediate post-test was conducted after the second pair-talk session ended and the delayed post-test was administered six weeks later. The interview was conducted in week 13, the subsequent week after the delayed post-test. Each interview session lasted for approximately 45 minutes to one hour.

Coding and analysis

The first source of data came from the two written work of the FCF and UFCF groups. The CF provided for each piece of writing was identified and categorised according to the

two targeted linguistic forms. The second source of the data was the transcribed collaborative dialogues of the UFCF and FCF groups in the two treatment sessions. All relevant episodes which contained deliberations on the two targeted linguistic forms were identified and coded into the following categorisations:

- Linguistic forms – SVA/ prepositions
- Resolution – correctly/ incorrectly/ unresolved
- Focus on ungrammaticality – perfunctory/ substantive
- Hypothesising correction – limited/ extensive
- Post-response reflections

The two targeted linguistic forms were identified and coded as either SVA or prepositions. In terms of resolution, correct resolution is when the pairs were able to come up with the corrected forms of the errors committed. Incorrect resolution is when the pairs came up with the forms that are inaccurate for the context of the written work. The feedback was considered unresolved when the pairs during the deliberation over the feedback mentioned that they did not know the correct form. Substantive focus is coded when the learners were able to understand why the errors were committed and able to explain on the corrections. Perfunctory focus is when the learners did not understand why an error was committed and were not able to explain the corrections (Qi & Lapkin, 2001). Extensive hypothesising of correction is when the participants deliberated extensively over an error and tried out several options before finally agreeing on a correction. Limited hypothesising of correction is when participants made correction by just acknowledging the feedback and simply came up with a correction without much deliberation. Post-response reflection is when learners reflected on their existing linguistic knowledge in comparison to the CF that they received and the deliberated corrections.

The third source of data came from the writings of the immediate and delayed post-tests. In order to examine the retention of the corrective feedback, a process-product analysis was employed (Nassaji & Swain, 2000; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010). The analysis linked the LREs in collaborative dialogue with the performance of the participants in the immediate and delayed post-tests. To establish this link, the examination focused on comparison between the response of the participants to the corrective feedback on the two targeted structures with the accurate use of these two forms in similar instances identified in the immediate and delayed post-tests.

Finally, the fourth source of data was the analysis of interviews conducted with the participants in a week following the delayed post-test. The interview was analysed for responses given on the roles of collaborative dialogue in enhancing the CF efficacy.

Results and discussion

According to White (2003), examining data at individual level is a ‘welcome trend’ which allows possibility of exploring more information on the individual linguistic competence. Bitchener et al. (2005) also suggested that individual performance may be

one of the factors that influenced the disparity in the accuracy scores over a period of time. Thus, this paper discusses qualitative findings that may render some insights as to how the CF and collaborative dialogue may have facilitated the learners in improving accuracy in written work. In order to achieve this, factors that may have influenced the uptake and retention were identified from the analyses of the LREs as well as interviews exploring the issue from the learners' perspectives and what roles does the collaborative dialogue play in enhancing the learning development in relation to the factors identified.

Learners' focus on ungrammatical uses

According to Swain (2005), noticing plays an important role in directing learners' attention to the gap that exists in their interlanguage system. This awareness assists learners to reflect on their language production and make necessary revisions. By employing focused or unfocused indirect CF, errors were made salient for the learners to focus their attention towards grammatical and ungrammatical uses while making room for them to test their language hypothesis in making corrections during the collaborative dialogue.

Close examination reveals that participants who demonstrated substantive focus seemed to attain greater uptake and retention than those who showed only perfunctory focus. Extract 1 is the LREs of learners demonstrating substantive focus. It was evident that the pairs showed substantive focus when deliberating over a SVA error and eventually were able to explain why the sentence was wrong and identified the correct form to use.

Extract 1

- | | | |
|-----|-------|--|
| (1) | Amira | SVA error here...the most popular device are... |
| (2) | | here...the subject is device |
| (3) | Hana | device are... not are we need singular...mmm... device?... |
| (4) | Amira | Yes... device is singular ... singular... so, cannot use |
| (5) | | are... singular...then I should use is...so, device is |
| (6) | Hana | Or...mmm... devices are? |
| (7) | Amira | no... not devices I just talk about one device |
| (8) | | here...mobile phone...so, it should be |
| (9) | | device...singular...verb is... device is |

Amira (all names in this article are pseudonyms) was fully aware that she was directed toward the phrase 'the device are' which was not in agreement in terms of numbers to the verb used (line 1). When Hana suggested the use of 'are' with 'devices', she asserted that she was talking about one device, the mobile phone and it should agree with the verb 'is', since it is singular (lines 6 to 8). This LRE indicated that when the pairs' attentions were directed towards the non-target like output, they managed to make accurate correction since they demonstrated substantive focus by clearly stating the reason for the error committed. This finding seems to corroborate the results from other studies that suggest the greater role substantive noticing plays in enhancing uptake of corrective feedback that is observed through the analysis of LREs (Qi & Lapkin, 2001; Sachs & Polio, 2007).

