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Teachers' Attitudes Towards , and Provision of, Negative Evidence

A Case Study of First year Students of English at University Centre of Mila

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements of the Master Degree in

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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

Negative Evidence (NE), also termed negative or corrective feedback, is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement. This dissertation attempts to explore the importance of NE in learners' academic achievement as well as in teaching since its aim is to investigate the teachers' attitude towards NE and its provision to language learners. It also aims to find out the most useful type or types of NE. A set of research questions guide our study: (1) Do teachers believe learners' errors should be corrected? If so, when and by whom? (2) What kind of errors do teachers mostly tend to correct? (3) What types of NE are performed by teachers in response to learners' errors? (4) Does error correction cause any anxiety in learners? This investigation is based on the hypotheses that English teachers may have a positive attitude towards NE, and may mostly use the implicit type – namely recasts. For this purpose, a questionnaire is administered to 20 teachers and another to 60 students, all from the University Centre of Mila, to collect the information needed and to check the hypotheses advanced. The results show that our sample of teachers has a positive attitude towards NE indicating its importance in language teaching and learning. Both implicit and explicit NE are made use of; recasts and explicit correction are both provided by the majority of them.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CA	Contrastive Analysis
CF	Corrective Feedback
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EA	Error Analysis
EC	Error correction
ES	Error Studies
FL	Foreign Language
FLCAS	Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale
GTM	Grammar-Translation Method
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
NE	Negative Evidence
NF	Negative Feedback
NLS	Native Language Structure
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SLL	Second Language Learning
TLS	Target Language Structure
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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INTRODUCTION

For decades researchers in second language acquisition (SLA) have tried to apply the communicative orientation in English curriculum which can mainly open up much discussion and oral activities in the classroom. This may also lead to students committing language errors in class. On the other hand, that leaves the teacher with some important decisions to make regarding whether to respond, and if so, how to respond to those errors.

There are still disagreements about the role of error correction and about the most effective practices regarding the correction of language errors. In this dissertation we tend to shed light on the concept that gives importance to errors and to error correction which is called Negative Evidence (henceforth NE). Good teaching and learning practices in schools must build on accumulated knowledge of NE and its effectiveness. For reaching this aim, it is very important primarily to know what teachers think about error correction. Many teachers provide NE in order to correct learners' mistakes and errors in language usage and to help them benefit from making those mistakes and errors. For this reason, teachers' role seems to be crucial in NE.

The term NE is often used interchangeably with the terms negative feedback (NF) and corrective feedback (CF) to refer to any erroneous utterances of language learners (Schachter, 1991). Lee (1990) believed that errors correction is a fundamental part of mastery in language learning, whereas some other scholars claimed that NE should not be used in classes because of its negative impact on the learners' affect and on the flow of communication (Krashen, 1981a; 1981b; Truscott, 1991). Nevertheless, currently second language acquisition (SLA) researchers strongly believe in corrective feedback (Ellis, 2006). Harmer (1983: 235) maintained that correction techniques are used in order to give the students "a chance to get the new language right".

The thesis at hand tends to take account of the research studies which give importance to the concepts under investigation concerning error correction, feedback and its types, NE and its different types, and most specifically the teacher's attitude toward, and provision of, NE.

1. Statement of the Problem

For decades, questions about error correction in SLA have been hotly debated, giving birth to a great deal of theoretical and empirical research. The big question raised by teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) practitioners is whether to provide learners with only positive evidence (PE) or to expose them to NE as well. This gives much more responsibility to the teacher who is the only responsible for giving feedback.

2. Aims of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the teacher's perception and point of view regarding the provision of NE and to find out the type or types of NE that teachers mostly use in classroom. This study also aims to see the impact of NE on the learner's affect and academic achievement. That may lead us to another aim which is to figure out the role of NE in the process of SLA.

3. Research Questions and Hypotheses

In order to reveal the teachers' perceptions concerning NE and its types, three research questions are raised:

- Do teachers believe learners' errors should be corrected? If so, when and by whom?

- What kind of errors do teachers mostly tend to correct?

- What types of NE are performed by teachers in response to learners' errors?

- Does error correction cause any anxiety in learners?

    In the light of the above, we hypothesize that:

- Teachers may have positive attitude towards negative evidence.

- Teachers may mostly use implicit NE to respond to learners 'errors.

- Teachers may mostly use recast as a type of NE to correct learners' errors.

4. Definition of Key Terms

Attitude: an attitude is a set of behaviours, beliefs, and feelings that one holds in relation to an object, a person, an event or an issue.

Explicit Correction: refers to direct provision of the correct form.

Error: errors reflect gaps in learners' knowledge and occur because the learner does not know what is correct and what is not. (Corder 1999, as cited in Tafani, 2009)

Feedback: is conceptualized as information provided by an interlocutor (eg. Teacher, peer, parent, etc.) regarding aspects of one's performance.

Implicit Correction: refers to indirect provision of the correct form.

Mistake: according to Brown (1987), a mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a 'slip', in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly.

Negative Evidence: is corrective reaction to what is ungrammatical or incorrect.

Positive Evidence: is the target language input that the language learner has access to, which may be spoken or written.

Recasts: involves reformulation of all or part of an erroneous utterance in the correct form.

5. Means of Research

For the sake of understanding the teachers' provision of NE, teachers' and learners' questionnaires have been chosen as suitable descriptive tools for gathering the necessary data needed for our research. The learners' questionnaire is a possible way of discovery by which we try to find out through the learners' eyes the teachers' reactions towards their errors. The questionnaires are given for teachers' and learners' in the University Centre of Mila. This includes a sample of first year English students and all teachers in the chosen University. The reason behind choosing first years is that they tend to commit more mistakes than more advanced learners, and teachers might be inclined to give them NE.

6. Structure of the Dissertation

The study consists of three chapters. The first two chapters include the review of the literature, and the last chapter covers the empirical part of the dissertation.

The first chapter is entitled "Error in Second Language Learning". It presents a historical perspective of some approaches while trying to situate error and how it is viewed. This is followed by an attempt to deconstruct the construct by making a distinction between errors and mistakes, including some classification of error types as well as its sources.

The second chapter is entitled "Negative Evidence". It starts by digging into the nature of negative evidence in terms of its definition, forms, types, in addition to its effect and importance in SLA. It then moves to outline the principles and dimensions of teachers' negative evidence as well as teachers' and learners' perception towards its provision. This chapter ends with a discussion of the relationship between teachers' negative evidence and learners' anxiety, let alone uptake.

The last chapter encompasses the field investigation. It includes the means of data collection where the choice of the method is justified. Then, the population and the sample are discribed. This chapter is culminated by the findings obtained upon analysis of the teachers' and the learners' questionnaire. It ends with some pedagogical and research implications and recommendations for future agendas.

CHAPTER ONE

ERRORS IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Introduction

There has been much discussion on errors and their correction in the foreign language classroom because of the fact that the attitudes towards errors of both teachers and students differ. According to James (1998), language is said to be uniquely human, so an error is likewise distinctive. How is error defined? In order to analyze learner language in a proper perspective, it is crucial to distinguish between errors and mistakes. Although giving a clear cut definition of error is still problematic, researchers try to cover all the possible descriptions of the concept.

In the process of learning and teaching a foreign language, an error has always been regarded as something negative; as a result, both teachers and students have adopted a repressive attitude towards it. Such a belief is supported by different approaches such as behaviourism, contrastive analysis and error analysis which focus on the importance of error correction. A different point of view was presented by different other approaches, namely Krashen's natural approach and the communicative approach which give much importance to error itself as a sign of learning. From the perspective of error correction or negative evidence, errors are evidence of the developmental language learning process. Moreover, errors help teachers to verify what features of language cause students' learning problems and to tell how close towards the goal learners have progressed and, consequently, what remains to be acquired (Corder, 1981). A number of errors and their types serve not only as indicators of the proficiency level, but they also help teachers in applying appropriate steps to treat learners' difficulties. Teachers can receive information as to whether they can move on to the next item which is included in the syllabus or not.

It is important to define error, its source, and types, since it has a considerable impact on further decisions that a teacher has to make, namely, the decisions concerning negative evidence.

This chapter offers a brief discussion of all the points mentioned above concerning the different approaches which discuss the error phenomenon in depth in addition to the different distinctions of error definitions, especially those which distinguish error from mistake, error types and sources.

1. A Historical Perspective

Language is a system of rules that the learner has to acquire or learn and trying out language and making errors are too a natural and unavoidable part of this process (Doff, 1995). Students' errors are a very useful tool of showing what they have and what they have not learnt. Instead of seeing errors negatively as a sign of failure (by the teachers or the students) errors should be seen positively as an indication of what teachers still need to teach or learn. According to Hadley (1993), the openness of language leads to both creativity and error. He posits that the process which leads to creativity is also the process which leads to error which is something we must accept, but clearly since we cannot have one without the other, we cannot ignore, confine or fail to appreciate or encourage this process. Errors do occur in second language learning (SLL) and therefore we should acknowledge and deal with them.

As a result, numerous approaches to language teaching emerged explaining the process of language learning and suggesting new methods of language teaching. As Christison and Krahnke (1983) pointed out, perhaps no aspect of language pedagogy has been the subject of more interest than the study of learner error.

This chapter presents those approaches to second language learning (SLL) that deal with error and error correction and pay close attention to it.

1.1. Behaviourism

The behaviourist approach to language learning was dominant in the 1950s and 1960s. It is one of the first schools of thought which dealt with learners' errors in great depth.

Behaviourists believed that learning a language is a matter of habit formation and a purely mechanical process. They viewed language learning as a process of acquiring skills, similar to learning to do something practical, like cooking or driving a car. As Hubbard et al. (1983) observed, the behaviourists would not say that a speaker of a language knows his language, but rather that he is able to perform in it. From this point of view, repeating and imitating incorrect forms would be harmful and thus have to be avoided.

If an error occurs, it is a sign of bad teaching methods. As Corder (1984) pointed out, "if we were to achieve a perfect teaching method, the errors would never be committed in the first place" (p.20). The occurrence of errors is thus a sign of one's inadequate teaching techniques. From the behaviourist perspective, errors are seen as something negative and a sign of failure.

1.2. Contrastive Analysis

The earliest approach to error identification is contrastive analysis (CA), which entails a "systematic comparison of specific linguistic characteristics of two (or more) languages in order to identify points of structural similarity and differences between native languages (NLS) and target languages (TLS)". (Fries 1945: 9, cited in Freeman and Long 1991: 51-52). Fries believed that the most efficient materials are those that are based on a scientific

description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner.

CA was used for explaining errors made by language learners. It attempted to answer the question, why some language features are more difficult for learners to acquire than others. Many researchers at that time carried out contrastive analyses between pairs of languages.

The contrastive analysis theory was built on the behaviourist view of language learning as a mechanical process of habit formation. It was believed that the aspects of the target language (L2) which are different from one's mother tongue (L1) were consequently to cause problems in learning. As Lightbound (2005) stated, the logic is that "when learning a second language a person will tend to use mother tongue structures in second language production, and where L1 structures differ from the L2, mistakes will be made" (p. 66). Finding out the differences and similarities between individual pairs of languages was thus believed to be enough to handle the problems arising in teaching. Based on that view, it was believed that "contrastive analysis can highlight and predict the difficulties of pupils" (Richards, 1984: 172). The method, therefore, concentrated on predicting error before it was actually made.

The theoretical expectations raised by CA failed to explain all types of error. As Richards and Sampson (1984) pointed out, "errors which did not fit systematically into the native language or target language were, for the most part, ignored" (p. 4). It was often the case that teachers were dissatisfied by findings of CA, since it does not tell them much what they already did know. Moreover, many errors observed in classrooms could not be predicted by the analysis anyway (Nemser, 1984).

It would, however, be wrong to claim that findings of CA are not predictive at all. Today, CA is seen as an explanatory method rather than a predictive one. As Shastri (2010) noted, it "helps us to decide on the extent of the interference of L1 in L2" (p. 26). This may

lead us to say that in addition to its failure to predict all types of errors, CA is still an insufficient teaching method especially with its limited interest in L1 interference as the only source of errors.

1.3. Error Analysis

In the 1960s, Error Analysis (EA) was developed and offered as an alternative to Contrastive Analysis. It suggests that the influence of the native language on second language is more complex; second language learners' errors are caused by many complex factors affecting the learning process such as the target language itself, the communicative strategies used as well as the type and quality of second language instruction (Hashim, 1999).

It is important to stress the point that EA not only explores sources of error, but also many other aspects of error and language learning. The shift of focus from learners' mother tongue to the target language is the major aspect that distinguishes EA from the preceding method. Another important change is that errors are not only predicted, but mainly observed, analysed and classified.

The process of analysing an error has three stages. According to Shastri (2010), these are identification, reconstruction and description of error. First of all, one needs to identify an utterance as being erroneous (or idiosyncratic as referred to by Corder). Such idiosyncratic utterance is then compared with the L2 and an utterance with the same meaning is then reconstructed. In this respect, EA is very much like CA. The final stage of analysis is description of how and why the idiosyncratic utterance occurred.

Error analysts frequently came up with various error typologies. The most widely spread division is between errors (systematic) and mistakes (accidental) from which error typologies are derived. To illustrate the point, Freeman and Long (1991), in their summary of intralingual errors (those that are not traceable to L1 interference), identified four types:

overgeneralization, simplification, communication-based errors, and induced errors. This similar to Corder's (1984) typology, although slight differences exist. Each of these categories is always clearly defined and distinguished from the others, which makes it easy to categorize all errors. These typologies will be paid closer attention further in the present work in the section on "Types of Error".

2. Errors in Language Teaching Approaches

2.1. The Grammar -Translation Method

Language, as one of the typically human characteristics, has been subject to different studies for a long time. At the time when Latin was the dominant language in Europe, language was studied from several perspectives. At that time, however, only receptive skills were studied, as people learned the language through literature and writing, followed with a detailed study of grammar. In this grammar-translation method, as Lightbound (2005) observed, "the main activity was focused on written translation, and no attention was given to the actual communicative use of the language in question" (p. 64). Later, when English took over as the most widely used language, who adopted the same methods for language learning and teaching just as Latin. It was assumed that grammar-translation method proved its efficiency through time thanks to its dominant status and thus had to be a high-quality method.

Grammar translation method, also known as the traditional method, was the dominant approach of foreign or second language. Richards and Rogers (2001) define GTM as " a method of foreign or second language teaching which makes use of translation and grammar study as the main teaching and learning activities" (p. 231).

According to Diane Larsen- Freeman in his book "*Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching"* (2011), GTM is based on teaching grammar and structures of the target

language; Teachers should raise the students' awareness towards the grammar rules of the target language. In Other words, it is important to provide students with correction when they make mistakes. The elective form of correction is explicit error correction, possibly supplemented with rule explanation; in other words, the teacher usually practice all-out correction and would prioritize accuracy over fluency, form over communication, and product over process. Hence, in the assessment of learner output the teacher would particularly penalize grammatical errors.

In the 20th century, with an increased need for actual communication in English, the grammar-translation method stopped being efficient and therefore new methods of approaching language learning were needed.

2.2. The Audio-Lingual Approaches

In the 1950s and 1960s, the audio-lingual approach to teaching was the prevailing method, where immediate correction of errors was important (Griffiths & Parr, 2001; V. Russell, 2009). According to Larsen-Freeman (2000) "it is important to prevent learners from making errors. Errors lead to the information of bad habits. When errors do occur, they should be immediately corrected by the teacher" (P. 43). Learners 'errors should not be tolerated and efforts should be made to rid the learners of the errors as soon as possible.

According to the behaviourists' views and as what have been mentioned previously learning could be achieved through repetitions of the desired actions. However, in the 1970s theorists started to question the behaviouristic methods, instead favouring a more naturalistic approach to learning. Terrell (1977) proposed a method which he called the "Natural Approach", in which communicative activities in the classroom were important and where students' errors were largely ignored unless there was a breakdown in the communication. Stephen Krashen was also involved in the construction of the Natural Approach, and he

claimed that the behaviouristic methods could have a damaging effect on the acquisition of a second language (SL) (1982). Instead he proposed the Monitor Model, which includes five hypotheses about language learning: the Acquisition—Learning hypothesis, the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Affective Filter, and the Natural Order Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982). The Comprehensible Input Hypothesis is arguably his most influential contribution to SLA research.

2.3. Krashen's Natural Approach and Input Hypothesis

There are very few language-teaching experts today who promote no focus on form. A prime advocate of this view is Stephen Krashen with his Natural Approach. This theory is strongly against any error correction in L2 acquisition and errors are not treated at all. Krashen and Terrell (1983) developed a hypothesis claiming that L2 learners should never be forced into speaking in L2 before they are ready for it. They introduced the notion of "silent period" (Krashen, 1982) during which learners only listen and decide for themselves when they are ready to perform in the target language. After the silent period an early production stage comes in which teachers are supposed to focus on meaning and not to correct errors (Brown, 2007). It is only during the last stage of extended production that teachers are allowed to correct some errors, though very rarely and only in case of communication breakdown. The reason is, in part, that Krashen believed that when students are relaxed, acquisition takes place.

Krashen's input hypothesis is the core thought which supports the idea of refusing any error correction. This hypothesis claims that "We acquire by understanding language that contains structure a bit beyond our current level of competence (i + 1). This is done with the help of context or extra-linguistic information" (Krashen, 2009: 21). Krashen thus believed that if comprehensible input (i + 1) is provided to the learner, it is all he or she needs to

develop his interlanguage further. According to him, learners do not need to be aware of the gap between their knowledge and the input; that is, they do not need to know that they are learning something new. Focus on form is undesirable and thus no correction or error treatment is needed whatsoever. As he claimed, acquisition is a result of comprehensible input, not error correction.

