Politeness and Corrective Feedback: Immediate and Delayed Performance

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A B S T R A C T

This quasi-experimental study aimed to investigate the effect of polite corrective feedback (CF) on Iranian EFL learners' immediate and delayed grammatical accuracy. The participants included a convenient sample of 60 intermediate male/female EFL learners (four 15-member groups) selected from a private language institute in Tabriz. After the researcher ensured the homogeneity of the participants, a researcher-made multiple-choice pre-test on present and past English tenses was administered. Later, the first and second experimental groups were treated with +Polite Explicit Feedback (in the form of elicitations) and +Polite Implicit CF (in the form of recasts), respectively while the control groups were provided with −Polite Feedback of the same forms. Following the assessment of the learners' oral grammatical accuracy immediately after the treatment (uptake), a multiple-choice post-test was administered two weeks after the immediate post-test to assess their delayed recall. The independent samples t-test and ANCOVA conducted on the pre-test, immediate learning scores, and delayed post-test scores indicated that, although polite CF in both groups had a significant effect on learners' grammatical accuracy, +Polite Explicit Feedback had a more significant effect on participants' performance than −Polite Explicit Feedback and +Polite Implicit Feedback. The results underscore the significance of integrating politeness element into CF discourse, bearing implications for educational planners, materials developers, and EFL instructors.

Keywords: politeness; corrective feedback; grammatical accuracy; immediate; delayed

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A R T I C L E   H I S T O R Y

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Introduction

The evolving landscape of EFL/ESL instruction, influenced by sociolinguistic and sociocultural perspectives, has increasingly emphasized the importance of classroom interaction discourse. There is a specific focus on socio-pragmatic elements of language teaching techniques including Corrective Feedback (CF) (Mitchel & Myles, 2004; Xiaoqing, 2010). This paradigm shift has sparkled a heightened interest in exploring the discourse features of classroom interaction, particularly with a particular emphasis on the pivotal role of politeness, which is of significant importance in the daily lives of Iranian EFL learners (Sharifian, 2013).

While politeness is commonly viewed as a universal concept (Sahragard, 2000; Watts, 2003), it is imperative to acknowledge the subtle intercultural nuances in linguistic and non-linguistic expressions of politeness across different languages. These variations can pose challenges in the learning process, especially for learners who benefit from and prefer receiving CF in non-threatening manners (Leech, 1983).

Moreover, despite the recognized importance of CF in language instruction (Lyster, 2023; Oliver & Mackey, 2003), there is a research gap in thoroughly exploring the implications of incorporating politeness elements within CF (Chiravate, 2010). In EFL classrooms, the correction of students' errors, if not handled with care, can be perceived as a threat to their self-esteem, potentially impacting their sense of autonomy and self-worth. Teachers in EFL classrooms often recognize the significance of preserving learners' 'face' and may employ strategies of polite CF to create a supportive and positive learning atmosphere, ultimately fostering strong student-teacher relationships (Wanli & Aihong, 2009).

In this context, the linguistic politeness displayed by teachers also has the potential to enhance students' motivation and engagement in classroom activities, ultimately improving their academic performance (Ergul, 2022). However, the extent to which incorporating politeness into CF enhances learner performance remains an area requiring further exploration. This prompts the need to investigate the specific effects of polite CF on linguistic outcomes, such as the grammatical accuracy of EFL learners, particularly within the socio-cultural context of Iranian classrooms (Holstun & Bohecker, 2024).

Theoretical Justification of the Study

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in the concepts of CF, politeness in language teaching, and their impact on language learning outcomes. CF plays a crucial role in language acquisition by providing learners with opportunities for error correction and reflection on language use (Ellis, 2003). Politeness in educational settings fosters a positive learning environment, enhances student-teacher relationships, and promotes learner engagement (Watts, 2003). Moreover, CF encompasses various strategies used to address learner errors and improve grammatical accuracy (Lyster, 2023). The effectiveness of CF in language learning has been supported by theoretical models emphasizing the role of feedback in language acquisition and error correction (Van Patten, 1997).