On the other hand, pairs that only demonstrated perfunctory focus would just simply read the CF and agreed on a correction. An example of perfunctory focus is given in Extract 2.

Extract 2

- | | |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| 1) Syed | Next...SVA... the numbers increases |
| 2) Nabila | Change to the number increases...no s |
| 3) Syed | Ok... the number...no s...next... |

Syed simply agreed on the suggestion and changed ‘the numbers’ to ‘the number’, leaving out the ‘s’. They were able to make accurate correction, but they did not demonstrate understanding over the CF and the errors committed. With this simple assumption, they tend to make mistakes when correcting similar SVA errors since they were not completely aware of the subject or the verb of the sentence. Interview with this pair of participants revealed that they just assumed that when the error is SVA, they just needed to omit or add an ‘s’ to one of the words underlined by the researcher. When asked if they knew which one was the subject or the verb in the underlined phrases, they mostly pointed out the verb correctly, but it was not consistent with the subject. An example is given below:

SVA

Another web browser used by the internet user are Safari.

In this sentence, Syed pointed to the ‘the internet user’ as the subject and during the pair talk, he added ‘s’ to the word ‘user’ instead of using ‘is’ to make it agreeable with the actual subject of the sentence. He simply assumed that ‘the internet users’ was the subject of the sentence and it should be plural since ‘are’ was used subsequent to the assumed subject. What this condition implies is that even though they sometimes managed to make accurate corrections, by not clearly being aware of the reason for their errors, they were unable to take up and retain the CF in the long run.

Hypothesising corrections

Similar to the Storch and Wigglesworth (2010) study, learners in the present study who were engaged in the LREs more extensively showed a greater uptake and retention of the CF for the two target structures. Participants who did not extensively test their language hypothesis seemed to not show much uptake and retention of the forms. They tended to repeat the same errors in the subsequent written work. The example below illustrates extensive hypothesising of correction during the collaborative dialogue deliberating over a CF on a preposition error.

Extract 3

- | | |
|----------|---|
| (1) Amin | P error...preposition...at year 2007. |
| (3) Ain | Why wrong? Maybe it should year 2007? no at |
| (4) Amin | No.. mmm... preposition... so... maybe at 2007? |
| (5) Ain | at 2007, no year? but at 2007... not right... at year |
| (6) | 2007 is better... maybe we should change at... use |

- (7) different preposition.
 (8) Amin at... I think to show place... at the bus stop... for
 (9) year...we should use other preposition... maybe
 (10) on... or... in?
 (11) Ain in?... in year 2007... on year 2007... I think in year
 (12) 2007 is better... like *dalam tahun* 2007 ('in the year
 (13) 2007')... ok... in year 2007

The participants in Extract 3 had extensively hypothesised the corrections during the LRE. They tested several possibilities (lines 4 to 9) before agreeing on the correction in line (11). These learners were able to understand the CF and why an error had been committed (lines 7-8) which provided them with more opportunity to extensively engage in the deliberation of the CF.

On the other hand, when participants did not extensively hypothesise the correction, the uptake and retention was considerably lower than those who had had extensive engagements in deliberating the CF. An interview with a participant revealed that she could not remember much from the pair talk when discussing the CF. The selected part of the audio recorded pair talk was played to her and her written work was shown when she was asked to recall during the interview.

This part...I don't remember ...when I write later after the pair talk...I just write ... did not think about the discussion...I cannot remember ...we discussed very quickly.

(Rubi, personal communication, January 3, 2012)

Rubi admitted that she could not remember the pair-talk when she was writing the subsequent tasks since the discussion was very short and did not trigger much emphasis on the forms being deliberated.

Storch and Wigglesworth (2010) suggested that extensive engagement provides the learners with more opportunity to test their language hypothesis while getting 'immediate feedback from their peers'. They also stated that learners have more resources in the learning process when deliberating over the CF collaboratively since they can assist each other and rely on each other's metalinguistic knowledge. Swain (2005) stated that learners need to test their language hypothesis in order to 'modify the output' resulting from the CF provided.