Generally, it is more beneficial for learners if their teachers decide to give up form-based EC at all. This belief is what causes conflict with most other SLA theories. The vast majority of them indeed see error correction as facilitative and useful (Ellis, 2009). Nevertheless, some of Krashen's ideas remain of use, such as allowing learners enough time to listen before forcing them to speak, or avoiding over-correction so as not to discourage students as regards speaking.

2.4. The Communicative Approach

Daisy (2012) stated that communicative language teaching (CLT) is an approach to the teaching of second and foreign languages that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. And Richards and Rodgers (2001) wrote that, CLT "aims to (a) make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and (b) develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication" (p. 155). CLT approach is believed to be the most effective theoretical model in English language teaching since early 1970s. Richards and Rodgers further emphasized that in the light to the concept of this approach, language carries not only functional meaning, but also carries social meaning.

Regarding errors, not all of them are dealt with and learners are not heavily corrected. Errors are seen as a "completely normal phenomenon in the development of communicative skills" (Littlewood, 1994: 94). This is in short the core idea of CLT. The learners are given

more space and they enter the learning process with their unique personalities. The teachers, on the other hand, are to step down from their places, the places where the earlier approaches used to place them, and become more of "humans among humans" (ibid.: 94).

It is thus evident that the attitude to errors was gradually changing towards a more favourable status in SLL. The same can be said about error correction (EC), "The *correction* of errors provides precisely the sort of negative evidence which is necessary to discovery of the correct concept or rule" (Corder, 1984: 170).

3. Error in Second Language Learning

Since the forties to date, Error Studies (ES) related to second language learning (SLL) have held a predominant place in the field of Applied Linguistics. However, in the last two decades, there has been a decline of studies dealing with the collection, description and classification of language learners' errors. Nevertheless, as it is reflected in the great number of publications on the issue through the five past years, both teachers of English and researchers have continued showing interest in related aspects such as error correction and error evaluation, (Bartram & Walton, 1991; Schachter, 1991)**,** interlanguage and language transfer (Hamnlerly, 1991 ; Selinker, 1992).

Error indeed plays an important role in SLL, as it is an inseparable part of learners' production. As Lightbound (2010) observed, "comprehension is, to most learners, an easier task due to the way the incoming information is processed, […] whereas production seems to involve greater processing constraints" (p. 97). It is thus not surprising that dealing with error, which comes about as a result of the constraints, is an important part of teachers' work.

3.1. Definition of Error

Errors are systematic and may give valuable insight into language acquisition because they are goofs in the learner's underlying competence. When native speakers make mistakes, they can identify and correct them immediately because they have almost full knowledge of the linguistic structure of their mother tongue (Scovel, 2001). Non-native speakers, L2 learners not only make mistakes, they also commit errors and as they have only an incomplete knowledge of the target language, they are not always able to correct the errors that they make. The learners' errors reflect a lack of underlying competence in the language that they are learning.

Liski and Putnanen's (1983) defined error as, "An error occurs where the speaker fails to follow the pattern or manner of the speech of educated people in English speaking countries today" (cited in Lightbound, 2005: 77).

In most general terms, error can be described as an "unsuccessful bit of language" (James, 1998: 1). Such definition is, however, too broad, and thus insufficient. Additionally, as Shastri (2010) pointed out, it is crucial to stress that an error is not corrigible by the learner him/herself and may suggest a certain lack of linguistic competence. Following James's and Shastri's observations, we could thus define error as a form or structure in the learner's utterance which is unintentionally deviant from the language system and is not corrigible by the learner.

3.2. Error and Mistake

It is very important in this level to make a distinction between error and mistake in order to be able to discuss the concept of negative evidence and error correction in the next chapter. In linguistics, the definitions of terms 'mistake' and 'error' are rather diverse, even though the term 'error' is often assumed to incorporate the notion of a 'mistake'. According to

Brown (1987), a mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a 'slip', in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly. Obviously, mistakes do not result from the learner's lack of knowledge. Equally important, Brown (1987) clarified that when attention is called to a mistake, they can be self-corrected. Also, according to Lennon (1999, as cited in Maicusi et al., 2000), an error is a linguistic form or combination of forms which in the same context and under similar conditions of production would not be produced by the speakers' native counterparts".(p: 158). In addition, Corder (1999, as cited in Tafani, 2009) explained that errors reflect gaps in learners' knowledge and that they occur because the learner does not know what is correct and what is not. For the same reason, second language (L2) errors are considered "unwanted forms" (George, 1972, as cited in Maicusi et al., 2000) and are regarded as something negative which must be avoided by any means. Lastly, Brown (1987) argues that, even if they are pointed out to the learner, errors cannot be self-corrected.

Dictionaries seem to regard *mistake* as a more general term than *error*. Cambridge Online Dictionary of British English provides us with a simple definition of error, "error: a mistake" (*Cambridge Dictionary Online*). Mistake, on the other hand, is explained in more detail: "an action, decision or judgment which produces an unwanted or unintentional result" (*Cambridge Dictionary Online*). Exactly the same situation occurs in the Oxford Dictionary, where error is simply defined as a mistake. A mistake is again given more space and is defined as "an act or judgement that is misguided or wrong" (*Oxford Online Dictionary*). Not surprisingly, Macmillan Dictionary follows the same pattern and only adds that error is a "mistake, for example in a calculation or a decision" (*Macmillan Dictionary*). Mistake is rather defined as "something that you have not done correctly, or something you say or think that is not correct" (*Macmillan Dictionary*). From these definitions it is clear that these dictionaries regard error and mistake as synonymous.

3.3. Sources of Error

There are mainly two major sources of errors in second language learning. The first source is interference from the native language while the second source can be attributed to intralingual and developmental factors. The former are those that "may be traced back to the learner's knowledge of the L1 or another language previously acquired" (Lightbound, 2005: 99). It is also called *interlingual errors*. The latter are those that are caused by incorrect applications of the rules of the L2, resulting in conflicts and "'non-target-language-like' behaviour" (Lightbound, 2005: 99). Apart from these, Shastri (2010) listed *fossilization* as another source of error. It occurs when some errors remain within the language system of proficient learners, who then become unable to correct them.

James (1998), on the other hand, proposed a more complex classification when he came up with six possible reasons of errors that learners make:

- Ignorance and avoidance: lack of knowledge leading to using an L1 item and thus creating L1 transfer or interference; avoidance happens when learners do not know the L1 and L2 items and have to avoid them somehow.

- L1 influence: the interlingual errors caused by L1 interference.

- L2 causes: the already mentioned intralingual errors – they happen when learners are ignorant of an L2 item; an example can be overgeneralization of a rule.

- Communication strategy-based errors: using near-equivalent forms, synonyms, super ordinate terms, or antonyms instead of the unknown target language form.

- Induced errors: result from classroom situations, where learners get misled by the way teachers give examples, definitions, explanations; there are also teacher-induced or exercise induced errors.

- Compound and ambiguous errors: errors ascribable to more than one cause, which are ambiguous errors, happen when there are two competing diagnoses of errors and we cannot be sure which source is the true one.

This classification could be more exhaustive than the previous classifications since it includes almost the possible reasons or sources of errors but still it does not deny the existence of other sources previously mentioned.

3.4. Types of Errors

Considering seriousness of error, there is generally distinction between *global* and *local* errors. As Burt and Kiparsky (1974) explained, local errors "are to be found within a limited linguistic domain i.e. involving the word or clause and affecting specific items such as articles, verb and noun agreement" (cited in Lightbound, 2005: 85). Global errors, on the other hand, "tend to be located within the relations between clauses, or sentences, or over longer stretches of discourse" (Lightbound, 2005: 85). Typically, these include word order, wrongly placed sentence connectors, tenses, relative pronouns, etc.

James (1998: 104-113) studied error taxonomies and classified errors into two types: linguistic categories (morphology, phonology, etc.) and surface structure taxonomies (errors of addition, omission, etc.). Choděra (2006) listed four categories on linguistic bases: *grammatical, lexical, spelling* and *phonetic* errors. It is interesting to note that all these classifications agree on the group of lexical errors (errors of vocabulary) yet employ differing angles of view and thus different categories. Based on a corpus of spoken language, Chun, Day, Chenoweth, and Luppescue (1982) distinguished five categories:

- Discourse errors: errors beyond the sentence level including structural/pragmatic aspects with inappropriate openings and closings, incorrect topic switches, inappropriate refusals, etc.

- Factual errors: including those concerning factual knowledge or the truth value of an utterance.

- Word choice errors: incorrect choice or addition of a noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, etc.

- Syntactic errors: tense agreement, morphology, word order, etc.

- Omissions: involving the incorrect omission of nouns, verbs, auxiliaries, articles, etc.

(cited in Lightbound, 2005: 88)

This classification seems to be, as Lightbound (2010) observed, the most appropriate one, as it is not built up around a single classifying aspect, but rather combines several aspects into a mixed classification (i.e. it is not purely linguistic). There are, however, quite a few such classifications that do not consider one single factor only, but rather mix more of them together.

Conclusion

In conclusion, learning a language involves testing out hypotheses about the system; as a result, some of the attempts might be erroneous. Since errors form a part of language learning that cannot be eliminated, there might be various views concerning them. Some teachers regard errors as failures in teaching particular language aspects, and students as well may perceive them as failures to acquire what they are supposed to know. The same thing can be said about researchers who naturally have different points of view concerning errors and the language acquisition process in general. However, errors might also be accepted as an indication that learning has taken place. One of the reasons for the popularity of error studies lies in their direct connection to EC or negative evidence which is a part of teacher's responsibility to improve the students' output. In the next chapter we will discuss the concept of NE in details.

CHAPTER TWO

NEGATIVE EVIDENCE

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NEGATIVE EVIDENCE

Introduction

There has been much discussion on errors and their correction in the foreign language classroom partly because of the fact that students' and teachers' attitudes towards errors and errors correction are different. The notions of negative feedback and correction are often termed evidence, which is the information that learners receive about the target language in reaction to their attempts at producing it. One can distinguish two   kinds of evidence, namely *positive evidence* and *negative evidence*.

Long (1996) defined the difference between *positive evidence* and *negative evidence* as the former being the evidence that provides learners with constructions that are acceptable in the target language and the latter being the evidence that informs the learner of what is not acceptable as a construction in the target language. What we mean by evidence, as used in this context, is the correction methods that the teacher of the target language uses to show the student that their utterance was incorrect.

The present chapter sketches out the different definitions of negative evidence (NE), its types, its importance, and its effect on students' performance and motivation. Then, we will discuss how to enhance learning through negative evidence, and finally we will deal with teachers' and students' perceptions of negative evidence.

1. On the Nature of Negative Evidence

The language to which learners are exposed when learning a second language is described as linguistic input. In second language (L2) classroom contexts, learners are usually provided with two types of evidence namely *positive evidence* and *negative evidence*. The term evidence refers to an interlocutor's response to a speaker's utterance during interaction. Positive evidence can be provided as authentic input, like for example what occurs in naturalistic conversations. It is also provided as modified input like what occurs in foreigner talk discourse or teacher talk .In contrast, negative evidence is information provided to learners about what is not appropriate in the target language.

This chapter aims to provide an overview of some important areas of research on negative evidence. Ever since the role of negative evidence in SLA was theoretically established, there has been a substantial amount of research on its effectiveness, and researchers have approached it from different perspectives. Some of this research will be mentioned in this section.

According to Schachter (1991), the research on negative feedback prior to the 1980s was very limited, as "negative data for a long time meant nothing more than simple corrections of the learner's speech production" (*ibid*.: 90). Long's Interaction Hypothesis, stating that providing learners with both positive and negative evidence makes the acquisition of the language easier, led to a substantial amount of research on the topic. From an educational perspective on interaction studies, the topic has been of particular importance.

Long (1991: 45-46) described focus on form as drawing "students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication". The use of negative evidence is a way of providing such attention.

The language learning classroom is a typical area for investigating the topic, due to the fact that negative evide*nce* is provided by the teacher frequently during the lessons. Classroom studies can be used to test theories regarding language acquisition, and also, from a more pedagogical perspective, to find out which practices concerning negative evidence are the most effective when learning a language.

Below is an outline of some of the most important areas of negative evidence (NE). First, some definitions of NE are presented. Then, the importance and effects of NE are discussed in an effort to shed light on just how efficient it is. Furthermore, the different types of NE are discussed in some detail.

1.1. Definition of Negative Evidence

Just to be clear, the term 'negative evidence' is used interchangeably with `negative feedback' and `corrective feedback' to describe the same phenomena by SLA researchers. However, the two latter terms imply a more pedagogical intention to correct. Even though there is a difference between the terms, they are all used to refer to reactions to learner's non-native-like output. What we mean by evidence, as used in this context, is the correction methods that the teacher uses to show a student that his utterance is incorrect.

As put by Thornberg (2005: 149) "It is necessary to state that errors are a natural part of the learning process". Errors are common features of language learning. Everyone makes errors in the learning process whether learning the first or the second language. In EFL classrooms, teachers generally encourage their students and to speak as much as possible with the purpose of improving their performance. When students use the target language they make different mistakes, and if these mistakes are not corrected, students will incorporate them for

correct forms in their interlanguage system. As such, if teachers do not provide corrective feedback, target items are likely to fossilize.

Lightbown and Spada (1999:171-172) showed that "corrective feedback is any indication to the learners that their use of the target language is incorrect". Corrective feedback is the way in which teachers or native speakers of the target language correct the errors made by learners of the target language if they do not use it correctly.

Tunestall and Gipps (1996) illustrated that negative feedback often takes place during student's presentation of unsuitable performance. Therefore, negative feedback is designed to eliminate or stop a performance that is viewed as unsatisfactory by teachers.

1.2. Forms of Negative Evidence

1.2.1. The Oral Form

Frey and Fisher (2009: cited in Bouraya, 2012) held that feedback occurs mainly through the spoken form. In order to get positive outcomes from learners, the oral feedback should be characterized by the setting, the structure, and the tone. The oral form of feedback is a strong power for moving students on and it is the most interactive form of feedback. It can be direct (provided to groups or individuals), or indirect (others listen and think about what has been said). Dialogue and questioning are the key ways by which teachers open chances for effective oral feedback; through these, teachers discover what students already know and identify gaps in their knowledge, to let them bridge the gap between what they currently know and the learning goals.

1.2.2. The Written Form

Ken and Fiona (2000: 206) defined written feedback as "The substantial comments that many teachers write on student papers [...] provide a reader reaction and offer targeted instruction". Written feedback or handwritten commentary is a fundamental method of responding to students' writing, in order to assist students' writing progress, and to point out what is wrong in their writing performance; it is considered as teacher reaction to students' writing. Teacher written comments on the students' paper indicate problems and make suggestions for improving their writing capacities.

1.3. Types of Negative Evidence

Students receive different responses when making errors. Lyster and Ranta (1997) put forward six types of corrective feedback (negative evidence). The six types are: 1) Explicit Correction, 2) Implicit Correction (Recasts), 3) Metalinguistic Clues, 4) Elicitation,5) Repetition, 6) Clarification request.

- **Explicit Correction:** The Teacher provides the correct form and indicates that the student's utterance is incorrect.

  S: She go to school every day

  T: It's not "she go", but "she goes"

- **Implicit Correction (Recast):** the teacher implicitly reformulates the student's utterance without directly indicating that the student's utterance is incorrect.

  S: I have 20 years old

  T: I am 20 years old.

- **Elicitation:** The teacher elicits the correct form from the student by pausing to let him complete the teachers' utterance (e.g., "It's a…..), by asking questions, or by asking students to reformulate the utterance.

S: When did you go to the market?

T: when did you.......?

- **Metalinguistic clues:** the teacher asks questions or provides comments related to the formation of the students' utterance without providing the correct form. Metalinguistic questions also refer to the nature of the error but are asked in order to elicit information from the learner, e.g. by asking "Is 'girls' singular?".

S: There were many flower in the garden

T: You need plural

- **Clarification request:** the teacher requests for more information from a student about an utterance.

S: How many years do you have?

T: Sorry?

- **Repetition:** The teacher repeats the student's ill-formed utterance, and regulates intonation to show the error.

S: I eated an apple

T: I EATED an apple

In Lyster and Ranta's study (1997), recast was the most widely used technique, being the preferred type feedback move in 55% of the cases, while the remaining 45% were divided as follows: elicitation (14%), clarification requests (11%), metalinguistic feedback (8%), explicit correction (7%), and repetition of error (5%). Studies by Mackey, Oliver and Leeman (2003) further confirmed that recasts were the most common form of error correction used by language teachers.

1.4. Effects of Different Types of Negative Evidence

Ellis, Loewen and Erlam (2006) chose to divide the negative feedback types into either implicit or explicit as they put it: "In the case of implicit feedback, there is no overt indicator

that an error has been committed, whereas in explicit feedback types, there is" (p. 540-541). Recasts are generally regarded as implicit, whereas explicit correction or metalinguistic clues is explicit.

The above mentioned divergences regarding types of corrective feedback has also made the task of finding out which type of negative evidence is the most efficient in SLA a challenging one. Since we have seen that recasts are the most widely used feedback type in the classroom, it is the feedback type that attracts the most attention here. Then, the notion of uptake as an outcome measure of SLA acquisition is briefly accounted for, before looking at which feedback type is more likely to lead to uptake.

1.4.1. Explicit Negative Evidence

One of the good things about metalinguistic clues is that, the teacher asks a question that centers on the error, it helps the student in locating the error and then hopefully he will use the hint provided by the teacher in the question to reformulate his utterance. Also, since the teacher does not provide his students with the correction directly, he pushes them to think about it and learn it. Although in order for this practice to work properly in a classroom situation, the learner is required to have some linguistic knowledge. For instance if the teacher asks the student: Does that verb form agree with the subject?" Firstly, the student must know what verbs and subjects are, and secondly they must understand the notion of agreement among subjects and verbs, and thirdly they must know what the `form of a verb' entails.

When it comes to elicitation, it is good method for promoting self-generated repair from the learner, which in turn increases the rate of his uptake in. Again, the problem with this method of correction is that it presumes linguistic knowledge on the part of the learner, which if not present, makes this method useless and a waste of time.

