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# THE IMPACT OF ASYNCHRONOUS COMPUTER-MEDIATED CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK ON INCREASING IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' CORRECT USE OF PRESENT TENSES

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## ABSTRACT

An area that has recently attracted increasing attention is providing feedback on learners' writing accuracy through the Internet. However, research in this area has largely focused on synchronous communication, i.e., chat, with fewer studies assessing asynchronous technologies, i.e., e-mail. Therefore, this study investigates the effectiveness of asynchronous computer-mediated corrective feedback-explicit/implicit, through e-mail on increasing the correct use of present tenses. Forty-five Iranian elementary EFL learners were randomly assigned to two experimental groups, receiving explicit and implicit corrective feedback respectively, and one control group receiving no corrective feedback. Each group included 15 participants. After the treatment, a post-test was administered to assess the probable increase in the correct use of simple present and present progressive tenses. Analysis of the results through two separate ANOVAs revealed that the experimental group 1 who received explicit corrective feedback significantly outperformed the experimental group 2 and the control group in terms of the correct use of simple present and present progressive tenses. The experimental group 2, however, showed no statistically significant improvement over the control group. While the findings support the current view on the effectiveness of corrective feedback through technology, due to the scarcity of research, more investigation is merited as there is much to gain regarding this burgeoning field.

**Key Words:** Computer-mediated communication, Asynchronous CMC, Synchronous CMC, Corrective feedback, E-mail, Noticing Hypothesis.

## INTRODUCTION

Since the introduction of the Internet as a means of communication and prevalence of computers, more and more people have been using electronic media to cover hosts of purposes such as interpersonal communication, sending/receiving information, educational and language learning and teaching perspectives, etc. The application of computer and the Internet can be expected to have a myriad of positive effects on language learning. It has been proved that communication through the Internet will have a significant motivational effect on the students (e.g., Meunier, 1996; Warschauer, 1996) which further helps them improve their communicative skills both orally and in the written form. According to Quan-Hasse, Cothrel, and Wellman (2005), the introduction of computer technologies such as the Internet, e-mail, chat, etc, into educational environments has made it possible for learners to communicate ideas, information, and their feelings without any limit on time and space. Similarly, Zhao (2006, ¶ 14) refers to the application of the Internet and says that "The Internet is the first major medium of communication that allows people to establish new social contacts outside the face-to-face context as well as to maintain existing ties formed in corporeal copresence". Carter (1997) also states that the emergence of faxes, e-mail communications, and word-processed texts has changed the ways in which written language can be utilized to maintain interpersonal interaction among different interlocutors within their social, cultural, and learning context.

## Computer-Mediated Communication

Language educators and specialists have recently begun to discover the potentiality of computer technologies and in particular computer-mediated communication (CMC) for language learning and teaching. The term CMC was first coined and introduced by Hiltz and Turoff (1978) while experimenting on computer conferencing on the Internet. Barnes (2002) defines CMC as a wide range of technologies that paves the way for human interaction and sharing of information through interconnected networks of computers including e-mail, discussion groups, newsgroups, and real-time chat. December (1997, ¶ 3) also states that "Computer-Mediated Communication is a process of human communication via computers, involving people, situated in particular contexts, engaging in processes to shape media for a variety of purposes". Having long been adopted in language learning and teaching, CMC has been proved to be more effective than class-restricted environment in that students no longer feel bored and frustrated with monotonous materials and methods of teaching and can learn new things in much more interesting and effective ways. Fey (1998) maintains that, "computer networks are allowing students to transcend boundaries of classroom walls and to learn in new ways" (p. 86).
According to Warschauer (2001), CMC or "on-line communication refers to reading, writing and communication via networked computers" and comprises of:

(a) Synchronous computer-mediated communication, whereby people communicate in real time via chat o discussion software, with all participants at their computers at the same time;
b) Asynchronous computer-mediated communication, whereby people communicate in a delayed fashion by computer, e.g. by e-mail; and
(c) The reading and writing of on-line documents via the internet. (p. 207)

Recently, pedagogical contributions of computer technologies have been extensively researched and beneficial outcomes have been reported. CMC can be greatly utilized in order to work on the writing improvement of English learners because according to Goodman and Graddol (1996), computer- mediated technologies are mostly concerned with written texts through English language. Additionally, by making a comparison between CMC and face-to-face communication, Bordia (1996) aptly concludes that CMC is "a combination of written and oral styles of communication" (p. 150). Maynor (1994) also indicates that e-mailing as one of the primary means of communication regarding asynchronous CMC (ACMC), represents itself as a converging point for both oral and written modalities in a two-way communication. This means that computer-mediated writing also exhibits characteristics of face-to-face communication. ACMC, as the name speaks for itself, provides mediated media of communication which provides interlocutors with an opportunity to deliberate, review, revise or even cancel the flow of communication before sending the information to the recipient (Heisler & Crabill, 2006). This valuable property of ACMC helps learners learn how to reflect on the content of what they are going to convey and be critical of what they have in mind before communicating it to others.

