

**O PAPEL DO FEEDBACK CORRETIVO NA SALA DE AULA DE PORTUGUÊS COMO LÍNGUA ESTRANGEIRA**

***EL PAPEL DE LA RETROALIMENTACIÓN CORRECTIVA EN SALA DE CLASE DE PORTUGUÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA***

***THE ROLE OF ORAL CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN L2 PORTUGUESE CLASSROOMS***

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**RESUMO:** As línguas são, de modo geral, aprendidas na relação com os outros e para os outros, em diferentes ambientes que influenciam a aprendizagem de segunda língua (L2). Uma das influências mais importantes do ambiente linguístico é que fornece aos alunos informação sobre a incorreção de seus enunciados (ORTEGA, 2009). Este processo é referido como Corretive Feedback (LYSTER; RANTA, 1997, RUSSEL; SPADA, 2006), que é um fenômeno complexo que possui diferentes funções na instrução L2 formal. O objetivo do presente estudo foi investigar os tipos de CF oral em salas de aula L2 portuguesas e analisar como os alunos responderam ao CF fornecido pelos professores. Os dados apresentados foram obtidos por meio da observação de aulas em um curso elementar e intermediário de um curso de português oferecido em uma universidade americana privada. Os resultados deste estudo mostram que a elicitación, a correção explícita e o feedback metalinguístico são os principais tipos de CF utilizados pelos professores observados.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Aquisição de segunda língua. Feedback corretivo. Português como língua estrangeira

**RESUMEN:** *Se aprenden las lenguas, en general, por medio de la relación con los otros y para los otros, en distintos ambientes que influyen el aprendizaje de segunda lengua (L2). Una de las influencias más importantes del ambiente lingüístico es la que fornece a los alumnos información sobre la incorrección de sus enunciados (ORTEGA, 2009). Se nombra a ese proceso por "Retroalimentación Correctiva" (Corretive Feedback-CF) (LYSTER; RANTA, 1997, RUSSEL; SPADA, 2006), que es un fenómeno complejo que posee diferentes funciones en la instrucción L2 formal. El objetivo del presente estudio fue el de investigar los tipos de CF oral en salas de clase de portugués (L2) y analizar como los alumnos respondieron al CF fornecido por los profesores. Los datos presentados fueron obtenidos por medio de observación de clases en un curso de portugués, niveles elementar e intermedio, ofrecido en una universidad americana privada. Los resultados de este estudio muestran que la elicitación, la corrección*

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*explícita y la retroalimentación metalingüística son los principales tipo de CF utilizados por los profesores observados.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Adquisición de segunda lengua. Retroalimentación correctiva. Portugués como lengua extranjera.*

**ABSTRACT:** *Languages are generally acquired along with and for others, in varied environments which influence second language (L2) learning. One of the most important influences of the linguistic environment is that it provides learners with information about the incorrectness of their utterances (ORTEGA, 2009). This process is referred as Corrective Feedback (LYSTER; RANTA, 1997, RUSSEL; SPADA, 2006), which is a complex phenomenon that has different functions in formal L2 instruction. The purpose of the current study was to investigate the types of oral CF in L2 Portuguese classrooms and to analyze how learners responded to CF provided by their teachers. The data presented were obtained from the observation of lessons in an elementary and an intermediate group of a Portuguese course offered at a private American university. The results of this observational study show that elicitation, explicit correction and metalinguistic feedback are the main CF methods employed by the teachers.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Second language acquisition. Corrective Feedback. L2 Portuguese.*

## Introduction

Languages are generally acquired along with and for others, in varied environments which influence second language (L2) learning. One of the most important influences of the linguistic environment is that it provides learners with information about the incorrectness of their utterances (ORTEGA, 2009). This process is referred interchangeably as **corrective feedback** (LYSTER; RANTA, 1997, RUSSEL; SPADA, 2006), **negative evidence** (GASS, 1997), and **negative feedback** (ORTEGA, 2009; LOEWEN, 2012).

Corrective Feedback (CF), the term adopted in this paper, is a complex phenomenon that has different functions in formal L2 instruction. Any indications of learners' non-targetlike use of the target language (TL) can be conveyed by a variety of types of CF, in response to learners' oral or written production. The purpose of the current study is to investigate the types of oral CF adopted in two L2 Portuguese classrooms in relation to learners' response to feedback.

## Theoretical framework

Considered under a historical perspective, CF practices were first rejected in communicative language teaching classrooms, since they were viewed as an obstacle for learners' free communication. Over the last years, however, CF in the L2 acquisition has gained an important role and positive results have repeatedly confirmed its use and effectiveness (RUSSEL; SPADA, 2006). In the context of communicative approaches to L2 instruction, for instance, CF has been seen "as a means of drawing learner's attention to accurate language use without disrupting classroom interaction" (LOEWEN, 2012, p. 24).