1.4.2. Implicit Negative Evidence (eg: Recasts)

With the implicit correction of errors, students are likely to recognize instantly that the form they have provided is incorrect. They also have the opportunity to learn from the form provided by the teacher by way of contrasting the incorrect form with the correct model. On the other hand one of the worst things about this method of correction is that since the teacher gives the correct form, there is little chance for the student to try and work out why their form is incorrect at all. This lack of understanding can lead also to the non-internalization of the correct form because if the student does not understand the reason of incorrectness then he has no grounded way of modifying his knowledge.

Since research shows that recasts are by far the most frequently used type of feedback in the classroom, the amount of research on the topic has increased rapidly. However, there are also other reasons why recasts have been given so much attention. For example, recasts have generally been viewed as an implicit type of negative feedback, and have thus often been studied when comparing the effects of implicit versus explicit feedback. Research has led to mixed results on whether or not recasts are beneficial to learners.

In his research of negative feedback in immersion classrooms, Lyster (1998a) found that recasts are " less successful at drawing learners' attention to their non-target output at least in content-based classrooms where recasts risk being perceived by young learners as alternative or identical forms"(p. 207). In a different study the same year, Lyster expanded on why he thought the ambiguity of recasts is a problem:

> Because ill-formed and well-formed sentences are equally likely to be
> followed by a variety of confirming and approving moves initiated by
> teachers, it remains difficult, if not impossible for young learners, with
> some degree of reliability, to (a) test hypotheses about the target

language and (b) detect input-output mismatches with respect to form

(Lyster, 1998b:p75).

This claim has been supported by Panova and Lyster (2002) who suggested that the reason why prompts (prompts are described as feedback techniques that push learners to self correction) led to more learning than recasts was that the learners failed to notice their own errors and were not sure about how to interpret recasts.

1.5. The Importance of Negative Evidence in SLA

Most teachers agree with the importance of *negative evidence* in the classroom, and its role in the process of second language acquisition (SLA). Much the same goes for the benefit of the interaction between participants in the classroom.

For many years, many researchers believed that *positive evidence* is all and it is required for acquisition to happen, however negative evidence affects only the performance but not change in underlying competence (Schwartz, 1993). Later, Krashen (1985) with his Input Hypothesis rejects the usefulness of *negative evidence* on SLA and claims that NE interrupts the flow of discourse for providing comprehensible input.

Long (1996), in his updated Interaction Hypothesis, suggested that *negative evidence* provides direct and indirect information about what is grammatical. As stated by him, "negotiation for meaning and especially negotiation work that triggers interactional adjustments by the NS or more competent interlocutor" facilitates L2 development since it "connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways" (*ibid*: 451-452).

White (1988) stated that *positive evidence* alone is not sufficient. Concerning whether or not L2 acquisition can progress on the basis of positive evidence alone she later suggested that it cannot, and that "there will be cases where change from X to Y will require negative

evidence" (*ibid*:148). White (1991) pointed out that to arrive at the appropriate L2 grammatical forms just relying on positive evidence alone cannot be enough for L2 learners. For exemple to reset the L2 word order, negative evidence provides enough information, which is not always accessible through positive evidence.

Also when an option is permitted in the learner's L1 only, it is necessary to use NE. Thus, negative evidence is necessary to activate the resetting of the parameter to its L2 value. The role of negative evidence adopted by the partial access position consists in providing access to properties defined by the principles learners have no longer access to. Negative evidence provides opportunities for learners to notice different points when their messages misunderstood, which could lead to reconsiderations (Chouinard & Clark, 2003).According to Gass (1988, 1990, 1991), negative evidence functions as an attention-getting-device. Later, she added that fossilization might occur if in the classrooms direct or frequent negative feedback is not provided.

2. Teachers' Negative Evidence

Of note, the term `negative evidence' is used interchangeably with `negative feedback' and `corrective feedback'. Students usually see their teachers as their only source of knowledge. They, therefore, rely on their teachers to provide them with feedback and the knowledge they need. The type and amount of negative evidence provided may affect students' attitude towards, and acceptance of, corrective feedback. Teachers should be aware of whether their feedback type is likely to affect students' attitudes negatively or positively.

Talking about teacher's feedback makes one wonder whether the teachers is the only source of feedback. In fact, another possible source is peers feedback. Hendrickson (1980: 221) believed that peer reviews is beneficial because "it allows the students to work in non-

threatening educational setting that helps build their confidence and fosters learning by discovery and sharing".

2.1. Teachers' Feedback Dimensions

Brookhart (2008) pointed out that feedback strategies can vary in several dimensions: timing, amount, mode, and audience.

2.1.1. Timing

Brookhart (*ibid.:*10) stated that "A general principle for gauging the timing of feedback is to put yourself in the students' place. When would students want to hear teachers' feedback? When they are still thinking about the work, of course. And when they can still do something about it". The aim of giving immediate or delayed feedback is to aid students hear it and use it. Feedback should be provided while students are still attentive to the topic, assignment, or performance in question. It should be given while they still think of the learning purpose. It especially needs to come while they still have some reason to work on the learning goal.

2.1.2. Amount

Brookhart (*ibid*.: 12) argued that: "For real learning, what makes the differences is a usable amount of information that corrects with something students already know and takes them from that point to the next level". Likely, the hardest resolution to make about feedback is the amount to give. A usual tendency is to repair everything you see. That is the teacher's eye view, where the aim is perfect achievement of all learning targets. Judging the right amount of feedback to give , on how many points requires deep knowledge and consideration.

2.1.3. Mode

Brookhart (*ibid*, 15) claimed that: "Feedback can be delivered in many modalities". Some forms of tasks lend themselves better to written feedback; some, to oral feedback; and some, to demonstrations. Some of the best feedback practices can arise from conversations with the students. For example, rather than telling a student everything the teacher notices about his work, he might start by asking him questions.

2.1.4. Audience

Brookhart (*Ibid*.: 19) suggested that "Like all communication, feedback works best when it has a strong and appropriate sense of the audience". Feedback about the details of individual work is best addressed to the individual student, in terms of what the student can understand. This simple practice is strong in itself because, in addition to the information provided, it communicates to the students a sense that the teacher cares about his individual progress. Thus, the first point about audience is to know whom you are talking to.

2.2. Teacher's Feedback Principles

Teachers need to make feedback as helpful as possible, in order to be effective teachers. Their task is to ensure that it is effective, so that students can understand it and use it. Feedback is not used to break things down; it is used to build things up. Krenk (2012) suggested the following list of possible principles which could be respected to develop more effective oral feedback:

- **State the constructive purpose for giving feedback**

 Good feedback should always have a goal and target for improvement.

- **Focus on description rather than judgment**

Judging students' performance is an evaluation of what has occurred in terms of right and wrong. While describing student's performance is just a way of reporting what has occurred. Constructive feedback should not be judgmental. For example when a teacher say to his students: "your communication skills are good "this is not very helpful." Instead, he needs to be specific by saying something like: "you demonstrate a high degree of confidence when you answer my question".

- **Focus on observation rather than inference**

Observation indicates what teachers can hear or see about students' performance, while inference indicates the interpretation and assumption teachers make from what they hear or see. Teachers have to observe and to focus on their reaction and on students' doings.

- **Focus on behaviour rather than the person**

 Teacher' focus should shift to the students' bahaviour rather than his expectation of the students' proper. To illustrate, the use of adverbs which describe disposals, rather than adjectives which describe qualities is what the teacher is supposed to expect.

- **Provide a balance of positive and negative feedback**

By nature, students react to their teacher's feedback either negatively or positively. So the effectiveness of teachers' feedback depends fundamentally on students' reaction to it. If teachers constantly provide or only negative feedback, students may begin to mistrust it and not listen.

2.3. Learners' and Teachers' Perceptions of Negative Evidence

There are two approaches to investigating perceptions of negative feedback. One way is to examine whether students perceive the negative feedback provided in the classroom as

error correction. Another is whether teachers perceive their own use of, for example, recasts as a means of error correction or more as a conversational strategy. Negative evidence may be investigated from the teachers' point of view to shed light on their views and opinions regarding the provision of negative feedback. It may also be investigated from the students' point of view to shed light on their views and opinions on receiving it.

Chaudron (1988: 133) stated that students "derive information about their behavior from the teacher's reaction, or lack of one, to their behavior" , while Horner (1988) asserted that lack of correction may lead to confusion among the other students, and that they should receive confirmation of their suspicions when they sense that an error has occurred.

Lyster (1998a) found that teachers in French immersion classrooms preferred to use negotiation of form (i.e. elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests or repetition) to correct lexical errors. When correcting phonological and grammatical errors, recasts was the preferred feedback type. The study also revealed a generally low tolerance among teachers for lexical and phonological errors. Grammatical errors were not corrected that often, but when it happened, recasts were used more often than other feedback types.

In the study of Coskun (2010), he suggested that teachers should observe their students' behaviour and take the teaching context into consideration before making any corrective feedback. In the study conducted by Harmon (cited by Lightbown and Spada, 1990), he found that most students have positive attitudes towards immediate correction to their errors. Margolis (2010) studied and compared the works of Truscott, Allwright, Fanselow, Hendrickson, DeKeyser, Lyster, Lightbown, and Spada. He found contradicting results; however, all these language researchers agree that large majorities of students like receiving corrective feedback. Students look forward to the correction of their errors and they are frustrated when they are ignored or tolerated.

Truscott (1999) found a mismatch on the perception of learners and on teachers regarding corrective feedback. While majority of the students in his study believed that their teachers should correct their oral errors in the classroom, more than 50 percent of the teachers believed that these errors should not be corrected. Truscott (1999) has a different finding about this issue. He does not encourage corrective feedback in grammar because to him it does not improve the learners' ability to speak grammatically. However, he did not mention if corrective feedback to other aspects of language learning is helpful.

2.3.1. Relationship between students' anxiety and teachers' feedback

In addition to negative evidence (corrective feedback), personality factors within a learner, such as anxiety, can contribute to successful language learning. Researchers defined language anxiety in various ways. For instance, Brown (2000: 151) defined anxiety as "feelings of uneasiness, self-doubt, apprehension, or worry". MacIntyre & Gardner (1994:284) defined language anxiety as "the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning"

Language anxiety has a major influence on language learning, whatever the learning setting. Usually, students are positioned between two extremes: self confidence and the lack of it. The former is the result of many factors such as motivation and praise; The latter is The effect of many factors on top of which lies anxiety. Jang (2003) investigated the relation between foreign language anxiety and corrective feedback. The study relied on a survey carried out in Korea. In general, the results showed a high correlation between students' attitudes towards corrective feedback and their anxiety about learning a foreign language at all proficiency levels. The results also indicated that despite the fact that some learners reacted positively towards error correction, the attitude scores were significantly different from the learners' proficiency levels. Some individual learners did admit to being anxious because of

receiving corrective feedback from their teachers during the interview, meaning that corrective feedback and anxiety are clearly connected. In particular, anxiety took place when learners were asked to speak in front of their classmates.

Horwitz (1986, cited in Liu, 2006) developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). To test his theory, Horwitz asked 75 English learners of Spanish at an American university to answer the FLCAS in their scheduled language class. The study revealed that significant foreign language anxiety level was experienced by many students in foreign language learning, which adversely affected their performance in that language. When it concerned oral skills, he maintained that most students, who were supposed to answer questions alone or give presentations in front of the class, especially when unprepared, would become (very) nervous. He also noticed that students became so tense that their mouths or legs shook during the presentation.

2.3.2. Uptake

In addition to the debate regarding how beneficial recasts are for learning, there is also disagreement about the validity of using uptake as an outcome measure in SLA.

Lyster and Ranta (1997) referred to uptake as different types of student responses immediately following negative feedback. This includes responses with repair of the non-target items as well as utterances still in need of repair. Havranek's study (2002) showed that recasts without learner contribution are the least effective for all learners:

> Learners who witness a correction as auditors profit more from it if
> they have time and opportunity to formulate a silent response similar
> to the one being corrected to match it with the correction. In the data,
> this condition corresponds to form-focused exercises rather than to
> more spontaneous utterances focusing on content (*ibid.:*268-269).

Long (2007) argued that foreign and second language teachers should not reject the use of recasts in their classrooms simply because they have been found to be ambiguous in some classroom settings. Furthermore, he pointed out that the immediate uptake of recasts cannot be equalled with L2 learning.

As Panova and Lyster (2002) pointed out recasts do not promote immediate learner repair, which involves repetition. However, recasts that reduce the learner's utterance and add stress to emphasize the corrective modification are more effective at eliciting repetition of the recast and are more likely to be identified by learners as negative feedback.

Conclusion

This chapter has accounted for research on various aspects of negative evidence. First, researchers still disagree when it comes to the extent to which feedback should be given, types of feedback which are more effective, in the importance of uptake. Second, studies showed that teachers prefer to use recasts. Thirdly, feedback used by teachers in different ways to correct the errors committed by the students will be more effective if they respect some specific principles and take the students' reactions into consideration. Finally, learners' and teachers' perceptions of negative evidence have been shortly accounted for, paving the way for the next chapter which will be the practical part for the present work.

CHAPTER THREE

FIELD INVESTIGATION

ON TEACHERS' PROVISION OF NEGATIVE EVIDENCE

CHAPTER THREE

FIELD INVESTIGATION

ON TEACHERS' PROVISION OF NEGATIVE EVIDENCE

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the concept of negative evidence (NE), to discover how teachers use it as a teaching strategy and to discuss the appropriate timing for providing it. It is also important for our research to investigate the impact of NE on learners' academic achievement. In order to investigate these effects, and to check the research hypotheses which are: teachers may have positive attitude towards NE, they may mostly use implicit NE with their learners and more specifically recast; a teachers'questionnaire is used to describe teachers' behaviour concerning NE. Besides, learners' questionnaire is also used as another way to determine the way teachers' provide learners with NE since this practice takes place in classrooms where the only participants who receive it are the learners; so to be fair they have a word to say concerning their teachers' attitude. This chapter will start with an account for means of data collection, then the population and the sample will be presented before ending up with reporting the results obtained. Some pedagogical implications will also be contributed.

1. Means of Data Collection

In order to understand the nature of teachers' attitude towards, and provision of, negative evidence, the teachers' and learners' questionnaires are used. According to Okobia (1998), the questionnaire is a set of questions used to test the hypothesis of the research. The

respondents are expected to provide written answers. The collected data can be about the feelings, beliefs, experiences, or attitudes of the participants. Moser and Kalton (1971) stated that the questionnaires are easy to analyse and not expensive. Starting with teachers' questionnaire, it consists of open-ended and close- ended questions to check better the teachers' attitudes through their answers and justifications to some questions. For learners' questionnaire, we decide to use only close-ended questions because of the fact that learners usually ignore open questions and they may feel that this type of questions is time demanding. Tick-answers solve this problem and learners' felt comfortable when they answer all questions.

2. The Population and the Sample

The target population is first-year University English students. The sample of students is 60 English students who belong to five groups of first-year English classes at the University centre in Mila. Twelve students are dealt with from each group. Our sample also consists of both males and females to eliminate gender-biased effects on the students' answers. The reason behind choosing first-year students is the fact that they are beginners and the possibility of committing mistakes is usually higher than other students of more advanced levels, so the possibility of receiving NE may also increase. This may help us to collect much information from them concerning their teachers' attitude towards NE. Moving to the sample of teachers, we take the sample of 20 English teachers in the department of English in the same University Centre. Both full and part- time teachers for two reasons: first, because of the limited number of full-time English teachers in the chosen University, and second to investigate whether the teachers' employment status will affect the teachers' attitude towards NE.

3. Teachers' Questionnaire

Teachers' Questionnaire is an instrument for collecting data from English teachers about their view on the use of NE. In this questionnaire we tend to make use of the term of *negative feedback* instead of *negative evidence* to avoid ambiguity.

3.1. Description of Teachers' Questionnaire

The teachers' questionnaire consists of fifteen questions divided into four sections. It is given to 20 teachers. Section one is allocated to background information. Section two deals with teachers' correction of students' errors, section three is assigned to types of feedback, and section four deals with students' reaction to teachers' negative feedback. This questionnaire contains closed-ended questions which necessitate ticking one or more options and open-ended questions for the purpose of gathering qualitative data from teachers.

Section One: Background Information (Q1 to 3)

The first section involves three questions. Its aim is to account for teachers' experience in teaching (Q1), teachers' employment status (Q2), and teachers' specialty (Q3).

Section Two: Teachers' Correction of Students' Errors (Q4 to 8)

The second section aims to examine types of students' errors (Q4), teachers' use of negative feedback (Q5), frequency of negative feedback use (Q6), teachers' reaction to students' mistakes (Q7), and the reasons behind not using negative feedback by teachers (Q8).

Section Three: Types of Feedback (Q9 to 12)

This section is designed to explore the type or types of feedback used by teachers and which one is considered more effective for students (Q9, Q10 & 11), the type of negative feedback used by teachers (Q12).

Section Four: Students' Reaction to Teachers' Negative Feedback (Q13 & Q14)

The last section seeks to determine whether students react to teachers' negative feedback (Q13), to discover how teachers' make students take their NF into account (Q14), and to find out teachers' opinion about the impact of negative feedback on learners' performance (Q15).

3.2. Data Results and Analysis of Teachers' questionnaire

Section One: Background Information

Q01: How long have you been teaching?