Therefore, asynchronous communication can deeply involve learners in the processes of critical thinking (Lee, 2004) and problem solving (Jonassen & Kwon, 2001) by demanding more focused and purposeful communication. Warschauer (1995) also emphasizes the role of e-mail in CMC and says that e-mail is the most important application regarding the Internet. It has also been suggested that using computer technologies can help learners increase their opportunities to use target language (e.g., Barson, Frommer, & Schwartz, 1993). Thus, these opportunities result in the improvement of the quality of written and spoken language (Sotillo, 2000) and negotiation of meaning (Blake, 2000). Finally, Sotillo (2000) maintains that because of delayed nature of e-mail, learners have more opportunities to produce syntactically complex language resulting in a significant improvement in their writing accuracy.

## Corrective Feedback and Learning

In the course of learning target languages, it is quite possible that learners deviate from target-like forms by making syntactic errors and mistakes which, according to Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis, are indicative of the differences between the target form and learners' interlanguage. In cases like this, teachers usually

resort to giving students appropriate feedback as to guide them towards target structures. The mismatch between what the learners receive as input and what they produce as output can be effectively dealt with by means of appropriate corrective feedback provided by the teacher (Campillo, 2003) which helps learners integrate correct language. According to Lightbown and Spada (1990), corrective feedback is any indication to learners by teachers that their use of the target language is erroneous and needs to be modified. Brown (1988) also states that feedback should be provided for learners as it helps them experience the effect of what they have produced as a guide to their future output.

Having identified an error in the process of interaction, teachers can resort to two types of negative corrective feedback as a response to the mismatch: *explicit* and *implicit* corrective feedback. According to Campillo (2003), "explicit corrective feedback involves the explanation of a formal aspect after an error has been made. In turn, implicit corrective feedback refers to ways which indicate that the learner's output is somehow erroneous, and needs to be reformulated " (p. 210). Appendix A summarizes definitions and examples of corrective feedback strategies proposed by Lyster and Ranta (1997) as cited in Sauro (2009, p. 99). Campillo (2003) also states that corrective feedback is crucial to the development of second language as it provides learners with opportunities to contemplate on and take into account other possibilities. Campillo (2003) cites Carroll and Swain (1993) and indicates that corrective feedback is "also applicable to the foreign language (FL) context, in the sense that it may trigger the cognitive processes required for acquisition" (p. 212).

In conclusion, with respect to the aforementioned benefits of computer technologies concerning grammar accuracy and the importance of corrective feedback, it can be argued that, research on learning outcomes following computer-mediated corrective feedback is still limited (e.g., Loewen & Erlam, 2006; Sachs & Suh, 2007) and to the best of our knowledge, no attempt has ever been made, especially in Iran, to assess the effectiveness of asynchronous computer-mediated corrective feedback–explicit/implicit, via e-mail on the correct use of English tenses. Therefore, the present study was undertaken with the hope that its findings might help to enhance the practices of TEFL.

## Background of the Study

### Corrective Feedback

Different studies have been carried out which have investigated the effectiveness of both explicit and implicit corrective feedback on the grammatical and linguistic accuracy of learners' production. Campillo (2003) refers to some previous research on explicit and implicit feedback and mentions that Lightbown and Spada (1990) analyzed the effect of explicit corrective feedback in an intensive communication classroom having English as the second language and found out that teaching of formal aspects of language contributed positively to the learners' linguistic and grammatical accuracy. Campillo (2003) also states that implicit corrective feedback has been thoroughly investigated and integrated into teaching environments and positive results have been reported. Campillo (2003) refers to Lyster and Ranta (1997) and says that they carried out their study through different types of corrective feedback ranging from explicit to implicit at primary levels. Accordingly, as stated by Campillo (2003), "The findings of the study revealed that recasts were the most used technique by the teachers (55% of the cases), followed by elicitation (14%), clarification requests (11%), metalinguistic feedback (8%), explicit correction (7%), and repetition (5%) " (p. 212). In the same way, Zhuo (2010) conducted a study examining "the relative effects of explicit and implicit recasts on the acquisition of English noun plural by Chinese EFL learners" (p. 55). In this study, students were randomly assigned to three groups: the first group received corrective feedback through explicit recast. The second group received implicit recast. And the last group acted as the control group receiving no feedback. In line with Campillo's reports, the results of Zhuo's study showed that recasts were more effective than other types of corrective feedback in bringing students' attention to their erroneous structures. Sheen (2004) also examined the role of corrective feedback in increasing learners' uptake in communication classes in four contexts: "French Immersion, Canada ESL, New Zealand ESL and Korean EFL" (p. 263). Findings of this study indicated "that recasts were the most frequent feedback type in all four contexts but were much more frequent in the Korean EFL and New Zealand ESL

classrooms (83% and 68%, respectively) than in the Canadian Immersion and ESL classrooms (55% for both)" (p. 263).