Learners' post-response reflections

As evident in the LREs, learners who reflected on their linguistic knowledge following their response to the CF that they received demonstrated greater uptake and retention of the accurate forms in subsequent written work. These learners showed improved accuracy on a condition that they were willing to unlearn the existing metalinguistic knowledge in their interlanguage system. To illustrate this condition, an example is described below on a preposition error, 'in conclusion'. Most participants used 'as a conclusion', but after

much deliberation and reflections, even though the participants were reluctant to accept the correct preposition, they were willing to change their familiar way of using the phrase. Extract 4 is an LRE excerpt from the first pair talk session.

Extract 4

- (1) Cheah Here... preposition error... as a conclusion... why?
 (2) Sia as a conclusion? ... preposition error... so how we
 (3) change this?
 (4) Why is this wrong? I always use this.. I didn't realise
 (5) this is wrong ... maybe as conclusion, no a, just as
 conclusion.
 (6) Cheah Well... maybe... but... as conclusion does not sound
 (7) right...I think change the preposition as... maybe we
 (8) cannot use as, use something else.
 (9) Sia But as a conclusion ... I always use this ... as a
 (10) conclusion... change to what?
 (11) Cheah I think it's in conclusion...in conclusion or maybe to
 (12) conclusion?... ... no ... that to conclude.... in
 (13) conclusion
 (14) Sia But why?... in conclusion doesn't sound right...
dalam kesimpulan ('in conclusion')
 (15) Cheah I think... in conclusion... that is how it is used...
 (16) Sia Ok let's try that ... in conclusion
 (UFCF Pair 2 Collaborative Dialogue 1)

Cheah was quite reluctant to accept the newly agreed form 'in conclusion' because she had been using 'as a conclusion' and was never pointed out that it was incorrect (lines 1-4). Eventually, after some deliberations, she accepted the form and changed her sentence accordingly. This unlearning process enhanced the reflective function leading to greater uptake and retention of the CF. The following are samples of sentences taken from Cheah's writings.

Writing Task 1 original sentence sample:

P

As a conclusion, in 2008 households in Japan preferred to own a mobile phones for communication.

Revised sentence:

In conclusion, in 2008 households in Japan preferred to own a mobile phones for communication.

Task 2 sample sentence:

In conclusion, the internet surfers use Internet Explorer more when surf the internet compared to other web browsers.

Delayed post-test sample sentence:

In conclusion, Singapore had highest number of subscribers in 2005.

It was evident that Cheah demonstrated uptake as seen in Task 2 sample sentence and the accurate use was retained after six weeks as shown in the delayed post-test sample sentence. Internalisation of the new accepted form occurred after the learners were willing to unlearn the previous used forms. The fact that these participants generally acknowledge their limited knowledge and skills in using the L2 made them to be more receptive of the feedback. One learner admitted that she always felt that her English was not good and she needed more practice to improve her language proficiency.

My English weak. I always feel ... when I write my sentence wrong. I need teacher tell me how can make them more accurate. During pair talk ... my friend help me a lot and maybe more discussion like this can help improve more because ... I get feedback from teacher and from my friend. I can learn more that way.

(Cheah, personal communication, January 4, 2012).

This receptiveness towards the corrective feedback due to the level of proficiency has also been discussed in the Patthey-Chavez and Ferris (1997) study comparing learners of different proficiency levels in their use of the CF in revising their written work. Lower proficiency learners were more inclined to use the CF thoroughly than the more able learners who employed the CF as initiatives to changes in their writings (as cited in Hyland & Hyland, 2006). The unlearning that took place was an indication that the learners have reflected on their own metalinguistic knowledge and they were more receptive towards the new learned language features and made progress in the learning development.

Roles of collaborative dialogue from the learners' perspectives

The output hypothesis theorises that learning can occur when the learners produce language (Swain, 2005). One of the means for the learners to produce language apart from the written work is through collaborative dialogue. Exploring this issue from the learners' perspectives, the present study attempted to address the question posed by Wigglesworth and Storch (2012) asking how collaborative dialogue is able to enhance learning development.

In terms of the importance of attention given by the learners to the CF that they received, interviews revealed that collaborative dialogue was viewed by the learners as the means to ensure that attention is paid to the CF since revision was required to be completed through the pair talk subsequent to getting back their written work. A number of participants admitted during the interview that the pair talk made them focus on the CF that they received.

The pair talk made pay more attention to the CF that I received. If I were to work on my own... individually, I wouldn't pay that much attention... I would usually just browse through once and keep the writing away.
(Raj, personal communication, January 4, 2012)

This attitude was shared by most participants admitting that the attention that was given to the CF was because they needed to make corrections collaboratively during the pair talk. They were obligated to attend to the CF in order to contribute to the discussion during the pair talk. The 'collaborative mindset' that was proposed to be essential in the Sato and Ballinger (2012) study can be also extended to the context of the present study. Having viewed the importance of collaborative work in completing tasks, learners were able to contribute more to the learning process, eventually enhancing each learner's language development.