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Less than one year	06	30%
b. 1-5 years	04	20%
c. 6-10 years	09	45%
d. More than 10 years	01	05%
Total	20	100%

Table 01: Teachers' Experience in Teaching
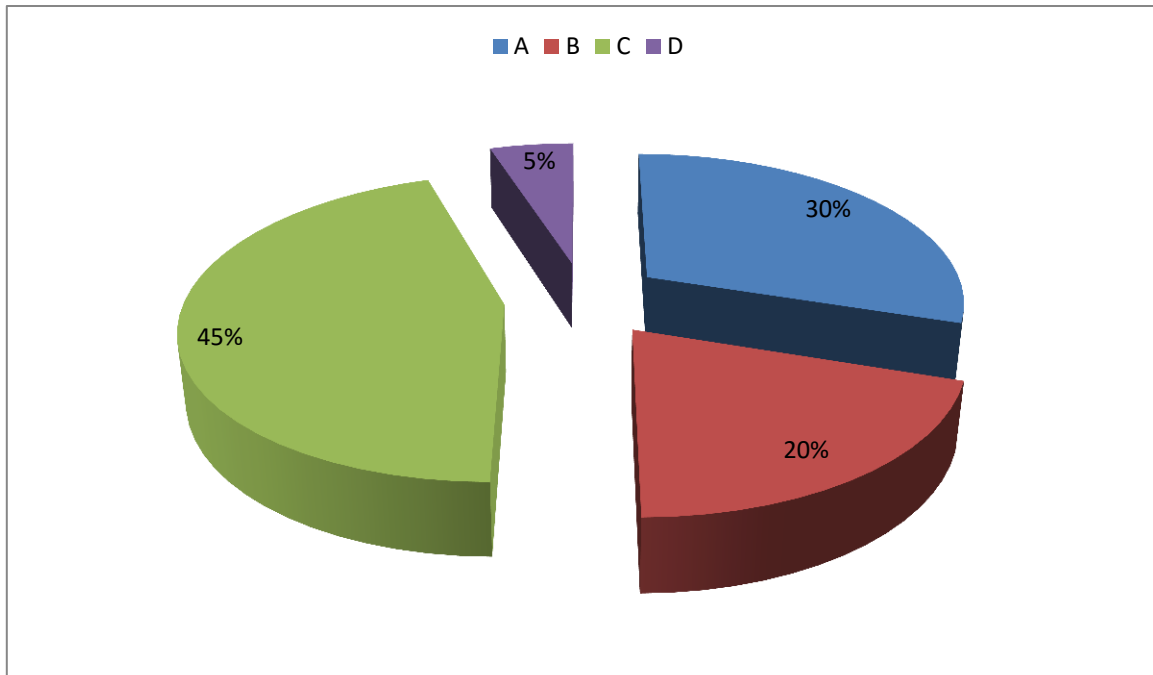
Figure 01: Teachers' Experience in Teaching

We see from teachers' replies that 45% of teachers have experience in teaching ranging from six (06) to ten (10) years, 20% of them have experience in teaching ranging from one (01) to five (05), and 5% of teachers have more than ten (10) years of experience. This means that the majority of teachers in our sample have considerable experience in teaching which makes them know much about the teaching environment including how to give feedback to students whatever its type is. Thirty percent (30%) of teachers have less than one (1) year of experience in teaching; that leads us to say that a good number of teachers in our sample are new in the field of teaching, so they do not have much knowledge about it, and if they do it remains theoretical.

Q02: What is your employment status as a teacher?

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Full-time	10	50%
b. Part-time	10	50%
Total	20	100%

Table 02: Teachers' Employment Status
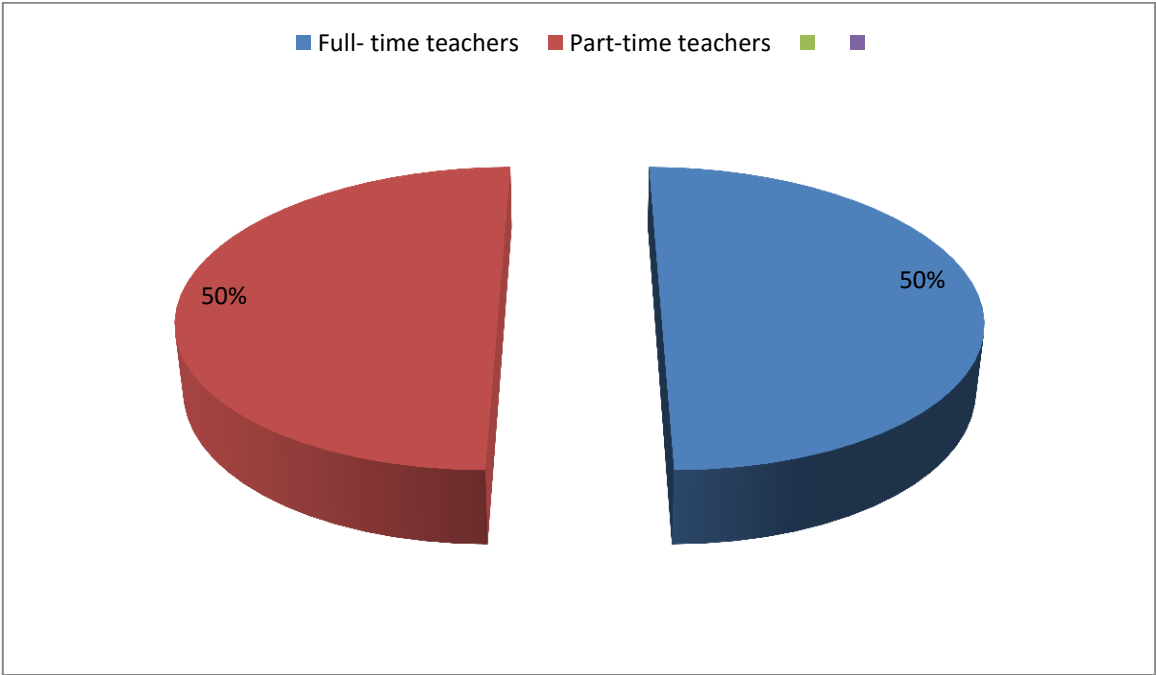
Figure 02: Teachers' Employment Status

To be honest, after analyzing teachers' answers to the foregoing item, we could not derive any useful information that can be interpreted in light of the research questions and that may help in our investigation. If history repeats itself, then, we would rather avoid asking such a question.

Q03: What is your specialty?

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Applied Linguistics	06	30%
b. Linguistics	08	40%
c. TEFL	04	20%
d. Others	02	10%
Total	20	100%

Table 03: Teachers' Specialty
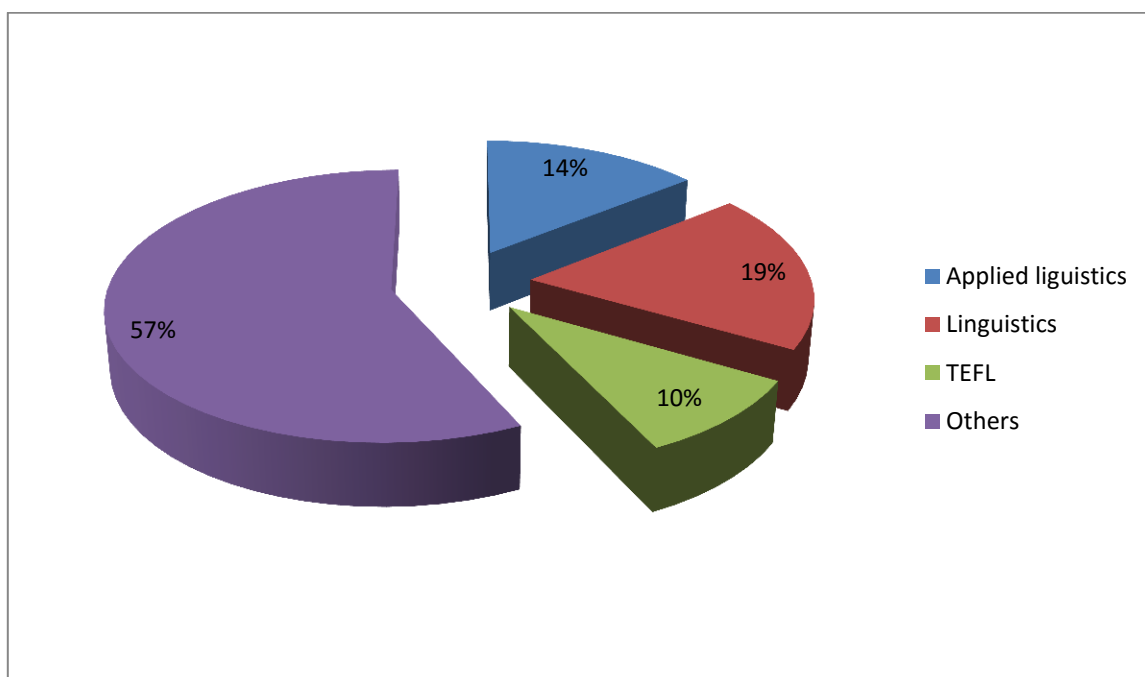
Figure03: Teachers' Specialty

The results in the table above suggest that the specialty of most of the teachers is linguistics (40%), with 30% for applied linguistics, and 20% for TEFL and this suggests that the majority of them are likely to have prior knowledge of negative feedback (though not of the term NE necessarily), its types, and the different ways of providing it, in addition to their being aware of its importance in teaching and learning a foreign language. For those whose

specialty is otherwise such as translation, and civilization and literature (10%), they are likely to have less information about the concept, at least theoretically. They are usually unaware of its different types, so they may provide just one type, if at all.

Section Two: Teachers' Correction of Students' Errors

Q04: What errors do students usually make?

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Mispronunciation	15	75%
b. Problems with vocabulary	15	75%
c. Problems of grammatical rules	20	100%

Table 04: Types of Students' Errors

From the table above, we can notice that 60% of teachers opted for more than one answer mentioning mispronunciation, problems with vocabulary and problems of grammatical rules. They believe that students usually make almost all types of errors in addition to other types that they indicated such as problems with negative interference whether in writing or in speaking (which we believe that it is related to one or more of the options provided above), they also indicate the problem of cohesion and coherence as the most common errors. This clearly demonstrates that the role of teachers is highly demanding since it requires dealing with different kinds of errors. Forty percent (40%) of teachers chose at least two types of errors and the frequently chosen type is grammatical errors. That supports the idea that the most frequent errors of foreign language students, especially beginners, are grammatical in nature. The results show that all teachers are aware of the errors committed by students; this raises the question that follows.

Q05: Do you provide students with negative feedback?

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Yes	20	100%
b. No	00	00%
Total	20	100%

Table 05: Teachers' Use of Negative Feedback
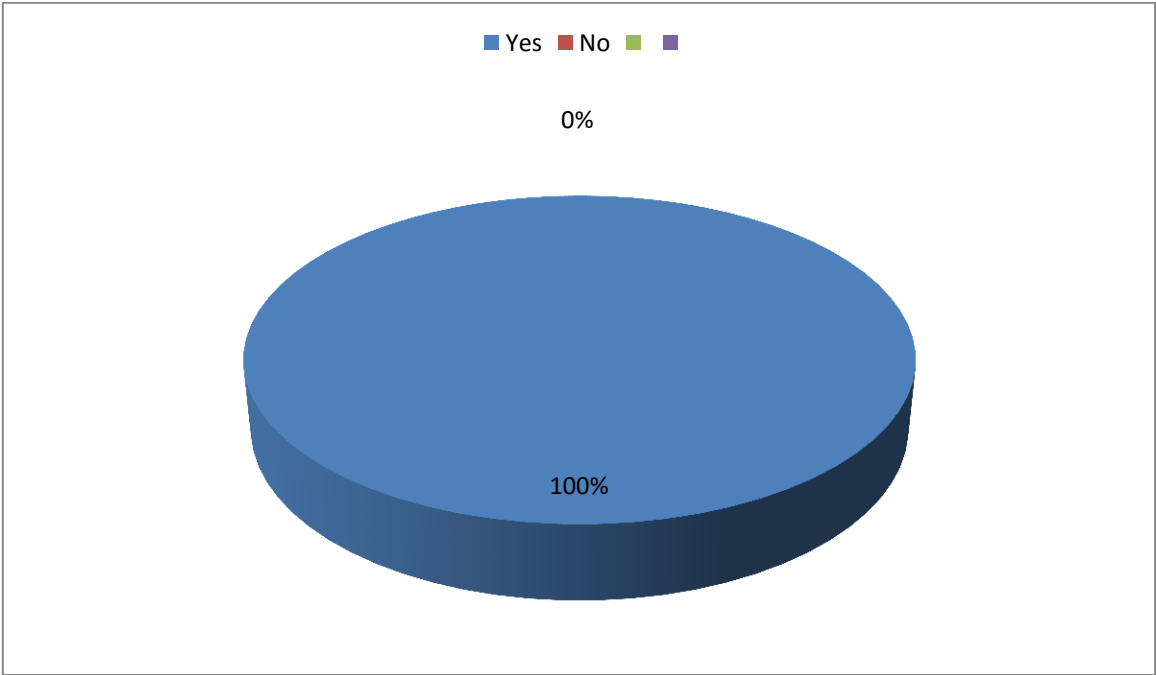
Figure 03: Teachers' Use of Negative Feedback

The results above show that all teachers (100%) provide corrective feedback. That indicates that they believe in its importance in language teaching and learning. All teachers agree that errors should be corrected because learners will benefit from the correction which enhances their level, but not providing it may lead learners to fossilisation that could not be cured.

Q06: If yes, how often?

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Very often	12	60%
b. Sometimes	08	40%
c. Rarely	00	00%
d. Never	00	00%
Total	20	100%

Table 06: Frequency of Negative Feedback Use
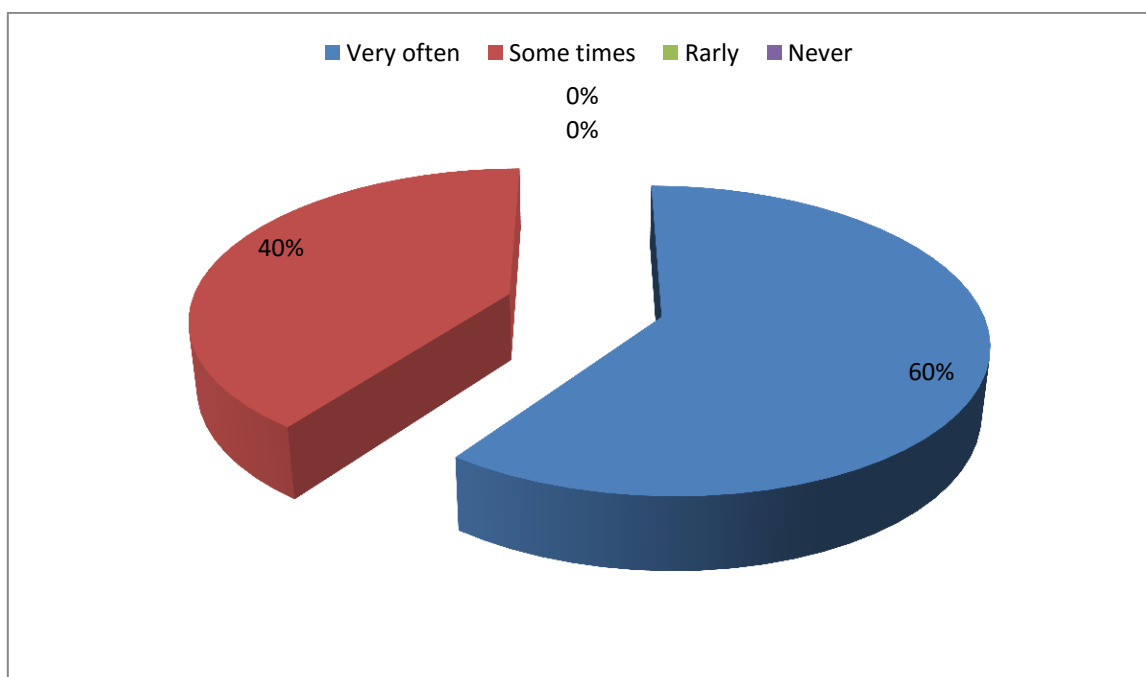
Figure04: Frequency of Negative Feedback Use

According to the table above, we can notice that the highest percentage of teachers (60%) shows that they correct students' errors very often because students need teachers' corrections to become more aware of their weaknesses, the thing that makes them understand the importance of receiving feedback in enhancing their level. However 40% of them report

51

that they correct learners' errors some times in order not to embarrass them, especially the introverted students.

Q07: If your students make mistakes, you:

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Interrupt them to correct their mistakes	10	50%
b. Correct them later	11	55%
c. Ask them to correct each other	05	25%
d. Do not correct at al	00	00%
e. Others	00	00%

Table 07: Teachers' Response to Students' Mistakes

Relying on the results shown above, we see that the highest percentage (55%) goes to those who correct the errors after students complete their contribution. They believe that correcting the errors immediately may interrupt the learners' communication and affect negatively their fluency; this may even make them reluctant to participate in the future times. This means that it is better to leave the correction to the end of the discussion. Almost the same number of teachers (50%) correct learners' errors immediately. The reason behind this may be that those teachers believe that errors should be corrected at the time they are committed to show the learner the place of the error and not to forget some errors when the correction is delayed. Many teachers chose more than one possibility so they use both delayed and immediate correction and this depends on the nature of the task at hand. Twenty-five percent (25%) of teachers give the chance to students to correct each other so as not to make the students passive recipients and the teacher the only source of information.

Q08: If you do not correct them, why not?

Not all teachers answered this question since they believe that errors should be corrected. According to 40% of teachers who sometimes provide learners with correction, it is impossible to stop learners at every word they produce to correct their errors, meaning that the teacher sometimes ignores some errors when need be. Their possible reasons are: when the learner is already in a stressed situation like when performing a presentation, the teacher should not correct every mistake because that may lead the learner to frustration; when the teacher feels the correction decreases the learner participation, it is better off not to correct or to correct in moderate fashion.

Section Three: Types of Feedback

Q09: Which kind of feedback do you usually provide your student with?