Brief review of corrective feedback literature revealed that most studies have so far been done with respect to recasts and a little, if any, investigation has been carried out regarding other types of corrective feedback such as explicit, repetition implicit, etc.

## Synchronous and Asynchronous CMC and Corrective Feedback

According to Sauro (2009), as technology is making its way into language learning and teaching environments, written CMC holds particular promises for the learning of complex and low salience features and forms. Thus, synchronous and asynchronous CMC environments are ideal contexts for the investigation of corrective feedback during written communication as they provide student-teacher interaction in a way that increases students' awareness towards target language and eliminates time and distance limitations.

Corrective feedback in this sense can draw learners' attention to the discrepancies between learners' output and target-like norm and facilitate the occurrence of noticing of the gap which according to Schmidt (2001) is the "first step in language building" (p. 31). Sauro (2009) also states that according to Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis "for learning to occur, second language learners must attend to and notice details and differences between the target language and their interlanguage and its representation in their production of output" (pp. 96–97).

It should be mentioned that some studies have also investigated synchronous and asynchronous computer-mediated corrective feedback in language learning and teaching environments in order to substantiate its efficacy on the improvement of learners' linguistic and grammatical abilities. For example, Hanson-Smith (2001) cites Holliday (1999) for his experiment with a large corpus of students' e-mails and mentions that Holliday "has established that electronic communication provides a range and distributive frequency of linguistic features comparable to other genre of writing and speaking. He suggests that the repetitive nature of e-mail … assists learners in understanding linguistic cues" (p. 109). This study clearly shows that CMC can help learners improve grammatical accuracy of their writing due to the fact that they can use linguistic cues more frequently and therefore pay more attention to the accuracy of their writings.

Romm and Pliskin (1999) also support that ACMC through e-mail provides learners with a friendly environment in which they no longer have the feeling of being isolated and excluded. Accordingly, they contribute more willingly to maintain the flow of communication, pay more attention to the teacher-provided instructions, and participate in interpersonal interactions more than before. Few studies (e.g., Lea, 2001) on ACMC and students' academic writing assignments show that students make use of online collaborative learning context, reflect on their own learning, draw upon their peers' feedback in the construction of their own knowledge, and thus benefit in their own academic writing. In one study on ACMC, St. John and Cash (1995) found out that an adult language learner dramatically improved his German via e-mail exchanges with a native speaker, because the learner systematically studied and reflected on the new vocabulary and grammatical structures in his incoming e-mails and used this information to improve the content of his future letters with impressive results. This is indicative of the usefulness of learner's interaction with a more capable peer (Vygotsky, 1978) such as teachers, native speakers, etc, resulting in receiving and benefiting from appropriate feedback. Therefore, this can be viewed as an undeniable fact that ACMC via e-mail exchanges can be expected to improve learners' grammar and linguistic awareness through corrective feedback provided by a more capable peer. More recently, Faghih and Hosseini (2012) and Hosseni (2012) conducted some studies examining the impact of asynchronous computer-mediated corrective feedback via e-mail on the correct use of articles and prepositions. The results of their studies reported significant increase in the correct use of articles and prepositions.

Similarly, most studies on the efficacy of corrective feedback through SCMC have so far been conducted with respect to recasts and meta-linguistic types of feedback and promising results have been produced. In one study, Razagifard and Rahimpour (2010) investigated the effectiveness of corrective feedback through chat on learners' grammar improvement and found out that meta-linguistic corrective feedback is more effective than recasts in getting learners to both notice the gap and enhance their ability to correctly apply grammatical structures.

As opposed to e-mail which is the most applicable tool regarding asynchronous studies, application of chat as a means of language learning has been gaining increasing popularity among scholars and researchers likewise due to the fact that it resembles face-to-face communication in its immediacy of interaction.

### The Present Study

The present brief survey of the related literature reveals that few researchers have so far embarked on investigating the effects of explicit and implicit computer-mediated corrective feedback through e-mail in Iran and even internationally. Moreover, with respect to CMC, most studies in this field have so far primarily dealt with the impact of recasts and meta-linguistic types of corrective feedback via SCMC and chat. Consequently, the aim of the present study was to investigate the extent to which asynchronous computer-mediated corrective feedback might be effective in promoting learners' correct application of simple present and present progressive tenses and the following research questions were proposed:

Q1. Does asynchronous computer-mediated corrective feedback have any significant effect on the correct use of *simple present* tense?
Q2. Does asynchronous computer-mediated corrective feedback have any significant effect on the correct use of *present progressive* tense?