There has been a substantial number of research investigating the occurrence and effectiveness of CF in naturalistic and L2 classroom contexts. In order to better understand the role of CF in L2 acquisition, it is necessary to consider some of its core features.

### **Features of corrective feedback**

An important aspect to discuss in this area of second language acquisition (SLA) is related to the taxonomies developed to address different types of CF, which have been discussed by a number of researchers. Chaudron (1977), in an early study, investigated the different types of CF provided by French immersion teachers to their students. In his taxonomy, he included categories such as repetitions with emphasis, prompts, and explanations. Lyster and Ranta (1997), when studying the teacher-student interaction in French immersion classrooms, identified six types of CF provided by teachers. They grouped these types of CF in two broad categories: reformulations and prompts. Reformulations include recasts and explicit correction. Prompts include varied signals that push learners to self-repair, such as elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests, and repetition.

Later, Ellis et al (2001) identified three main types of CF: recasts, elicitations, and metalinguistic feedback. More recently, Ellis (2008) has narrowed CF in two broad categories: input-providing feedback and output-promoting feedback. According to Loewen (2012), recasts and elicitations are among the most frequent types of corrective feedback.

Together with its types, the frequency and distribution of CF have been investigated in different instructional settings (LYSTER et al., 2013). By contrasting 12 studies of classroom CF, Lyster et al (2013) highlight that English as a foreign language

in high schools in China and Hong Kong, high school French L2 in Quebec, and English immersion in Korea present a low frequency of CF per hour. The high-frequency contexts of CF per hour include, for example, German as a foreign language in Dutch speaking high schools in Belgium. According to Ellis et al (2001) and Loewen (2012), CF has been found to occur in both communicative and more traditional L2 instructional contexts in varying degrees. Regarding the effectiveness of CF for L2 learning, there is supporting evidence that CF can be beneficial for learners (RUSSEL; SPADA, 2006).

Learner uptake is another construct that plays a crucial role in the investigation about CF. It can be defined as “a student’s utterance that immediately follows the teacher’s feedback” (LYSTER; RANTA, 1997, p. 49). In other words, learner uptake refers to the student’s responses to CF. It has been argued that learner uptake can ease L2 acquisition (ELLIS et al., 2001) and that the instructional context (LYSTER; MORI, 2006) and the age of learners (OLIVER et al, 2008) can influence the amount of modified output. Considering the potential amount of repair provided by CF, Lyster and Ranta (1997) found out that recasts are less effective in promoting repair than other types of CF. Taking these aspects in mind, it is necessary to point out that, besides it has been argued that uptake is a possible indication that CF has been noticed (LOEWEN, 2012), there is a scarcity of research on different types of CF in relation to learner uptake, especially in the L2 Portuguese classroom.

### **The present study**

Taking into account the types of CF, the different frequencies by which they occur in the L2 classroom, and the varied ways learner uptake relates to CF, the goal of the current study is to investigate the types of oral CF in L2 Portuguese classrooms and to analyze how learners respond to CF provided by their teachers<sup>2</sup>. Thus, the research questions that are going to guide this investigation are the following:

- a) What are the different types of corrective feedback provided by teachers in the L2 Portuguese classroom?
- b) How do learners respond to feedback?
- c) Is there any evidence of repair? If so, for what types of feedback?

<sup>2</sup>Due to the facts that the focus of this study is on different types of feedback in relation to uptake, we will not be reporting on the different types of errors committed by the learners.

By focusing on the CF practices adopted in the L2 Portuguese classroom, this study can contribute to the understanding of how feedback occurs in this specific context of instruction, how students respond to CF and which types of CF lead to most repair. Besides that, although a number of studies have focused on CF in English L2 (ELLIS et al, 2008), Chinese L2 (YANG; LYSTER, 2010), and Japanese and Spanish L2 (LONG; INAGAKI; ORTEGA, 1998), there is a lack of studies on CF in the L2 Portuguese classroom.

## Methodology

The data presented in this study derive from the observation of lessons in one elementary and one intermediate group of a Portuguese course offered at a private American university. Two 50-minute lessons were recorded in each group. In the elementary group, the lessons were recorded in video, whereas in the intermediate group data was recorded in audio format.