Options	Number of teachers	Percentage (%)
a. Positive feedback	08	40%
b. Negative feedback	01	5%
c. Both of them	11	55%
Total	20	100%

Table 08: Types of Teachers' Feedback
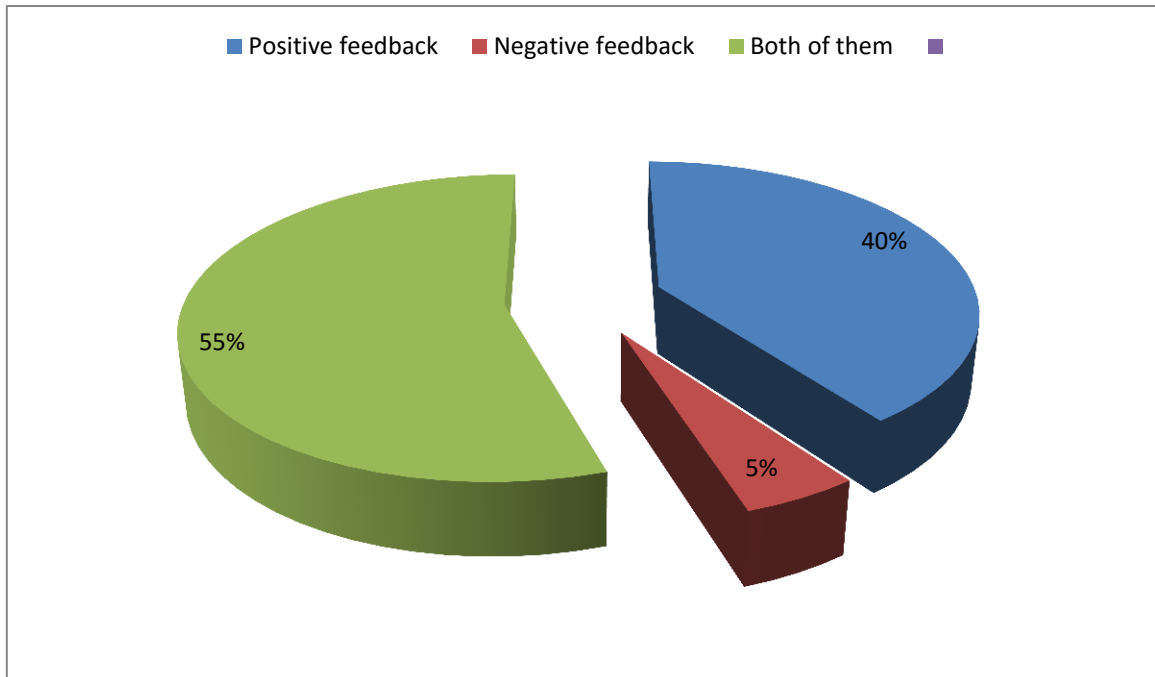
Figure 05: Types of Teachers' Feedback

We can deduce from table 08 that 40% of teachers use positive feedback because it might be more helpful in raising learners' motivation and encouraging them to develop themselves more. The highest percentage of teachers (55%) use both types of feedback. Those believe that both types are important and each one can help learners but in different ways. Just one teacher uses negative feedback because the role of the teacher for him/her is to correct the students' errors not just to encourage them by providing positive feedback.

Q10: If both, which kind of feedback has proved more effective with your students?

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Positive Feedback	07	64%
b. Negative Feedback	04	36%

Table 9: The Effective Type of Feedback
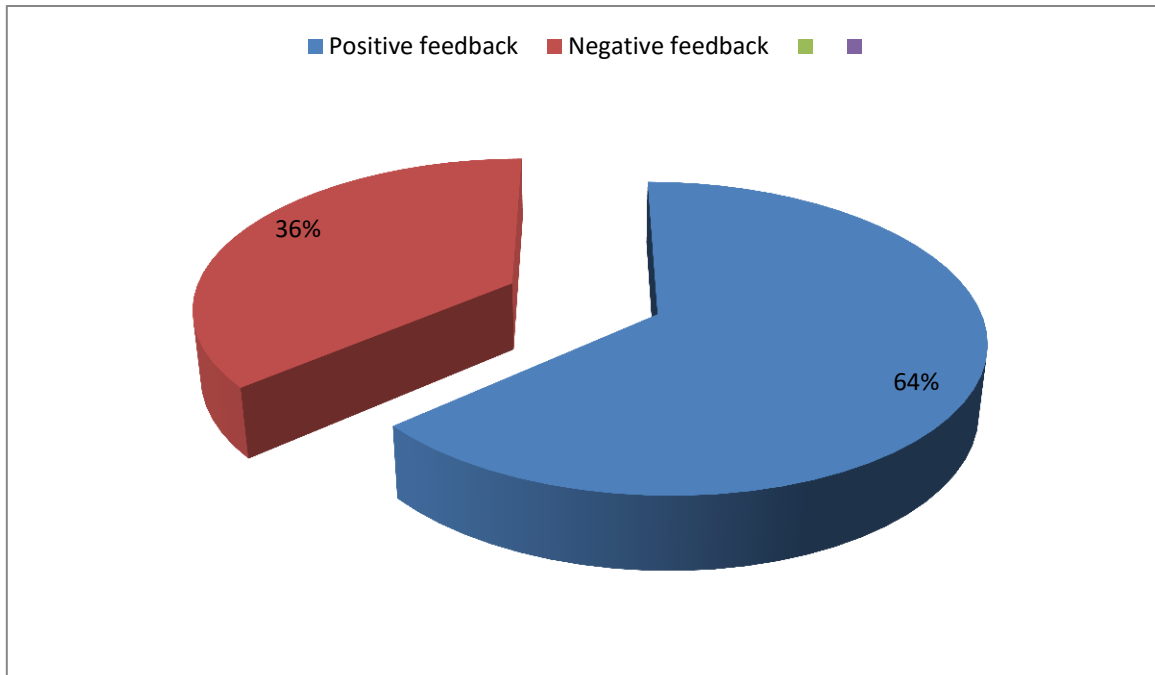
Figure 06: The Effective Type of Feedback

Again, and according to table 09, 64% of teachers who use both types of feedback believe positive feedback to be the most effective type with students. Some reasons are indicated in the question bellow.

Q11: How so?

Not all teachers answer this question. Taking the answers of teachers who think that positive feedback is more effective with students, they indicate that it raises learners' motivation and encourages them to participant more in the classroom. Although those who think that negative feedback is more effective, they believe that it shows learners their weaknesses and helps them to take rid of their usual errors.

Q12: Which type of negative feedback do you give to your students?

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Explicit correction	10	50%
b. Implicit correction	10	50%
Total	20	100%

Table 10: Types of Negative Feedback
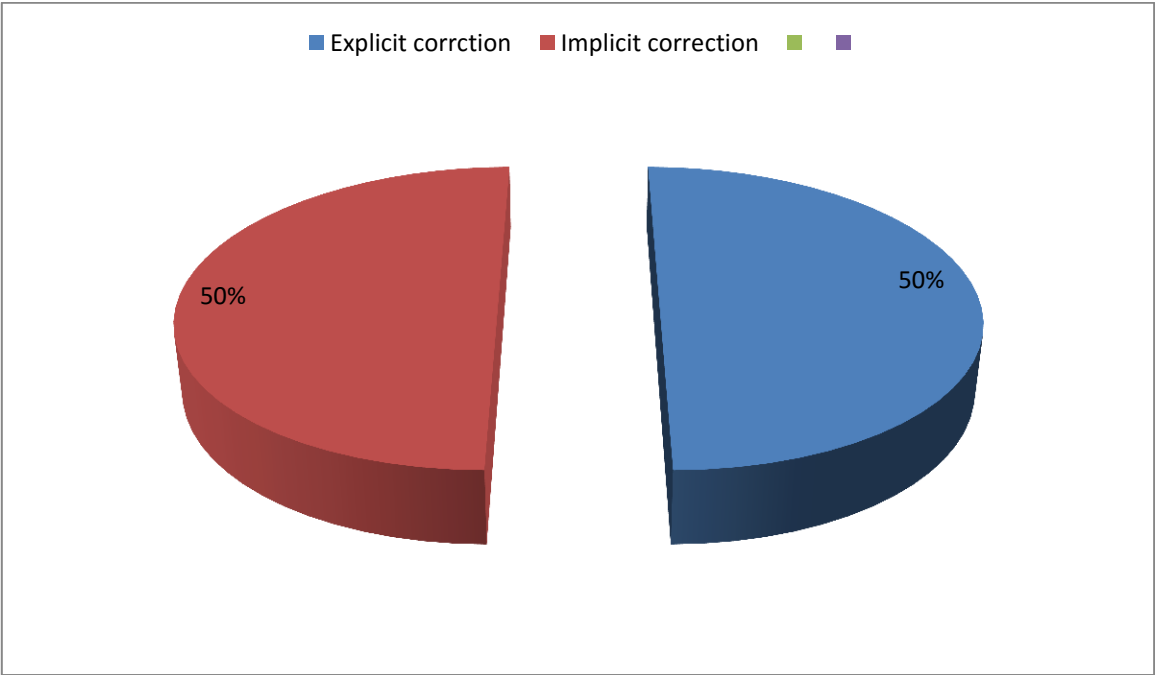
Figure07: Types of Negative Feedback

It seems that the two types of negative feedback are used equally by teachers. Forty-five percent (45%) of teachers use explicit negative feedback as their way of correcting students' errors because they believe that errors should be corrected explicitly by indicating the place of the error and providing students with the correct form. The same percentage of teachers use the implicit correction because they care for students' affect such that they provide them with the correction but in indirect way. Only two teachers out of twenty (10%)

provide both explicit and implicit negative feedback because they believe that both of them should be used equally by teachers depending on the teaching method that each teacher uses, the type of errors committed, the type of the task at hand and also the personality of each learner.

Section Four: Students' Reaction to Teachers' Negative Feedback

Q13: Do your students react to your negative feedback? (Uptake)

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Yes	20	100%
b. No	00	00%
Total	20	100%

Table 11: Students' Reaction to Teachers' Negative Feedback
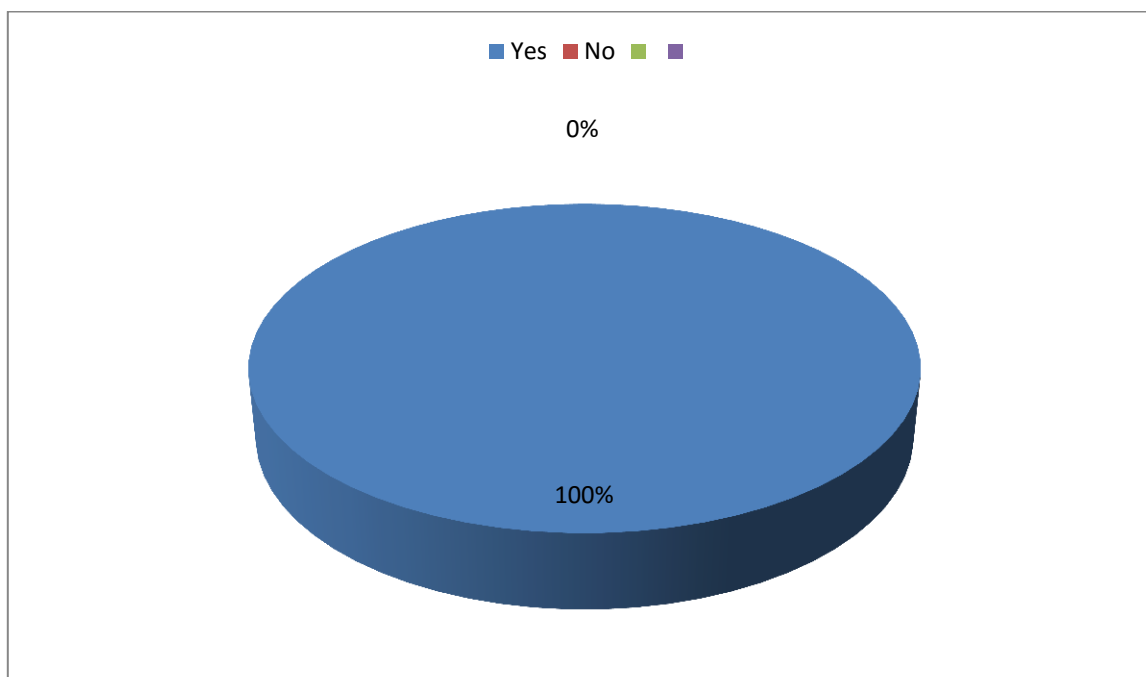
Figure08: Students' Reaction to Teachers' Negative Feedback

The results above show that all teachers indicate that learners react to their negative feedback. This indicates that learners take the feedback given into account by trying to correct

the erroneous utterances they produce. Teachers in this case might feel satisfied since the aim of their negative feedback is reached when it is followed by uptake.

Q14: How do you make your students take your negative feedback into consideration?

The answers for this question take into account the teachers' performance when they give negative feedback. The majority of them hold that politeness and smiling is the key for getting acceptance from learners since they do not take the teacher's negative feedback as a criticism which may destruct their motivation. Some teachers believe that indicating the importance of receiving negative feedback ,on many occasions, may make the learners feel at ease even when they commit errors. Just one respondent holds that punishment is what makes learners take the negative feedback into account and in this way they will not repeat the same errors.

Q15: In your opinion, along your teaching experience, do you think that negative feedback is an important technique to correct the learners' errors and to improve their level?

For the majority of teachers, negative feedback is very helpful especially for beginners since it improves their performance whether in speaking or in writing and it helps them discover their weaknesses at an early stage. Few teachers believe that negative feedback alone cannot achieve good results especially with those learners who are demotivated, introverted and having speaking problems. Negative feedback in this case may hinder their language improvement.

4. Learners' Questionnaire

Learners' questionnaire is a means of research used for collecting quantitative and qualitative data to see their view concerning *negative evidence* (NE) (which is termed in this questionnaire as *negative feedback* simply because of the fact that learners are not familiar

with the term *negative evidence)*. It may also provide us with different insights about their teachers' attitude toward NE. Learners, because they are a part of the teaching/learning environment, can help us to know more about the way teachers provide them with NE.

We take the sample of 60 first-year English students from 5 groups of English classes. The selection of students was random since we take 12 students from each group. The chosen sample includes both males and females.

4.1. Description of Learners' Questionnaire

The questionnaire involves 15 questions divided into four sections. The first section is devoted to students' background information. The second one deals with students' errors. The third section bears upon teachers' negative feedback, while the last section is devoted to learners' reaction to teachers' negative feedback. Each section includes a set of questions. These are dichotomous question (Yes/No questions), scale questions, or questions requiring respondents to answer from a series of options.

Section one: Background Information (Q1 to Q3)

The first section consists of three questions. It aims to discover learners' interest of English (Q1), learners' specialty choice (Q2), and learners' level (Q3).

Section two: Learners' Errors (Q4 to Q6)

The aim of the second section is to examine learners' most difficult skill (Q4), types of learners' errors (Q5) and learners' preferred source of correction (Q6).

Section three: Teachers' Negative Feedback (Q7 to Q11)

The fourth section tends to explore teachers' type of feedback (Q7), teachers' use of negative feedback (Q8), the frequency of teachers' correction (Q9), teachers' focus in correction (Q10), and teachers' ways of correction i.e. types of negative feedback (Q11).

Section four: Learners' Reaction to Teachers' NE (Q12 to Q15)

The purpose of the last section is to determine the possibility of repeating the same errors by learners (Q12), the reasons behind this behaviour (Q13), learners' awareness of the importance of negative feedback (Q14), and learners' reaction to teachers' negative feedback (Q15).

4.2.   Data Results and Analysis of Learners' Questionnaire

Section one: Background Information

Q1: Are you interested in English?

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Yes	51	85%
b. No	09	15%
Total	60	100%

Table 12: Students' Interest in English
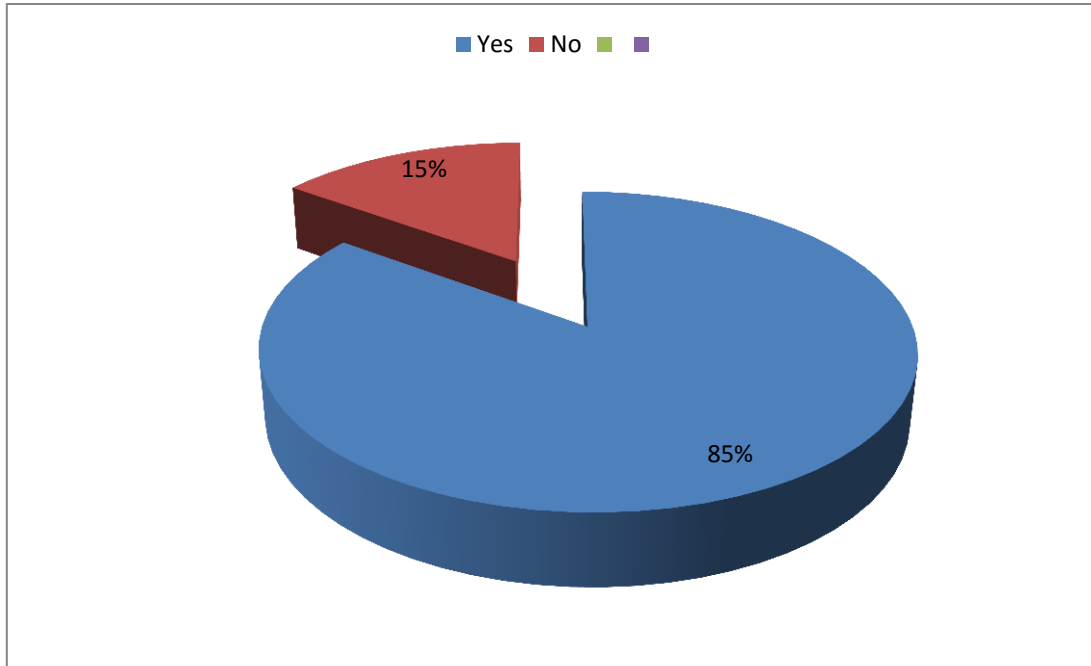
Figure07: Students' Interest in English

We can notice from table 12 that the majority of learners (85%) are interested in English, the thing that makes them more willing to accept their teachers' negative feedback because they need to improve their proficiency level in English and to get rid of all the language problems that they suffer from. For those who are not interested in English (15%), they do not have the passion to enhance their language, so they may bother when the teacher provides them with negative feedback.