## METHOD

### Participants

The participants of this study consisted of adult elementary EFL learners from Iran Language Institute (the ILI) in Tehran aged 16 or more whose mean age was 21. The reason for selecting elementary learners was that it was assumed that since they were beginners, they would not know much about the details of EFL syntax. In order to make sure of the learners' proficiency level and homogeneity, Key English Test (KET, 2009) developed by Cambridge was administered prior to the treatment. The participants were selected voluntarily and according to their access to the Internet out of the class sessions. Out of the subject pool, 45 participants were randomly identified as two experimental groups and one control group. Each group consisted of 15 participants. The experimental group1 (N=15) received explicit corrective feedback, the experimental group 2 (N=15) received implicit repetition corrective feedback, and the control group (N=15) received placebo feedback. The assignment of the participants to the experimental and control groups was random as well.

### Target Structure

Simple present and present progressive tenses were chosen in this study as target forms for two reasons. First, elementary EFL learners are already familiar with the basics of these structures. Thus, in this study, the emphasis was put on increasing the awareness over the correct use of present tenses rather than on instructing the learners how to use them. Second, these structures are known to be problematic as learners frequently fail to use them properly. Therefore, this study attempted to enhance the learners' ability to correctly apply simple present and present progressive tenses through asynchronous computer-mediated corrective feedback.

### Instruments

The participants of this study were presented with their regular coursebooks developed by the ILI. Elementary coursebooks at the ILI comprise of ten units and each unit is further divided into two sections, and every section is covered in one session lasting for an hour and 45 minutes. Session one is devoted to conversation, grammar, and vocabulary. Session two covers reading, grammar, and listening. Classes are held twice a week. The total of twenty-one sessions covers the whole term for each of the three elementary levels at the ILI.

The participants were required to submit an e-mail and the modified version of the same e-mail after receiving corrective feedback from the second session on as home assignment every week after covering every unit, using computer or laptop out of the classroom. At the end of the treatment, learners' grammar improvement on present tenses was assessed using following instruments as their post-test:

1. Simple present and present progressive tenses

1.1. A Cloze passage consisting of 12 simple present and 10 present progressive gaps (Morgan & Lieu, n.d.).

1.2. Twenty multiple-choice sentences, each sentence followed by three choices consisting of ten simple present and eleven present progressive answers (Pitzer & Lieu, 1999; Mugglestone, n.d.).

### Procedure

Prior to the treatment, the participants were told that they were obliged to write at least one paragraph or maximum two consisting of 100 to 150 words every week. From the second session on, they were required to submit an e-mail on a topic in line with their regular coursebook contents provided by the researcher as home assignment. All the participants in three groups received the same topic every week. The total of eight writing topics was provided for the participants during the experiment. The experimental group 1 received explicit corrective feedback, i.e., the instructor indicated that an error had been made, identified the error and provided the correction, to which repetition was required by the participants as modified output.

Example (1), asynchronous corrective feedback−explicit:

The participant: Now, I learning English, if we have a good teacher it become easier. I think that is something that provide our future and we can get the best end…..

Instructor's corrective feedback: Now, I am learning English (you should say I am learning English not *I learning English) if we have a good teacher it becomes (you should say it becomes not *it become) easier. I think that is something that provides (you should say something that provides not *something that provide) our future and we can get the best end…..

Modified output by the participant: Now, I am learning English, if we have a good teacher it becomes easier. I think this is something that provides our future and we can get the best end ….

The experimental group 2 received implicit repetition corrective feedback, i.e., the instructor repeated the learner's utterance highlighting the error by means of emphatic stress, underlined bolded uppercase words, to which reformulation by the participants was required as modified output. It is worth mentioning that the role of the emphatic stress was thoroughly explained to the participants because it required the participants to grammatically correct the underlined bolded uppercase words' usage by adding, deleting, changing, and modifying the surrounding or within words. It was also emphasized that the underlined bolded uppercase words had nothing to do with spelling mistakes.

Example (2), asynchronous corrective feedback−repetition implicit:

The participant: …. Therefore every one that start to learn a subject he need a helper but for some less than other people ….

Instructors' corrective feedback: …. Therefore **EVERYONE THAT START** to learn a subject **HE NEED** a helper but for some less than other people ….

Modified output by the participant: …. Therefore everyone that starts to learn a subject he needs a helper but for some less than other people ….

In order to make sure of noticing the teacher-provided corrective feedback, the participants of the experimental groups were obliged to send their modified output as an independent e-mail prior to receiving the next new topic.