Both the elementary and the intermediate groups use the textbook *Ponto de Encontro – Portuguese as a world language*. The book comprises 15 units of work, 10 of those are covered in two semesters of the elementary course. The last 5 units are covered in the first semester of the intermediate course. The authors of the mentioned textbook argue that “it follows a communication-oriented framework with a strong emphasis on meaningful, contextualized communication in the classroom” (JOUET-PASTRÉ et al., 2013, p. xix, xx). In the observed lessons in both groups, however, the focus was on grammar-based activities that included the explanation and review of grammatical structures not associated to a meaningful context of use of the L2.

## Participants

The participants in this study were two teachers and their 24 students. Teacher A (TA) is a Spanish male that has been teaching Portuguese at the university level for 4 years. His elementary group comprises 8 L1 English students. Teacher B (TB) is a Brazilian female who has taught Portuguese for 17 years. She has a group of 16 L1 English students. Although the teachers knew that we were interested in recording classroom interactions, they were not aware of our research focus on CF.

## Procedure

The utterances of both the feedback provider and the feedback recipient received attention in this study. The utterances produced in the L2 Portuguese classrooms were analyzed by taking into account the learner's erroneous utterance that triggered the feedback, the feedback provided by the teacher, and the learner's (optional) response to the feedback. The focus was on the presence of six different types of CF used by teachers in the L2 classroom, which were grouped in two broad categories, following Lyster and Ranta (1997).

## Results

### Feedback

We found five different types of feedback used by the two teachers in this study. Below, we shortly describe each type of CF observed in the L2 Portuguese classrooms and provide examples to illustrate them.

- 1) Explicit correction: This type of CF refers to the explicit provision of the correct form by the teacher.

#### (a) TA – Elementary – Lesson 1

St: *Meus irmãos saem com seus amigos e joga.*

TA: *E jogam.*

St: *Jogam basquete.*

St: My brothers go out with their friends and plays.

TA: And play.

St: Play basketball.

#### (b) TB – Intermediate – Lesson 2

St: *Nós temos ido para o filme todos os sábados.*

TB: *Ao invés de filme, nós vamos dizer para o cinema, não?*

St: We have been to the film every Saturday.

TB: Instead of film, we have to say to the cinema, right?

- 2) Recast: It involves the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance. In general, a recast is not introduced by sentences like "You mean" or "You should say".

(c) TA – Elementary – Lesson 1

St: *Eu vou viajar, eu vou viajar para*  
TA: *Pra onde?*  
St: *Para casa de meus*  
TA: *Para a casa de meus pais, né?*<sup>3</sup>

(d) TA – Elementary – Lesson 1

TA: *O que vocês vão fazer?*  
St: *Eu viajar, viajo.*  
TA: *Então, eu vou, vou viajar.*  
St: *Eu vou viajar, eu vou viajar para.*  
TA: *Pra onde?*  
  
TA: What are you going to do?  
St: I to travel, travel.  
TA: So, I am going to, I am going to travel.  
St: I am going to travel to.  
T: Where to?

- 3) Clarification requests: This type of CF is offered when intelligibility is low and meaning needs to be negotiated (ORTEGA, 2009).

(d) TA – Elementary – Lesson 1

St: (...) go shopping.  
TA: *O quê? Como se fala?*  
  
St: (...) go shopping.

<sup>3</sup> It was not possible to translate this excerpt into English because in Portuguese, it is necessary to place the definite article before the noun house, as in "Para a casa de meus pais", whereas in English it is not.

TA: What? How do you say that?

(f) TB – Intermediate – Lesson 2

TB: *Número 3?*

St: *(Incompreensível)*

TB: *Como?*

St: Oh, sorry. *Tenho vindo.*

TB: Number 3?

St: (Unintelligible)

TB: Say it again.

St: Oh, sorry. I have come.

- 4) Metalinguistic feedback: It contains comments, information, or questions related to the error in the student's utterance. The teacher does not necessarily say the correct form.

(g) TA – Elementary – Lesson 2

TA: *Quantas horas você dorme por noite?*

St: *Faz, durmo, like I slept.*

TA: You don't need the past.

TA: How many hours of sleep do you get every night?

St: I've been, I sleep, like, I slept.

TA: You don't need the past.

- 5) Elicitation: Used when teachers directly elicit the correct form from the student

(h) TA – Elementary – Lesson 2

TA: *E qual é o presente do verbo dizer?*

St: *Eu digo, éh, você diz.*

TA: *Você diz? Muito bem!*



- St: *Eles dizem* and *disse*.  
 TA: Nós .... diz.  
 St: *Dizemos, dizemos*. Is it *dizemos*, no?  
 TA: What do you guys think here? *É dizer, o verbo é dizer*.  
  
 TA: And what is the present tense of say?  
 St: I say, éh, you say.  
 TA: You say? Very good.  
 St: They said and say.  
 TA: We... sa.  
 St: We say, say! Is it say, no?  
 TA: What do you guys think here? It is say, the verb is to

say.