Q2: Was English your first choice?

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Yes	51	85%
b. No	09	15%
Total	60	100%

Table 13: Learners' Specialty Choice
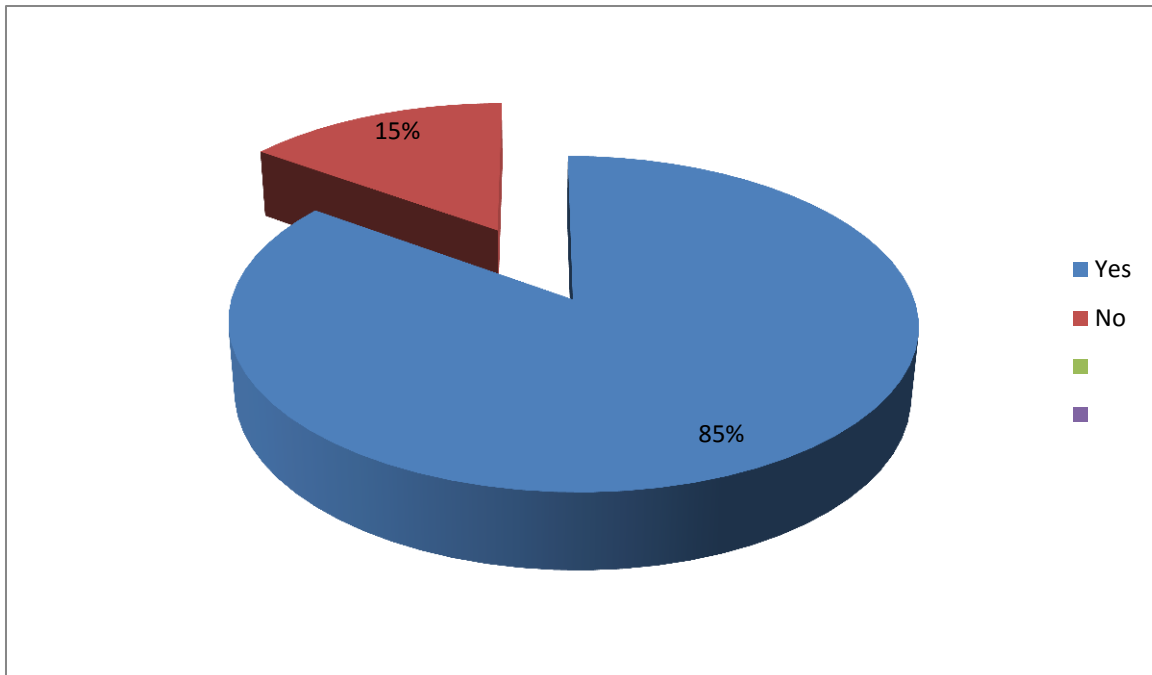
Figure 08: Learners' Specialty Choice

Table 13 shows that English is the first choice for 85% of learners. That leads us to say that these learners are likely to perform better in the classroom and they may also be motivated to receive teachers' feedback more than those for whom English is not their first choice (15%).

Q3: How do you consider your level in English?

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Very Good	00	0%
b. Good	15	25%
c. Average	42	70%
d. Poor	03	05%
Total	60	100%

Table 14: Learners' Level
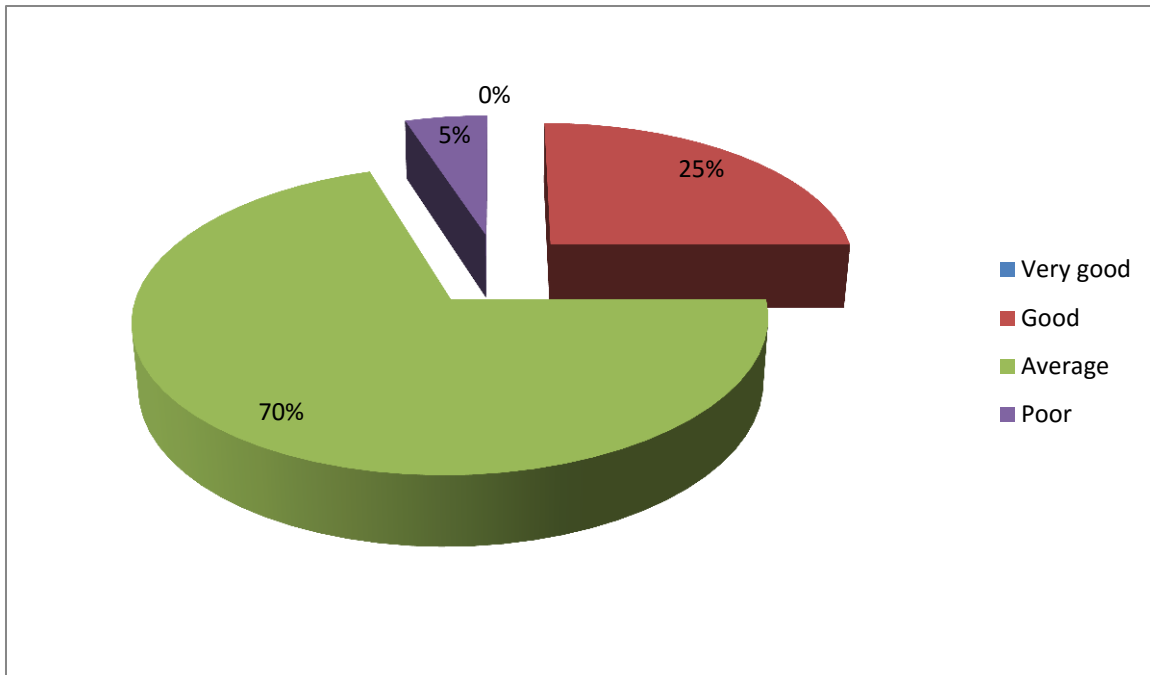
Figure09: Learners' Level

We can notice from the results in table 14 that 70% of learners have an average level in addition to those learners whose level is poor (05%). This result suggests that the majority of learners have a tendency to commit errors and the possibility of receiving negative feedback will be so high. Twenty-five percent (25%) of learners whose level is good, may receive less negative feedback because of their few committed errors in comparison with the rest. This is not necessarily the logical conclusion; poor or average students might not even participate, excluding thus the likelihood of receiving teachers' correction.

Section two: Learners' Errors

Q04: Where do you find more difficulties?

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Speaking	29	48%
b. writing	31	52%
Total	60	100%

Table 15: Learners' Most Difficult Skill
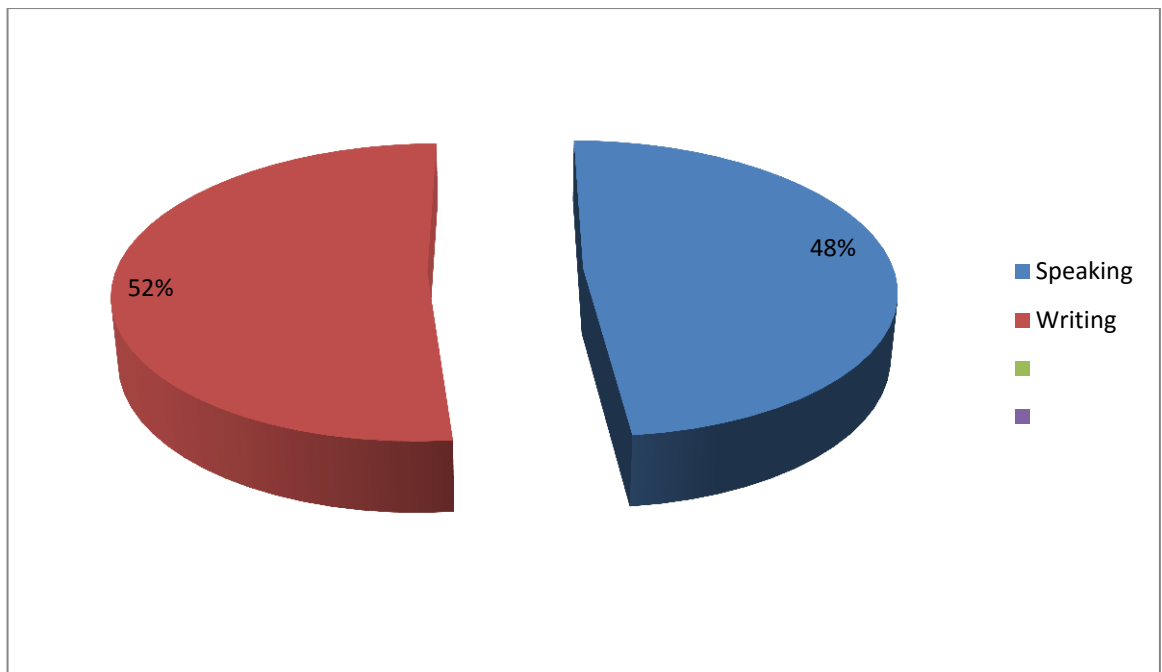
Figure10: Learners' Most Difficult Skill

As we see in table (15), the highest percentage of students (52%) have difficulties in writing, unlike the rest of them (48%) who seem to have more difficulties in speaking. We can explain this in that almost all of the students did not get the chance before to work on their writing and speaking skill. One of the reasons behind this may be because all first-year students are beginners so they need more negative feedback to work on their weaknesses and difficulties in the foreign language.

Q05: What are the mistakes that you usually make? (You can tick more than one answer)

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Mispronunciation	60	100%
b. Problems of vocabulary	60	100%
c. Problems with grammatical rules	60	100%

Table 16: Learners' Types of Mistakes

The table shows that all of the students selected the three given options (100%). This proves that all the students are conscious of the errors they make when using the target language so the teacher is supposed to deal with all these types of errors and to provide them with negative feedback when need be.

Q06: Which one of these sources do you prefer to correct your mistakes?

Options	number	Percentage (%)
a. Teachers' Feedback	54	90%
b. Peer Feedback	00	00%
c. Self Feedback	06	10%
Total	60	100%

Table 17: Learners' Preferred Source of Negative Feedback
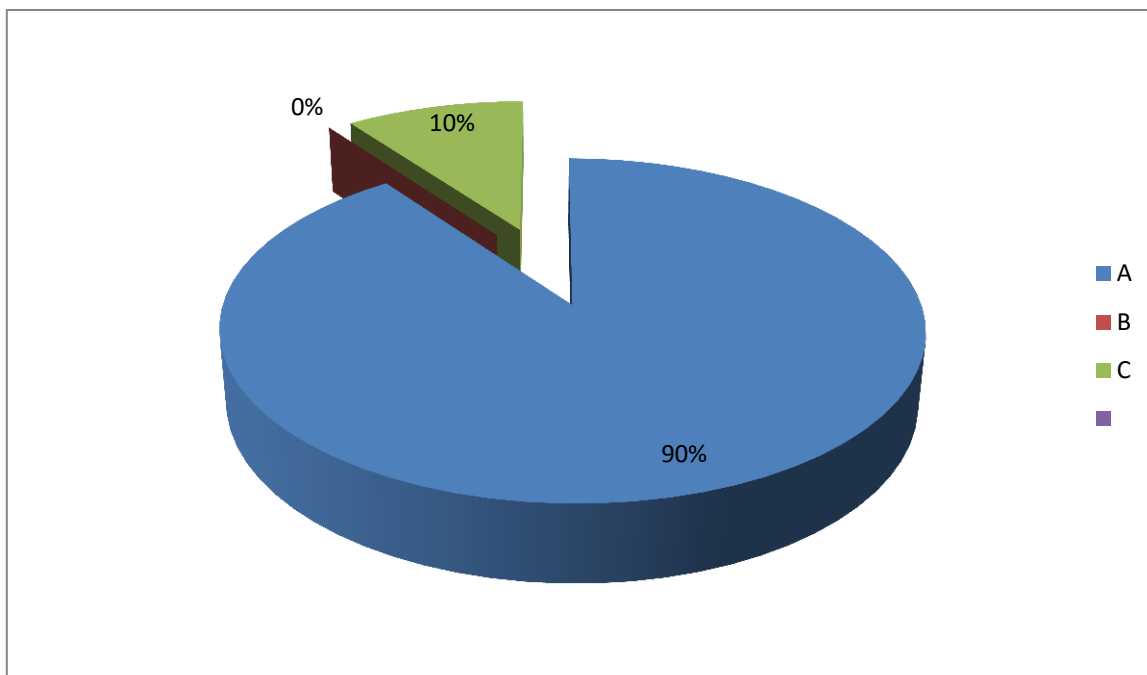
Figure11: Learners' Preferred Source of Negative Feedback

We notice that the majority percentage of students (90%) prefer Teachers' feedback as a source of correction, and no one chooses peer feedback at all (0%). This was the expected result**;** students prefer to be corrected from their teachers because they felt that the feedback they got from them is more accurate than the feedback given by their peers. Learners most of the time fell embarrassed when their classmates correct their errors especially because they have almost the same level. Ten per cent (10%) of students choose self- correction because they may feel frustrated when they receive NF from their peers or from their teacher so they prefer to correct their errors by themselves however, this can be very difficult especially for beginners.

Section Three: Teachers' Negative Feedback (NF)

Q07: Which type of feedback do you usually receive from your teacher?

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Positive feedback	37	61%
b. Negative feedback	09	15%
c. Both of them	14	23%
Total	60	100%

Table 18: The Mostly Received Type of Feedback
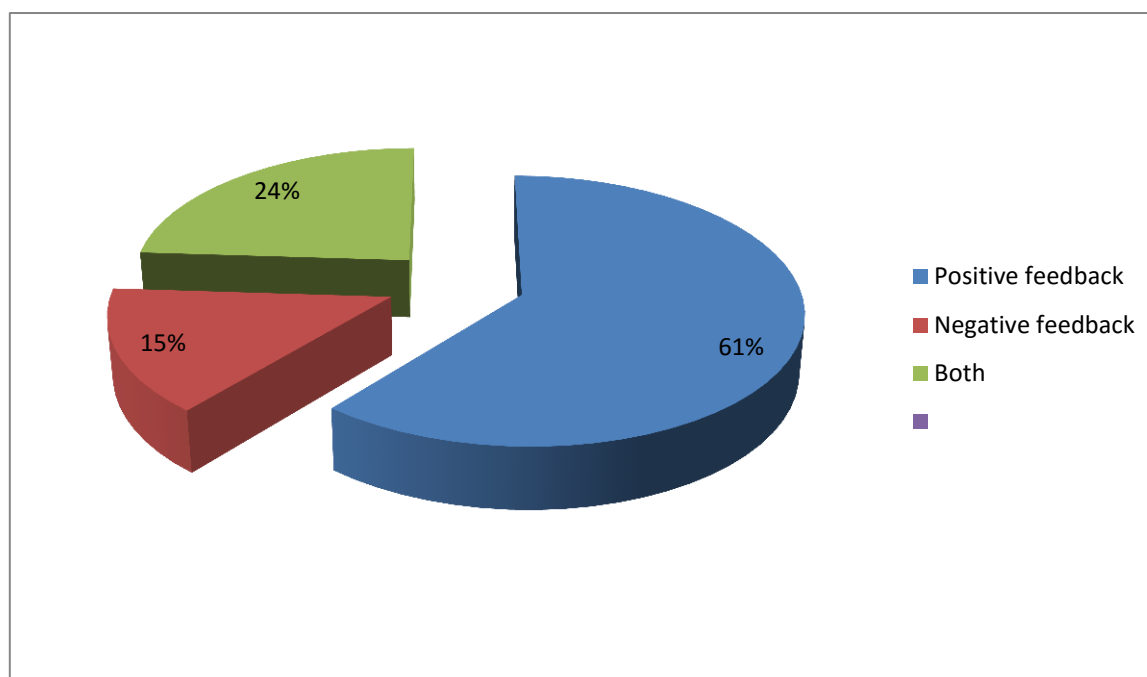
Figure12: The Mostly Received Type of Feedback

It seems, and as the table shows, that the majority of learners (61%) indicate that their teachers provide them most with positive feedback and this is an evidence that teachers try to raise their motivation and not just to criticize them. The same thing can be said about those who choose both (23%) because teachers are aware of the importance of both so they try to

provide them both. 15% of learners claim that their teachers use mostly NE and that cannot denies what have been said.

Q08: Does your teacher correct your errors?