The control group received placebo feedback, i.e., "topic relevant response that does not contain the target form in the same context", for example: "student: In Sweden the global warming is a problem. Native speaker: Many people believe it's a problem everywhere" (Sauro, 2009, p. 104) to which no modified output was required.

Teacher-provided corrective feedback for the experimental groups mainly focused on the correct use of simple present and present progressive tenses. Other grammatical deviations were corrected without bringing the participants' attention to them. At the end of the treatment, the participants of the three groups were presented with the post-test assessing the extent to which the treatment was successful in enhancing the experimental groups' ability over the control group's to correctly apply simple present and present progressive tenses.

This study was conducted within a period of 8 weeks in the summer of 1390 at the ILI, Fadak branch in Tehran. During the experiment, the current researcher held all of the classes, taught the learners, distributed e-mail writing topics every week, provided appropriate corrective feedback to all the groups, and administered the post-test.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Two separate one-way ANOVAs were calculated regarding the correct use of simple present and present progressive tenses and their means separately. Differences among the experimental and control groups were considered significant at the .05 alpha level.

### Analysis of the Results on Simple Present Tense

In order to answer the first research question, descriptive statistics regarding the experimental and the control groups was calculated first. The summary is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics on simple present tense

| Corrective Feedback | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental Group1 (Explicit) | 15 | 20.47 | 1.642 | 16 | 22 |
| Experimental Group2 (Implicit) | 15 | 18.07 | 3.674 | 7 | 21 |
| Control Group | 15 | 17.27 | 3.173 | 11 | 22 |

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The minimum score was 7 which belonged to the experimental group 2 and the maximum score was 22 which belonged to the experimental group 1 and the control group. As Table 1 shows, the experimental group 1 who received explicit computer-mediated corrective feedback with the mean scores of 20.47 performed better than the experimental group 2 and the control group with the mean scores of 18.07 and 17.27 respectively. The experimental group 2 slightly outperformed the control group. The differences between the groups' mean scores are presented in the following figure.

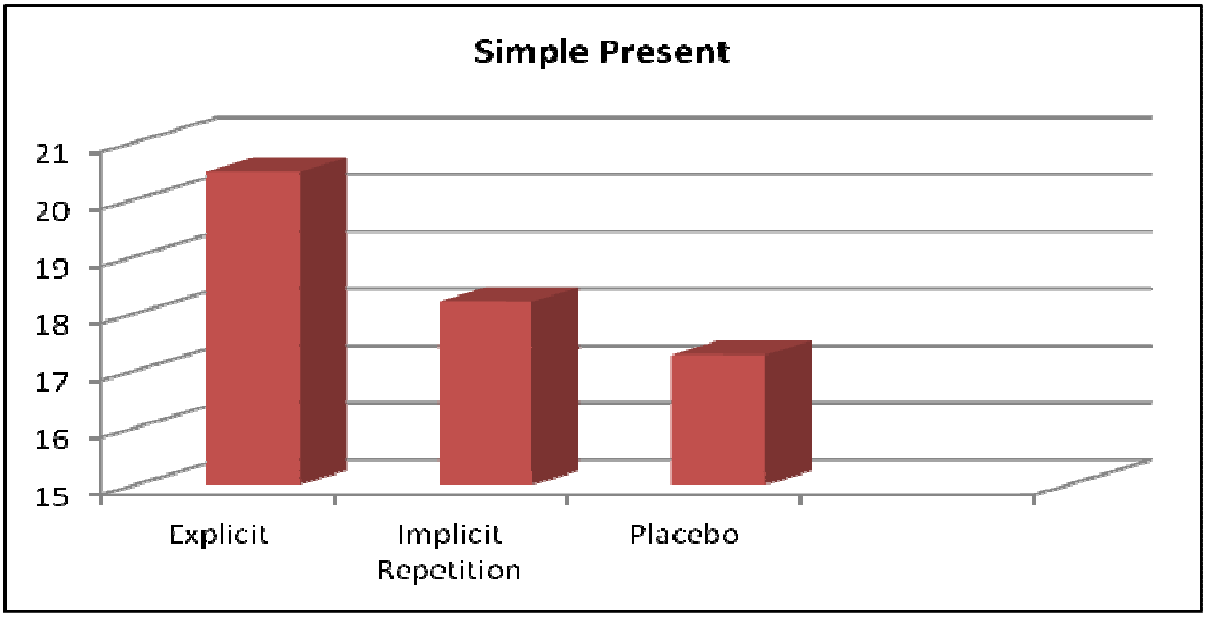


Fig 1: Group means on simple present tense

In order to investigate the effect of asynchronous computer-mediated corrective feedback on increasing the correct use of simple present tense, a one-way ANOVA was calculated. The results of ANOVA showed statistically significant difference at the $p$=.05 level of significance for the three groups in this study: $F$ (2, 42) = 4.753, $p$ = .014. Additionally, to find out where the difference(s) lie regarding the mean scores of the three groups, post-hoc comparisons through the Turkey HSD test were carried out. Following table summarizes the results of post-hoc tests.