Focus on ungrammatical uses was greatly enhanced by the collaborative dialogue. By discussing the CF with a partner, a learner can be more aware of the gap that exists in their interlanguage system. A participant stated that working collaboratively helped her to become more conscious of her language use.

My friend help with the correction. If I made corrections on my own, I don't know why they wrong, but when discuss, we help each other. So, I understand better why they are wrong and how correct them.
(Nazira, personal communication, January 6, 2012)

Most participants felt that without the collaborative dialogue, they may not pay attention to why errors have occurred. They would either simply make corrections without giving much thought or may not even bother to correct the errors. If this happened, the CF that was provided would not be beneficial to the learners and learning would not occur.

As evident in the LREs analysis, collaborative dialogue provided means for extensive hypothesising of corrections. Learners deliberated over the CF more when they work collaboratively to make corrections than when they work on their own. A participant said that when they were discussing the CF, they were motivated to discuss thoroughly until they arrived to the decision that they are both satisfied with.

When we discussed, we tried many times until when we were confident with the corrections. But if I revise on my own, I just simply made correction and did not think much about it.
(Alif, personal communication, January 5, 2012)

Most participants expressed that since they needed to contribute to the pair talk, they really focused on the CF and they wanted to be certain of the corrections that they agreed on.

Findings also reveal that collaborative dialogue enhances reflective function. Learners were able to focus on ungrammatical uses in their existing language system and

extensively hypothesise their corrections mainly because collaborative dialogue provides them with the means to reflect on their linguistic knowledge. Swain (2005) stated that the pair talk can be regarded as the ‘exterior source of physical and mental regulation for an individual’ (Swain, 2005, p. 478). This regulation and scaffolding that occurred during the collaborative dialogue would then be internalised into individual learner’s language system. This internalisation can be an indication of learning taking place. Learners expressed that working collaboratively to make corrections can be beneficial since they were able to help each other and improve on their own linguistic knowledge.

Discussion to make corrections helped me a lot. I cannot make all corrections alone because I don’t know all. My partner help make me realise why the error.

(Jannah, personal communication, January 6, 2012)

Another participant stated that working with a partner was better than working on her own in making corrections.

I think I liked work with a friend more than work alone to make corrections. We help each other a lot... if I work alone ...I did not know the corrections...I did not know why I was wrong...my friend helped me explain why they were wrong.

(Maya, personal communication, January 5, 2012)

Working collaboratively provided the learners the means to get input from their peers on their language use in addition to the CF provided by the teacher. In order for the CF to be effective, it is important for them to be able to understand their errors and their language use.

Conclusion

Learners in the present study demonstrated that they were inclined to reflect on their existing second language system as a result of responding to the CF that they received, as well as going through the process of focusing on the ungrammatical uses and hypothesising the corrections. The findings from this study suggest that collaborative dialogue enhanced the facilitative effects of the CF in assisting learners to improve accuracy of SVA and prepositions in written work. As indicated by Wigglesworth and Storch (2012) on the importance of producing language to learn, which is theorised in the context of the Output Hypothesis (Swain, 2005), collaborative dialogue provides the means for learners to produce language during the learning process. In other words, the effectiveness of this learning process was greatly enhanced by the collaborative dialogue that primarily direct and focus the learners’ attention towards the CF and to reflect on the language use in written work. As Storch says (2010, p. 42), “learning requires extensive and sustained meaningful exposure and practice”. In relation to this, it is evident from the findings of this study that employing collaborative dialogue has been an effective means to enhance corrective feedback efficacy which eventually leads to learning development.

However, Sachs and Polio (2007) remind us that since the LREs analysis can be highly inferential, misinterpretations tend to occur. This can be due to the fact that ‘there is no certain way of knowing whether a given verbalization is a veridical (i.e. complete and accurate) account of a learner’s awareness of linguistic input’ (Sachs & Polio, 2007, p. 73). Thus, the data in the present study have been interpreted with caution by frequently seeking clarifications during the interview. Furthermore, since the present study has limited the focus to just two linguistic features (SVA and prepositions), in terms of pedagogical implications, it would be beneficial if studies can be conducted to explore the roles of collaborative dialogue on CF provided for a wider range of linguistic features. Nevertheless, the present study has yielded promising findings with regards to the roles of collaborative dialogue in enhancing CF efficacy, and teachers may consider incorporating this approach in language classes to help learners improve accuracy in written work.

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