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Yes	60	100%
b. No	00	0%
Total	60	100%

Table 19: Teachers' Correction to Errors
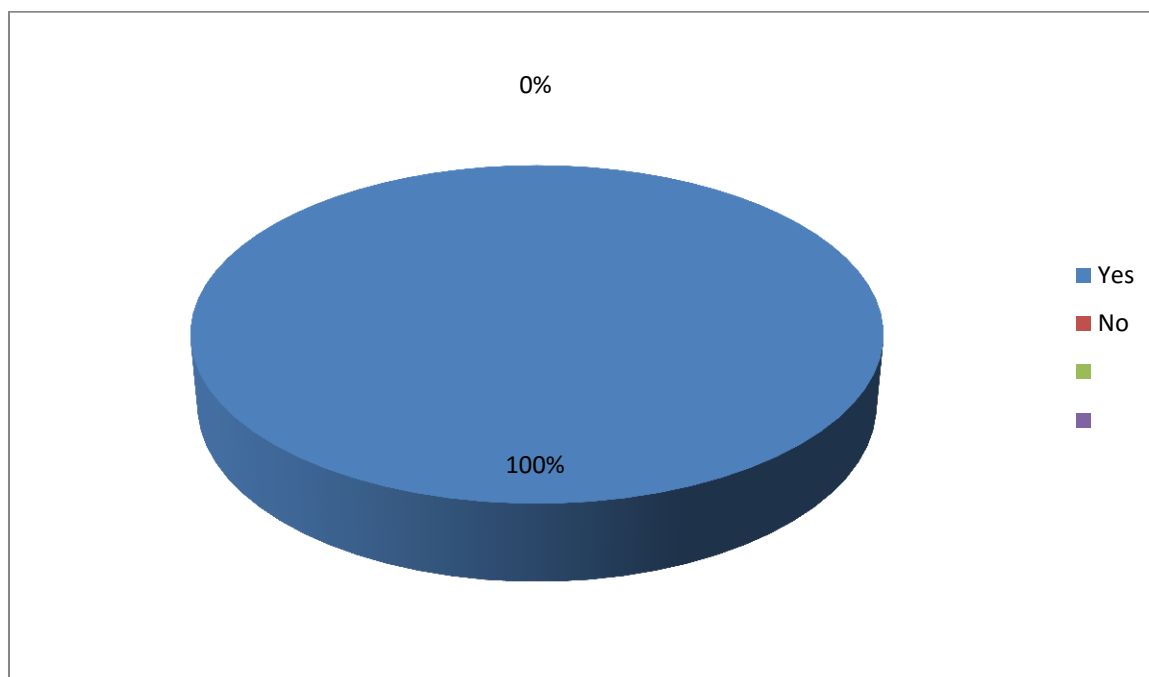
Figure13: Teachers' Correction to Errors

All the students (100%) claim that their teachers provide them with error correction, while no one says "No". This result shows that all teachers are aware of the importance of error correction in SLA.

Q09: How often does your teacher correct your mistakes?

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Very often	54	90%
b. Sometimes	06	10%
c. Rarely	00	0%
d. Never	00	0%
Total	60	100%

Table 20: Frequency of Teacher's Negative Feedback
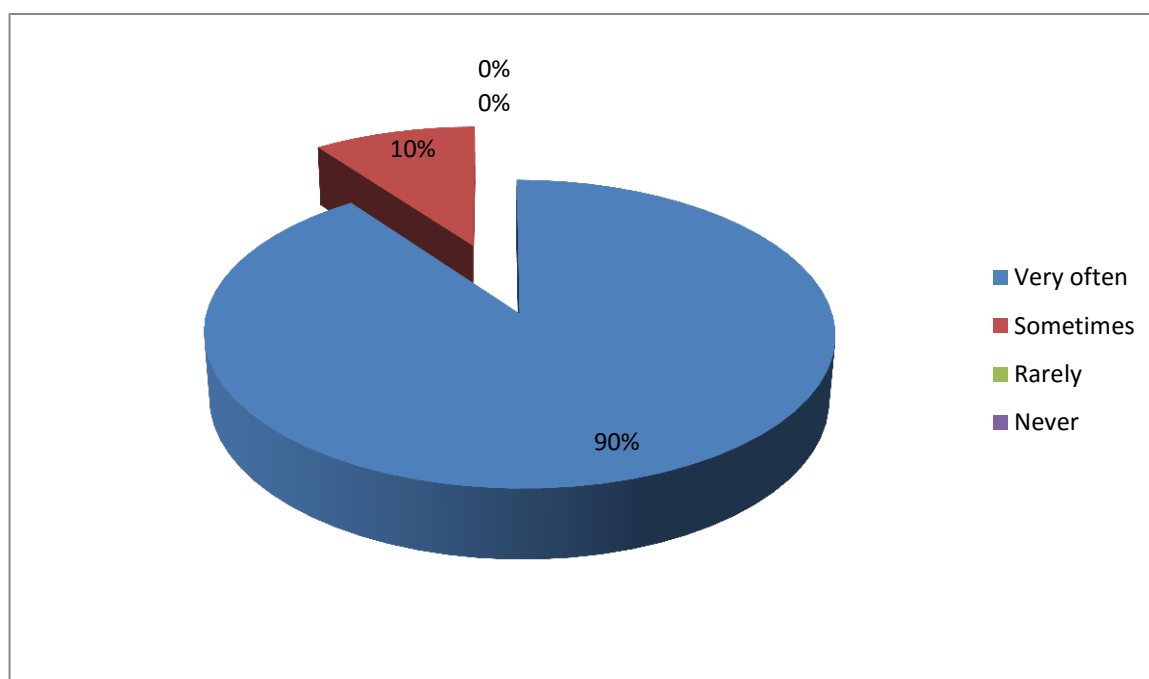
Figure14: Frequency of Teachers' Negative Feedback

We can notice from the table above that the majority of teachers (90%) use negative feedback very often. That leads us to say that they believe that error correction is important for learners, especially for enhancing their proficiency level in the foreign language. Just 10%

of teachers use negative feedback only sometimes because they believe that heavy correction will not help much.

Q10: when your teachers correct your errors, they focus more on:

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Form	48	80%
b. Meaning	12	20%
Total	60	100%

Table 21: Teacher's Focus in Correction
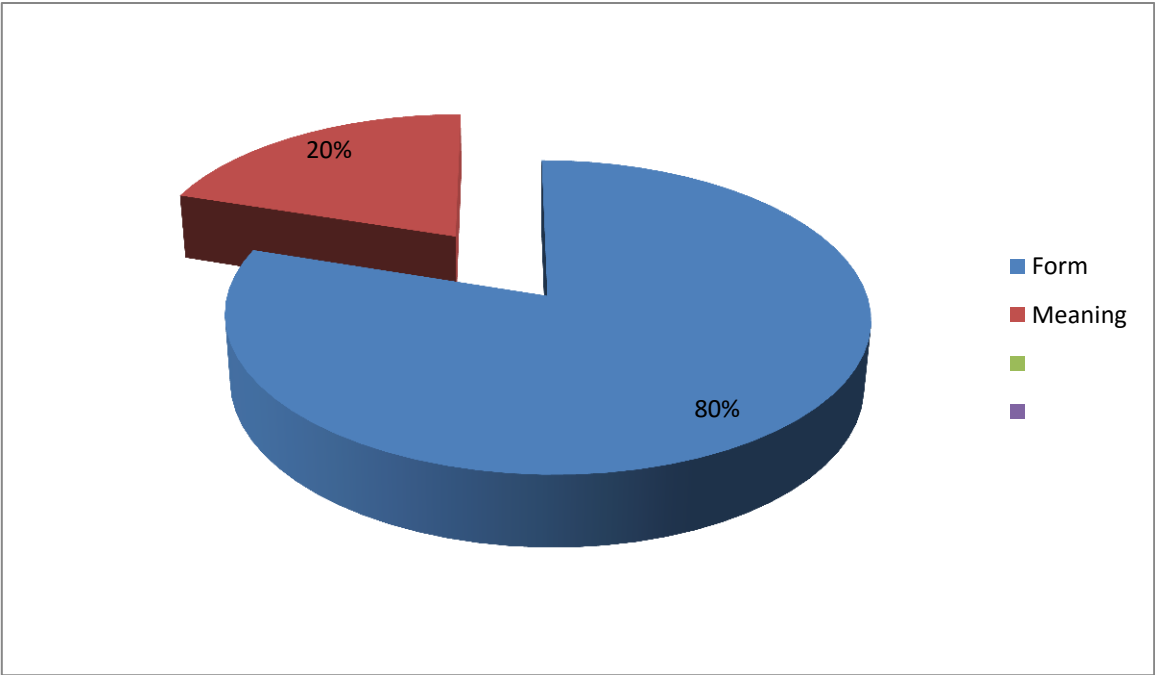
Figure15: Teachers' Focus in Correction

The table shows that the majority of teachers focus more on form (80%), while twenty percent (20%) of students say that their teachers focus more on meaning. This may be due to the fact that teachers can always get the point the learners want to convey so meaning

is secured; they tend to focus more on form, especially with beginners, to make them rid of their grammatical errors.

Q11: How does your teacher correct your errors?

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Providing the correct form	25	42%
b. Reformulating the error	30	50%
c. Asking for clarification	00	0%
d. Providing the rule	05	8%
e. Others	00	0%
Total	60	100%

Table 22: Types of Negative Feedback
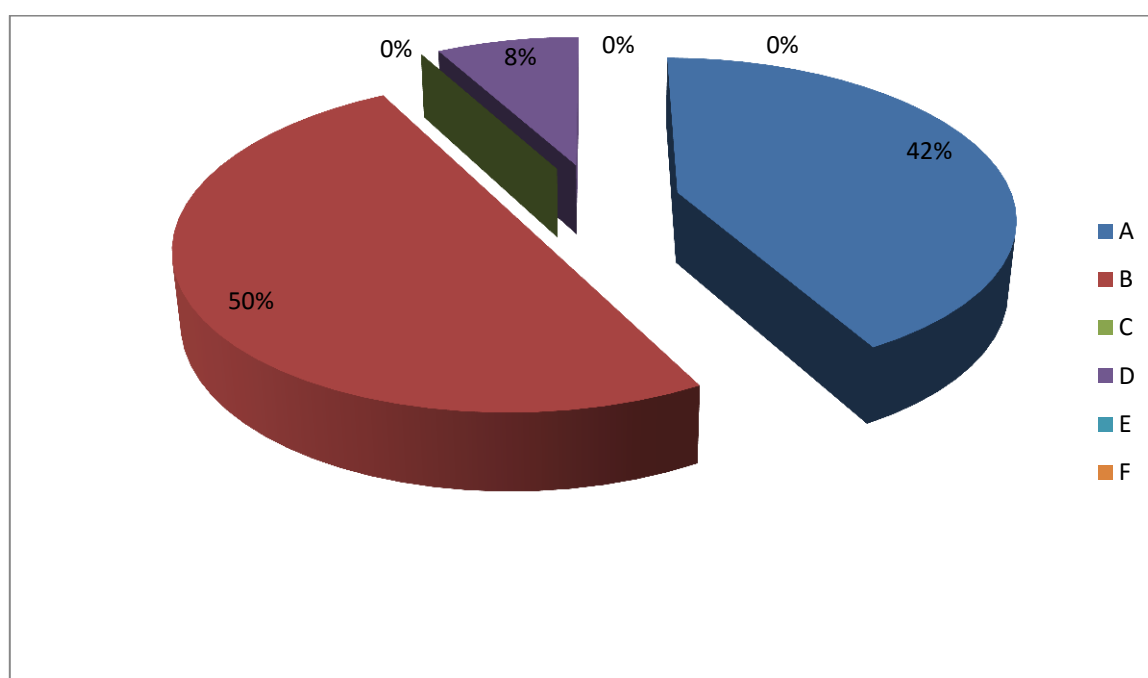
Figure16: Types of Negative Feedback

From the table above, we can say that recasts and provision of correct rule are the most practiced types of negative feedback with the percentage of 50% and 41% and this is because of the importance of both implicit and explicit correction in enhancing the learner's level.

Section Four: Learners' Reaction To teachers' Negative Feedback

Q12: When your teacher corrects your mistakes; do you repeat the same mistakes again?

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Yes	23	38%
b. No	37	62%
Total	60	100%

Table 23: The Possibility of Repeating the Same Errors by Learners
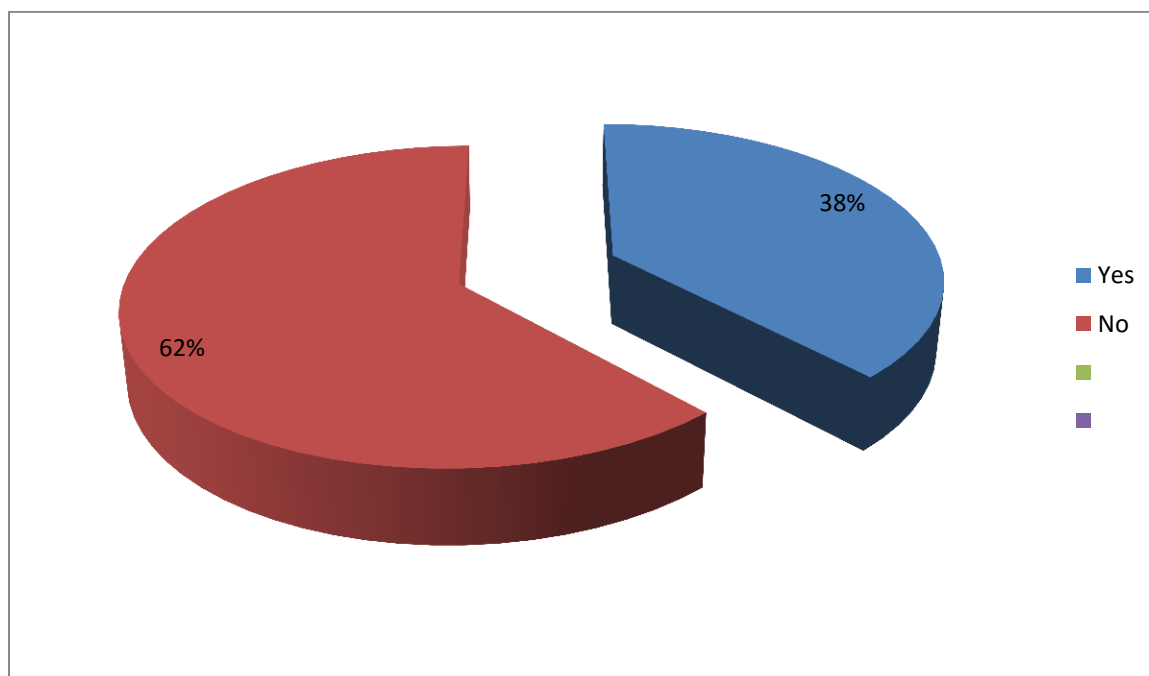
Figure17: The Possibility of Repeating the Same Errors by Learners

The table above shows that almost 38% of learners declared that they repeat the same mistake even when the teacher provides them with correction and this may explain that these mistakes with time will lead them to fossilization and their errors will so difficult to be solved. For those who indicate that they do not repeat the same mistakes after the correction (61%), they benefit from teachers' correction so they can improve their level in the foreign language.

Q13: If yes, it's because of

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. The ambiguity of feedback	21	35%
b. The teachers' way of providing the feedback	39	65%
Total	60	100%

Table 24: The Reasons of Repeating the Same Errors by Learners
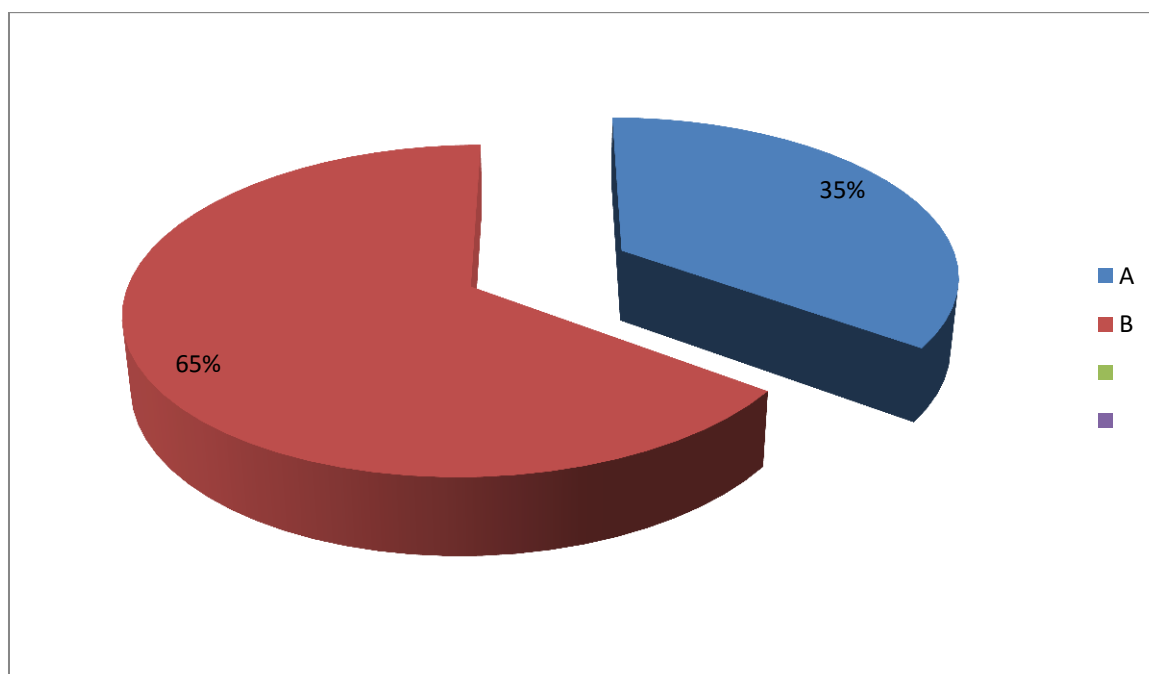
Figure18: The Reasons of Repeating the Same Errors by Learners

Sixty percent (65%) of learners repeat the same mistakes because they do not feel comfortable when the teacher provides them with negative feedback especially, when the correction is given in a way of a criticism. Learners in this case do not benefit from the feedback and this may affect them negatively.

Q14: Do you think that teachers' negative feedback is important in enhancing your performance?