Table 2: Results of Post-hoc tests on simple present tense

| Corrective Feedback | Corrective Feedback | Mean Difference | Std. Error | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental 1 (Explicit) | Experimental 2 (Implicit) | 2.400 | 1.080 | .079 |
| Experimental 1 (Explicit) | Control Group | 3.200* | 1.080 | .014 |
| Experimental 2 (Implicit) | Experimental 1 (Explicit) | -2.400 | 1.080 | .079 |
| Experimental 2 (Implicit) | Control Group | .800 | 1.080 | .741 |
| Control Group | Experimental 1 (Explicit) | -3.200* | 1.080 | .014 |
| Control Group | Experimental 2 (Implicit) | -.800 | 1.080 | .741 |

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 2 shows that the mean difference between the experimental group 1 (*M*=20.47, *SD*=1.642) and the control group (*M*=17.27, *SD*=3.173) was statistically significant with the alpha level of .014 < .05. The mean difference between the experimental group 1 (*M*=20.47, *SD*=1.642) and the experimental group 2 (*M*=18.07, *SD*=3.674) was not statistically significant: .079 > .05. The mean difference between the experimental group 2 and the control group was not statistically significant as well: .741 > .05.

### Analysis of the Results on Present Progressive Tense

In order to answer the second research question, descriptive statistics had to be calculated first. The summary is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics on present progressive tense

| Corrective Feedback | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental Group 1 (Explicit) | 15 | 14.73 | 2.251 | 10 | 19 |
| Experimental Group 2 (Implicit) | 15 | 12.20 | 3.144 | 7 | 17 |
| Control Group | 15 | 10.67 | 4.152 | 2 | 17 |

The minimum and maximum scores were 2 and 19 and belonged to the control group and the experimental group 1 respectively. As Table 3 shows, the experimental group 1 who received explicit computer-mediated corrective feedback with the mean scores of 14.73 outperformed the control group with the mean score of 10.57. The experimental group 1 also performed slightly better than the experimental group 2. The experimental group 2 also slightly outperformed the control group. The differences between the groups' mean scores are presented in the following figure.