Table 1 provides the number and percentage of the different types of CF found in this study.

**Table 1:** Occurrences of corrective feedback

Type of feedback	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Elicitation	7	27 %
Explicit correction	7	27%
Metalinguistic feedback	7	27%
Clarification request	3	12%
Recast	2	7%
TOTAL	26	100%

Source: Own elaboration

According to the results in this table, explicit correction, elicitation and metalinguistic feedback are the feedback methods of choice of the L2 Portuguese teachers that were part of this study. When taken together, these three feedback techniques correspond to 81% of the total.

### Learner uptake

As the purpose of this study is to investigate the CF practices adopted in the L2 Portuguese classroom in relation to the students' response to CF, we retrieved two types of uptake pointed out by Lyster and Ranta (1997, p.49): "a) uptake that results in repair of the error by the learner and b) uptake that results in an utterance that still needs repair". Based on that, we grouped the six occurrences of learner uptake found in this study in two categories. The excerpts below illustrate some examples of learner uptake.

### **Uptake with repair**

#### (i) TA – Elementary – Lesson 1

TA: *É presente, lembra que é presente, não é passado aqui... Eu tomo. Você? E você, como é, fala para mim. Você...*

St: *Toma.*

TA: *Então, nós...*

St: *Tomamos.*

TA: *Mmm hmm.*

TA: It is present tense, remember it is present, it is not the simple past here. I drink. You? And you, how is it, tell me, you...

St: *Drink.*

TA: *So, we...*

St: *Drink.*

TA: *Mmm hmm.*

#### (j) TA – Elementary – Lesson 1

TA: *O que vocês vão fazer?*

St: *Eu viajar, viajo.*

TA: *Então, eu vou, vou viajar.*

St: *Eu vou viajar, eu vou viajar para.*

TA: *Pra onde?*

TA: *What are you going to do?*

St: *I to travel, travel.*

TA: *So, I am going to, I am going to travel.*

St: I am going to travel to  
T: Where to?

### Uptake without repair

(k) TA – Elementary – Lesson 2

TA: *Quantas horas você dorme por noite?*

St: *Faz, durmo, like I slept.*

TA: You don't need the past.

St: *So, durmo?*

TA: Yes!

St: *Faz durmo sete horas.*

TA: How many hours of sleep do you get every night?

St: There is, I sleep, like, I slept.

TA: You don't need the past.

St: *So, I sleep?*

TA: Yes.

St: I've been I sleep seven hours.

Table 2 shows that 6 occurrences of learner uptake were identified in this study. This means that only 23% of the total occurrences of CF resulted in uptake by the students. Besides that, Table 2 shows that the most successful CF technique for eliciting uptake in the present study is elicitation.

**Table 2:** Occurrences of learner uptake

Occurrence	Feedback
Uptake 1	Elicitation
Uptake 2	Explicit correction
Uptake 3	Explicit correction
Uptake 4	Elicitation
Uptake 5	Elicitation
Uptake 6	Metalinguistic feedback

Source: Own elaboration

In most cases, feedback did not lead to uptake due to topic continuation by the teacher or because of the monosyllabic answers provided by students after receiving feedback.

## Discussion

The results of this small scale observational study in two L2 Portuguese classrooms show that elicitation, explicit correction and metalinguistic feedback are the feedback methods most employed by the teachers in the study. Concerning recasts, whereas in Lyster and Ranta's (1997) study corresponded to 55% of all CF moves, they were used only in 7% of the CF moves analyzed in the present study.

When considering the CF moves that led to uptake by the students, the results indicate that elicitation is the most successful CF method for eliciting uptake, as it represents 50% of the total CF moves followed by uptake. This finding is in accordance with Lyster and Ranta's (1997) study, which shows that all learner utterances following elicitation involve uptake. Our data also indicate that the most evidence of repair was found for elicitation, since explicit correction provides learners with the correct form and cannot lead to repair.

## Considerações finais

When considering the findings of the present study and its implications for L2 learning, it becomes important to carefully reflect on the link between elicitations and student repair. Based on the results of this study, which is limited by a small number of participants and observed lessons, we cannot say, for instance, that elicitation, due to its uptake-leading characteristic, should be massively employed in the L2 classroom. It can be the case that students would feel pushed to repair their ungrammatical utterances because the teacher directly elicits the correct form from them. In other words, learner uptake that results from elicitation might be a kind of forced uptake and not really lead to learning. This and other aspects such as how different types of repair are likely to affect L2 development in different ways over time in classroom settings might be the object of further investigation.

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