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Yes	52	87%
b. No	08	13%
Total	60	100%

Table 25: Learners' Awareness of the Importance of Negative Feedback
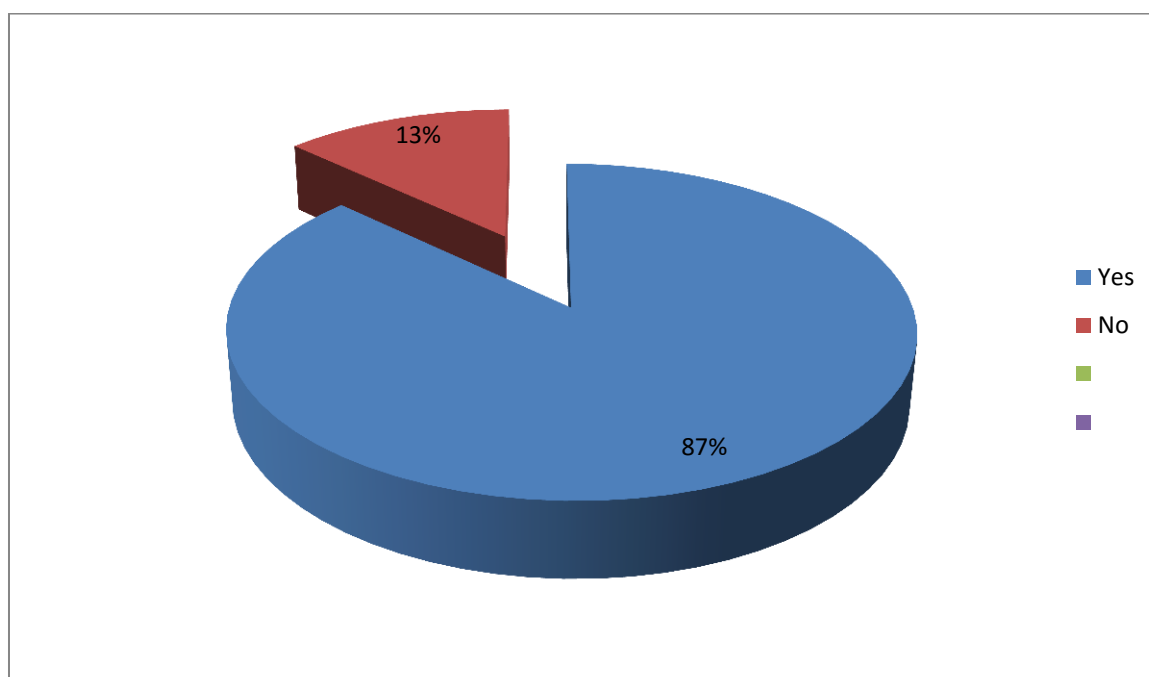
Figure19: Learners' Awareness of the Importance of Negative Feedback

We can read from the results above that 87% of learners indicate that teachers' negative feedback is important for them especially for enhancing their performance. This is

because they may benefit from it and may notice progression in their proficiency level, or because they are aware of its importance in learning a foreign language. Few learners (13%) claim that teachers' negative feedback is not important for them because it may decrease their motivation and as a result their level may not witness progress.

Q15: How do you react when you receive feedback from your teacher?

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
a. You like it	46	77%
b. You do not like it	08	13%
c. You are in different	06	10%
Total	60	100%

Table 26: Learners' Reaction to Teachers' Negative Feedback
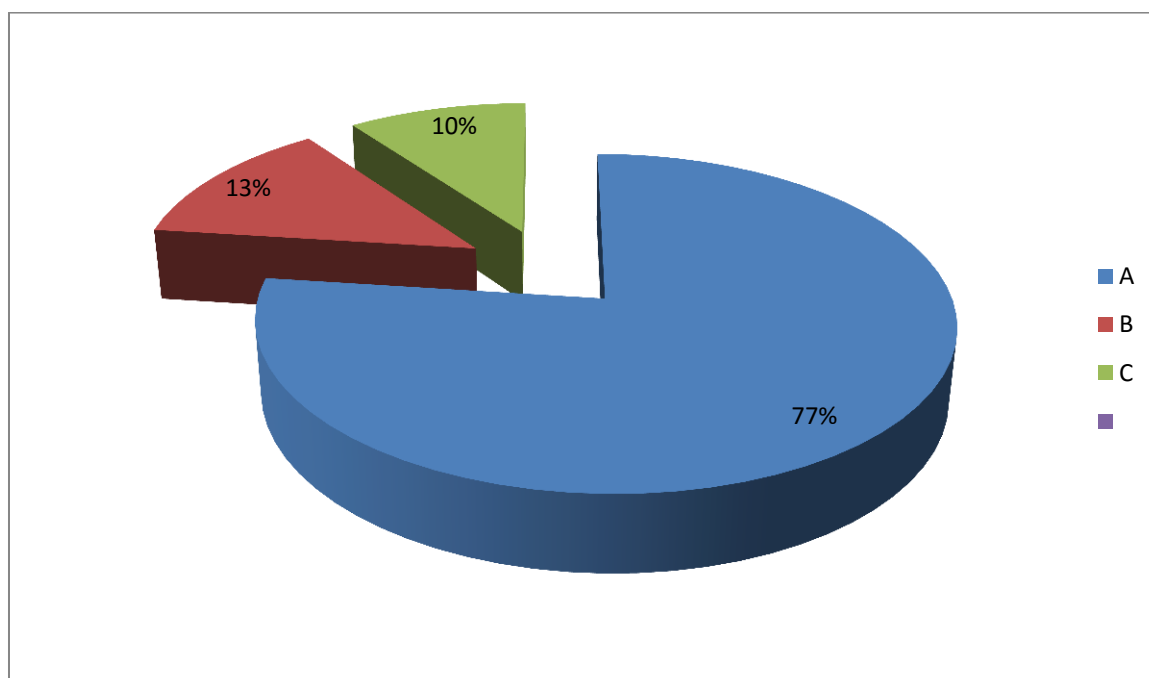
Figure20: Learners' Reaction to Teachers' Negative Feedback

Again, the results above come as indication of the reasons of the previous item since the majority of learners tend to like teachers' negative feedback; because of that, they think it

is important for their learning. The opposite can be said about those who do not like teachers' negative feedback (13%). As for those who are indifferent, the way teachers provide their negative feedback indicates whether the learners will accept it or not.

5. Discussion of the Findings

One of the main aims of the thesis is to investigate the teachers' attitude towards, and provision of, negative evidence (NE). To summarize the findings, the results of both learners' and teachers' questionnaires show that there is a positive attitude of teachers towards NE since it shows that the majority of them tend to provide learners with correction in a frequent manner; in addition, they believe in its importance especially in enhancing learners' academic achievement. On the other hand, learners' questionnaire shows almost the same results since participants indicate that their teachers usually provide them with negative evidence while focusing more on form in their correction. Concerning the type of NE that they usually use with learners, the results of both questionnaires show that both explicit and implicit negative evidence are made use of. The reason given by teachers is that both of them are important and the role of the teacher is to know what and when to use each type depending on the learners' differences and needs as well as the nature of the task. Recast is the most useful type of implicit NE.

A second aim of this study is to see the impact of NE on learners' academic achievement. The results of teachers' questionnaire show that there is always a reaction on the part of learners. This is a sign of acceptance of NE and as a result there will be an improvement in learners' level. Regarding learners' questionnaire, learners seem to benefit from the teacher's correction so this again supports the idea that NE has a positive impact on learners.

6. Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

We have seen that the present research reveals that NE has a good impact on our sample. This may be the result of teachers' positive attitude towards it. In this research there have been few teachers who have a negative attitude towards NE especially those who support more positive feedback since they believe that too much negative feedback in the classroom would lead to language anxiety among learners. They hold that correcting every error is neither practical nor beneficial. As Gregersen (2003) claimed: "As errors are made, learners become more anxious, and the more anxious they are, the more errors they make" (p.29). Teachers' positive attitude cannot take place if there is no learners' acceptance of their practice; this is partly teachers' attitudes are completed with learners' perceptions concerning the use of NE.

There is a need for more research on both learners' and teachers' perceptions of NE. Divergence between the two perceptions may take place but this cannot reduce the importance of the research. The impact of NE in this research seems positive though it deals with a small sample of teachers. A research limitation that we wish to volunteer involves the limited number of English teachers in the University centre of Mila, but we are not to blame. For the same reason, it was very difficult to pilot the questionnaires before distributing it to teachers. This could have helped us to discover the main gaps that need to be reduced concerning the choice of the questions as well as the use of different terminologies since not all teachers have knowledge about NE. Piloting is an important stage in research since it gives a preconception to the researcher about the form of the chosen means of research.

For the sake of eliminating the possibility of not collecting the needed information from learners especially because they usually do not respond to open-ended questions, we provided them with close- ended questions instead. The result is as expected because learners

have answered all the questions given and that helps us in our investigation. For teachers, our tendency is to focus more on open-ended questions since they have more ability to express themselves and consequently we can collect more insights from them.

This research reveals that implicit NE is not the only type used by teachers since explicit correction also receives a positive attitude. Recasts, as the most useful type of implicit correction, are not always beneficial at least for those who support the explicit correction. It seems that just like learners having different learning styles, teachers too exhibit different teaching styles

Negative evidence has the same meaning as negative feedback and corrective feedback and because the term is not familiar for most teachers, they showed ambiguity when they heard the name. To avoid ambiguity, use is made of the familiar terms to make the picture clearer for the respondents. NE is considered as an effective teaching strategy that is used by teachers to correct learners' errors since it helps learners to discover their weaknesses and to encourage them to work on their proficiency level in the foreign language. We wish that more research on the present topic will be conducted.

Conclusion

To sum up the main findings of teachers' and learners' questionnaires, the results show that there is a positive teachers' attitude towards NE. The majority of teachers stress its importance in developing learners' performance in classrooms. We deduce also that explicit and implicit correction are almost equally used by teachers at the University Centre of Mila. Recasts, not as expected are not the only useful type of NE; in fact, explicit correction or providing the correct form still attracts the attention of many teachers and is considered as an equally the most useful type of NE.

In addition, the results of this study show that teachers face all types of errors including grammatical, phonetic, and lexical errors so their role is so demanding in the sense of deciding on how, when, and what type of feedback to provide, but also for whom.This is to mean that teachers need to be more aware of learners' differences because this may help them to decide what to correct and what not given that most of the time heavy correction may hinder their progression and may also kill their motivation.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Error correction is a debatable topic in the field of language teaching and learning. For understanding the concept of negative evidence, it was very important to give first an account of errors. One of the main aims of this research is to find out the teachers' attitude towards, and provision of, negative evidence. As the first step, it was necessary to give a clear explanation to the concept under investigation and then to indicate its importance in learning a new language. Thus, another aim of this thesis is to discover the impact of NE on the learners' academic achievement.

The first finding of our investigation is that teachers in the department of English at the University Centre of Mila have a positive attitude towards NE since they usually use it with their students and they believe in its importance in learning a foreign language. Second, explicit and implicit NE are equally used by the teachers and not as expected since we hypothesised that most teachers prefer implicit NE as a way of correcting students' errors. The same thing can be said about recasts since both teachers and learners pointed out that providing the rule or what is also called explicit correction is the most useful teaching technique in addition to recasts.

As for the major aim of the present research work, the aim of investigating teachers' provision of negative evidence, the results show that teachers have positive attitudes towards it, not to mention the fact that it is also important. Investigating the impact of NE on learners' affect is also one of the present aims. The results show that learners do not bother when they receive teachers' NE; This does not deny the fact that teachers do care of learners' affect when they receive NE.

Of note, our dealing with NE might make some curious about the notion of positive evidence which has comparatively equal importance, at least in our view. The value of each in language teaching and learning would make a promising research agenda.

It is important to end up with the results that we did not expect. According to our sample, positive feedback is more helpful for learners than negative feedback. Motivation is a crucial element in learning, and because of that teachers claim that NE may decrease the learner's motivation. Be that as it may, it is noted that teachers happen to provide explicit correction i.e using negative not positive feedback.

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Appendix (A)

Teachers' questionnaire :

Dear teachers,

This questionnaire is devised to collect information about teachers' attitude towards Negative evidence and its effects on enhancing student's performance. We would be grateful if you could answer these questions to help us in our research. Please, use a tick (×) to indicate your chosen answer and specify your options when needed.

Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Section one: Background Information

1- How long have you been teaching?

a) less than one year ☐   b)1-5 years ☐

c) 6-10 years ☐   d) More than 10 years ☐

2- What is your employment status as a teacher?

a) Full- time ☐   b) Part-time ☐

3- What is your specialty?

....
....

Section Two: Teachers' correction to students' errors

1-what are the errors students usually make?

a) Mispronunciation ☐   b) Problems with vocabulary ☐

c) Problems of grammatical rules ☐

d) Others, specify:

....
....
....

2-Do you provide students with negative feedback to correct their mistakes?

    a) Yes   □   b) No   □

3- If yes, how often?

    a)Very often   □   b) Sometimes   □

    c) Rarely   □   d) Never   □

5- If your students make mistakes, you:

    a) Interrupt them to correct their mistakes   □

    b) Correct them later   □

    c) Ask students to correct each other   □

    d) Do not correct at all   □

    e) Others   □

6- If you don't correct them at all, why not?

....
....
....
....

Section three: Types of Feedback

1-Which kind of feedback do you usually provide your students with?

    a) Positive feedback (eg: good job!)   □

    b) Negative feedback (eg: stop or eliminate errors)   □

    c) Both of them   □

2- If both, which kind of feedback has proved more useful with your students?

    a) positive feedback   □

    b) Negative feedback   □

3- How so?

....
....
....

4- Which type of negative feedback do you give to your students?

   a) Explicit correction (eg: providing correction and indicate the mistake)

   b) Implicit correction (eg: reformulating the student's utterance)

Section Four: Students' Reaction to Teachers' Negative Feedback

1- Do your students respond to your feedback? (i.e. uptake)

a) Yes   ☐   b) No   ☐

2- How do you make your students take your feedback into consideration?

....
....
....
....

2- In your opinion, along your teaching experience, do you think that negative feedback is an important technique to correct the learners' errors and to improve their level?

....
....
....

Thank you.

Appendix (B)

Learner's questionnaire :

Dear students:

This questionnaire is intended to gain insights into the feedback you receive from your teachers and its effect on your performance. (Feedback is the correction that the teacher gives to his students when they make mistakes). you are kindly requested to answer the questionnaire. We should be grateful if you could answer these questions to help us in our research .Please use a tick (√) to indicate your chosen option.

Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Section one: Background Information

1-Are you interested in English?

   a- Yes ☐
   b- No ☐

2- Was English your first choice?

   a- Yes ☐
   b- No ☐

3- How do you consider your level in English?

   a- Very good ☐
   b- Good ☐
   c- Average ☐
   d- Poor ☐

Section two: Learners' Errors

4-Where do you find more difficulties?

   a- Speaking   ☐

   b- Writing   ☐

5-What are the mistakes that you usually make? (you can tick more than one answer)

   a- Mispronunciation   ☐

   b- Problems of vocabulary   ☐

   c- Problems with grammatical rules   ☐

6-Which one of these sources do you prefer to correct your mistakes?

   a- Teachers' feedback   ☐

   b- Peer Feedback   ☐

   c- Self Feedback   ☐

Section Three: Teachers' Negative Feedback (NF)

7- Which type of feedback do you receive most from your teacher?

   a- Positive feedback   ☐

   b- Negative feedback   ☐

   c- Both of them   ☐

8-Does your teacher try to correct your errors?

   a- Yes   ☐

   b- No   ☐

9-How often does your teacher correct your mistakes?

   b- Very often   ☐   b-Sometimes   ☐

   a- Rarely   ☐   d-Never   ☐

10-Does your teacher focus more?

   a- On form   ☐   b- On meaning   ☐

11- How does your teacher correct your errors?

    a- Providing the correct form   ☐

    b- Reformulating your errors   ☐

    c- Asking for clarification   ☐

    d- Providing the rule   ☐

    e- Other….

……………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………….

Section Four: Learners' Reaction To teachers' NF

12- When your teacher corrects your mistakes, do you repeat the same mistakes again?

    a- Yes   ☐

    b- No   ☐

13- If yes, it's because of …

    a- The ambiguity of feedback   ☐

    b- The teacher's way of providing the feedback   ☐

14- Do you think that teacher's feedback is important in enhancing your performance?

    a- Yes   ☐

    b- No   ☐

15- How do you react when you receive feedback from your teacher?

    a- You like it   ☐

    b- You do not like it   ☐

    c- You are indifferent   ☐

Thank You

الملخص

إن التغذية الراجعة السلبية-مصطلح يطلق على تقنية تصحيح أخطاء الطلبة من طرف الأساتذة-هي من اقوى المؤثرات في التعليم و المردود التعلمي. و تسلط هذه المذكرة الضوء على أهمية التغذية الراجعة السلبية في مردود الطلبة التعلمي و كذا أهميتها في مجال التعليم بما انها تهدف للبحث في سلوك الأساتذة اتجاه هذه الأخيرة و مدى تأثيرها على دارسي اللغة. وتهدف أيضا إلى معرفة أي الأنواع من التغذية الراجعة السلبية أكثر استعمالا من طرف الأساتذة و مدى تأثيره على طلاب السنة الأولى انجليزية بالمركز الجامعي ميلة. اختيرت مجموعة من الأسئلة لغرض هذه الدراسة نذكر منها : (1) هل يعتقد الأساتذة انه ينبغي تصحيح جميع أخطاء الطلبة؟ (2) أي نوع من الأخطاء يتم تصحيحها غالبا؟ (3) ما هي اكثر انواع التغذية الراجعة استعمالا من طرف الأساتذة (4) هل تصحيح الأخطاء يسبب قلقا للطلبة؟ و قد بني هذا البحث على الفرضيات التالية : قد يكون لدى الأساتذة سلوك ايجابي اتجاه التغذية الراجعة السلبية، و أنهم يستعملون غالبا النوع الغير مباشر منها. ولهذا الغرض، تم تقديم استبيان إلى 20 أستاذا و آخر إلى 60 طالبا، جميعهم من نفس المركز الجامعي بميلة، بغرض جمع المعلومات اللازمة والتحقق من الفرضيات السابقة. وتبين النتائج ان العينة التي لدينا من المعلمين لديها موقف إيجابي تجاه التغذية الراجعة السلبية كدليل على أهميتها في تدريس اللغة والتعلم وان أغلبية هؤلاء الأساتذة يعتمدون على نوعين محددين من التغذية الراجعة السلبية.