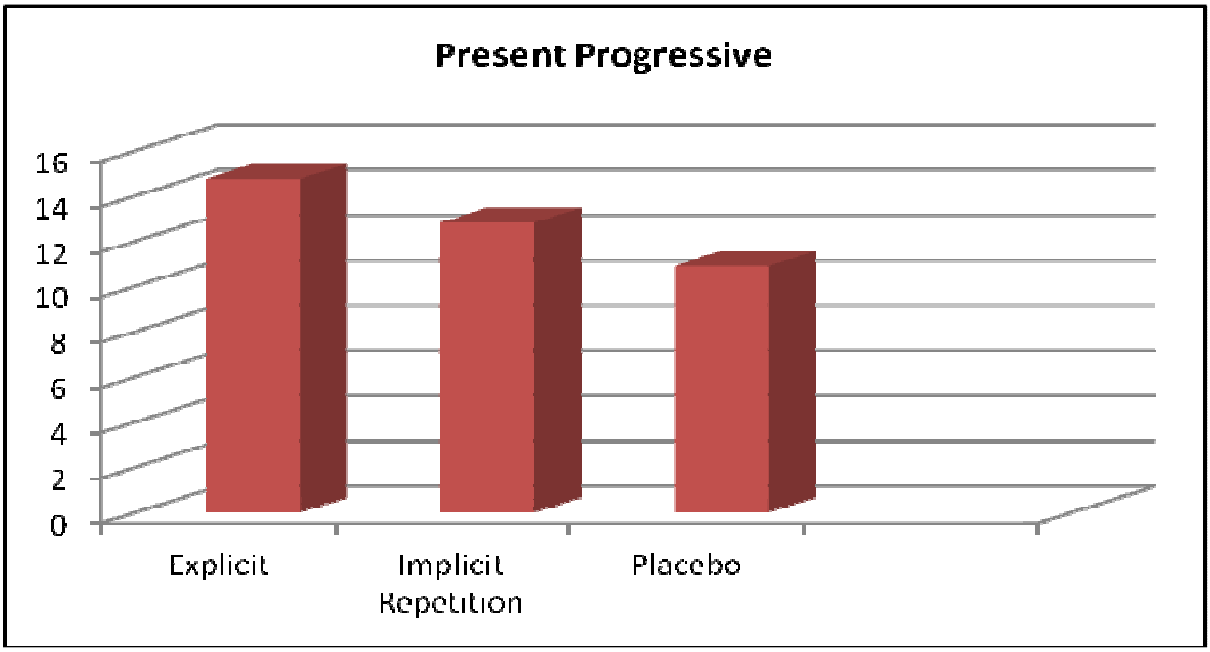


Fig 2. Group means on present progressive tense

In order to investigate the effect of asynchronous computer-mediated corrective feedback on increasing the correct use of present progressive tense, a one-way ANOVA was calculated. The results of ANOVA showed statistically significant difference at the *p*=.05 level of significance for the three groups in this study: $F$ (2, 42) = 5.896, $p$ = .006. Additionally, to find out where the difference(s) lie regarding the mean scores of the three groups, post-hoc comparisons through the Turkey HSD test were carried out. Following table summarizes the results of post-hoc tests.

Table 4: Results of Post-hoc tests on present progressive tense

| Corrective Feedback | Corrective Feedback | Mean Difference | Std. Error | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental 1 (Explicit) | Experimental 2 (Implicit) | 2.533 | 1.196 | .098 |
| Experimental 1 (Explicit) | Control Group | 4.067* | 1.196 | .004 |
| Experimental 2 (Implicit) | Experimental 1 (Explicit) | -2.533 | 1.196 | .098 |
| Experimental 2 (Implicit) | Control Group | 1.533 | 1.196 | .413 |
| Control Group | Experimental 1 (Explicit) | -4.067* | 1.196 | .004 |
| Control Group | Experimental 2 (Implicit) | -1.533 | 1.196 | .413 |

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 4 shows that the mean difference between the experimental group 1 ($M$=14.73, $SD$=2.251) and the control group ($M$=10.67, $SD$=4.152) was statistically significant with the alpha level of .004 < .05. The mean difference between the experimental group 1 ($M$=14.73, $SD$=2.251) and the experimental group 2 ($M$=12.20, $SD$=3.144) was not statistically significant: .098 > .05. The mean difference between the experimental group 2 and the control group was not statistically significant as well: .413 > .05.

One of the main goals of this study was to investigate the probable effectiveness of asynchronous computer-mediated corrective feedback–explicit/implicit, via e-mail on increasing the correct use of simple present and present progressive tenses. Although previous research mostly supports the efficacy of corrective feedback on improving grammar accuracy (e.g., Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Campillo, 2003), the results of the present study both negate and support this tenet.

Research question 1 dealt with the investigation of whether asynchronous computer-mediated corrective feedback could increase the correct use of simple present tense. Results of ANOVA on the post-test revealed that the experimental group 1 who received explicit corrective feedback significantly outperformed the experimental group 2 and the control group. But the experimental group 2 who received implicit repetition corrective feedback did not show statistically significant improvement over the control group.

Research question 2 dealt with the investigation of whether asynchronous computer-mediated corrective feedback could increase the correct use of present progressive tense. Results of ANOVA on the post-test revealed that the experimental group 1 who received explicit corrective feedback significantly outperformed the experimental group 2 and the control group. But the experimental group 2 who received implicit repetition corrective feedback did not show statistically significant improvement over the control group.

With respect to the statistical results of ANOVAs, explicit corrective feedback proved effective in drawing learners' attention to the differences between their output and target norm. Therefore, findings of the present study, as far as explicit corrective feedback is concerned, support Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis in

enabling learners to notice the gap resulting in the improvement of learners' grammatical accuracy in terms of simple present and present progressive tenses. Similarly, Lu (2010) in one study found out that the experimental group who received explicit corrective feedback significantly outperformed the control group regarding the correct use of simple present tense. In addition, superiority of explicit corrective feedback in increasing the correct use of English present tenses by Iranian EFL learners further supports St. John and Cash's (1995), Faghih and Hosseini's (2012), and Hosseini's (2012) findings on the efficacy of corrective feedback via e-mailing on increasing structural accuracy of written output. This superiority can be due to a variety of factors. First, Iranian EFL learners generally tend to rely on their teachers to provide them with correct structures when they make a mistake. In this sense, they are most responsive when teachers explicitly locate the error, correct it, and require them to modify their language. Second, they tend to overlook teacher-provided corrective feedback, especially on their writings, when incorrect structures are indirectly brought to their attention. Third, they tend to use erroneous structures less frequently for which teachers provide some clues and they fail to apply them correctly.

Accordingly, with respect to the analysis of the results concerning implicit corrective feedback, the experimental group 2 who received implicit repetition corrective feedback showed no significant improvement over the control group in terms of the correct use of simple present and present progressive tenses. However, the present study contradicts with Büyükbay and Dabaghi's (2010) study in that their findings showed that "the students in the experimental class, who were exposed to repetition as corrective feedback in response to their errors, did better on their grammar test than the students in the control class" (p. 187). In the same sense, Lu (2010) also concluded that implicit corrective feedback contributed to a significant increase in the correct use of present tenses. Apparently, the results of the present study, as far as implicit corrective feedback is concerned, are in line with an earlier view held by Truscott (1996) claiming that "grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned" (p. 328). But by looking at recent studies (e.g., Sheen, 2007; Lee, 1997) and also the findings of explicit corrective feedback mentioned earlier, it would be wrong to generalize these findings to all aspects of language learning and corrective feedback as there is ample evidence confirming the applicability and efficacy of different types of implicit corrective feedback on grammar improvement.

This contradiction can be accounted for in the light of a variety of reasons. First, the experimental group 2 simply failed to notice the teacher-provided corrective feedback because the participants didn't receive any information on the formal aspects. Second, the bolded uppercase words might have misled them into wrongly correcting and changing the word itself or adding unnecessary words without realizing incorrect parts. Third, due to the fact that the participants were of low proficiency, implicitly requiring them to correct their errors might have demanded deeper levels of processing than correcting explicitly which they might lack at this stage. Fourth, the control group might have already been familiar with these structures and answered the testing instruments by simply putting appropriate items, thus, neutralizing the efficacy of implicit corrective feedback. Fifth, the participants of this study might have had previous experiences in EFL affecting the testing results. Sixth, psychological factors might have affected their performance on the test. Finally, it can be claimed that, reminding learners of their mistakes might have acted as psychological barriers to their uptaking of teacher-provided corrective feedback resulting in inefficacy of the treatment. On the other hand, the control group might have interpreted their writing to be perfect as they didn't receive any feedback.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, the impact of asynchronous computer-mediated corrective feedback on increasing the correct use of simple present and present progressive tenses was explored. On the basis of the results, it became evident that explicit corrective feedback had significant effect on increasing the correct use of English present tenses. However, implicit corrective feedback didn't have any significant effect on increasing the correct use of present tenses regarding the experimental group 2 over the control group. The findings of the present study also

provide further implications as to the efficacy of computer-mediated corrective feedback as a pristine searching medium on different aspects of language grammar. Nonetheless, some limitations are attributed to this study. First, the level of proficiency was elementary, and it is possible that more proficient learners would have performed differently. Second, the overall teaching method at the ILI, i.e., a modified version of ALM, may have affected the results. Finally, it should be admitted that most previous research on corrective feedback and positive contributions to grammar accuracy and different English tenses has been conducted in forms of written, oral, and chatting. Therefore, generalizations to asynchronous computer-mediated via e-mail especially in EFL environments should be done with great discretion.

However, despite these limitations, it is believed that the findings of this study are encouraging as technology has been finding its way into pedagogical environments. Additionally and with respect to the results of the present study, it stands to reason that there is still plenty of room for further research in this field.

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**Appendix A**

Characteristics of Lyster & Ranta's (1997) categories of corrective feedback

| Corrective Feedback Type | Definition | Example(s) | Nature of Error Indicated | Target-like Reformulation Provided | Elicited Output |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Explicit Error Correction** | Explicit provision of the target-like reformulation | You should say visited. | Yes | Provided directly | None or repetition |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Metalinguistic Feedback** | Comments, information or questions (that may or may not contain metalanguage but do not include the reformulation) related to the ill-formedness of the utterance | There's a mistake.<br><br>It's past tense.<br><br>Did you use the past tense? | No<br><br>Yes<br><br>Yes | No<br><br>Provided indirectly through metalinguistic hint at correct reformulation<br><br>Provided indirectly through metalinguistic question concerning rule governing reformulation | Identification of error and/or reformulation<br><br>Reformulation<br><br>Metalinguistic response, yes/no response, or reformulation |
| **Elicitations** | A prompt for the learner to reformulate | Try that again.<br>How do we say that in the past tense?<br>Yesterday we … | No<br>Yes<br><br>Sometimes | No<br>No<br><br>No | Reformulation<br>Reformulation<br><br>Reformulation |
| **Repetitions** | Repetition of all or part of the utterance containing the error, often accompanied by a change in intonation | Yesterday we visit my aunt. | Sometimes | No | None or repetition |
| **Recasts** | Implicit reformulation of all or part of the learner's utterance | Yesterday we visited my aunt.<br>I visited my aunt last week. | Yes<br><br>Yes | Reformulation provided<br><br>Reformulation provided | Repetition<br><br>Repetition |
| **Translations** | Target language translation of unsolicited use of the L1. | *** | Yes | Reformulation provided | Repetition |
| **Clarification Requests** | An utterance indicating a problem in comprehension, accuracy or both. | Pardon? | No | No | Repetition, reformulation, or meaning elaboration |