On the other hand, the incorporation of politeness markers in language teaching practices is essential for creating a supportive and respectful classroom environment (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). Politeness strategies, such as using courteous expressions and non-verbal cues, contribute to effective communication and student engagement (Kadar & House, 2021). Integrating politeness into CF can also enhance learner motivation and performance (Gharibe &

Sadeghi, 2020). Research indicates that the integration of politeness into instructional discourse positively influences language learning outcomes, particularly grammatical accuracy (Sharifian, 2013). By exploring the interplay between politeness, CF, and grammatical accuracy, this study aims to contribute to effective language teaching practices.   Therefore, the present study aims to examine the specific effect of polite CF on the grammatical accuracy of Iranian EFL learners and provide insights that can inform more effective language teaching practices tailored to their needs, ultimately enhancing their language proficiency. By exploring the link between polite CF and immediate and delayed grammatical accuracy of Iranian EFL learners, this research seeks to highlight the interplay between politeness, CF, and grammatical accuracy. Through this exploration, the study aims to address the gap in understanding how politeness in CF specifically influences the grammatical accuracy of Iranian EFL learners, contributing to a deeper understanding of effective language teaching practices within the field of ELT and providing practical implications for language educators working in similar environments. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following six questions:

1. Does Plus Polite Explicit Feedback (+PEF) affect Iranian EFL learners' immediate grammatical accuracy significantly?

2. Does Plus Polite Implicit Feedback (+PIF) affect Iranian EFL learners' immediate grammatical accuracy significantly?

3. Is there any significant difference between Plus Polite Explicit Feedback Group (+PEF) and Plus Polite Implicit Feedback group (+PIF) in terms of learners' immediate grammatical accuracy?

4. Does Plus Polite Explicit Feedback (+PEF) affect Iranian EFL learners' delayed grammatical accuracy significantly?

5. Does Plus Polite Implicit Feedback (+PIF) affect Iranian EFL learners' delayed grammatical accuracy significantly?

6. Is there any significant difference between Plus Polite Explicit Feedback Group (+PEF) and Plus Polite Implicit Feedback group (+PIF) in terms of their effect on learners' delayed grammatical accuracy?

Literature Review

Politeness and Language Education

Politeness is crucial in social interactions as it plays a key role in promoting positive relationships and reducing conflicts. It involves using respectful language, considering others' feelings, and adhering to societal norms. Research has shown that politeness is closely linked to higher levels of empathy and emotional intelligence (Fernández-Dols & Ruiz-Belda, 1995; Holtgraves, 2011). Polite individuals are generally perceived more positively and are more likely to succeed in various personal and professional contexts. Moreover, politeness can aid in navigating challenging situations diplomatically and maintaining harmony in relationships (Babad & Taylor, 1992). By being polite, individuals demonstrate respect for others, thereby contributing to a more harmonious and cooperative societal environment. Practicing politeness is vital for fostering positive interactions, showing respect, and building strong relationships (Goffman, 1967).

Politeness in the classroom acts as a social lubricant, fostering a harmonious teacher-student relationships and balancing power dynamics (Locher, 2004). Recent studies have focused on politeness markers (Kadar & House, 2021; Caballero et al., 2021; Fitriyah, 2023; Ardianto, 2023;

Islentyeva et al., 2023), encompassing linguistic expressions and behaviors that convey respect and positive relationships. Verbal markers like '*please*' and '*thank you*' demonstrate politeness and appreciation, while non-verbal cues such as eye contact and smiling signal effective communication (Goffman, 1967). Understanding and utilizing these markers create a respectful and conducive learning environment for all students.

Moreover, in classroom interactions, the use of politeness markers helps foster a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Teachers who incorporate politeness markers in their communication demonstrate empathy, sensitivity, and a genuine interest in their students' well-being. By using polite language and gestures, educators can enhance student engagement, motivation, and overall classroom dynamics.

Corrective Feedback in Language Education

Various definitions have been offered for CF. Generally speaking, CF refers to providing students with information about errors they have made in their language production (speaking or writing) in order to help them improve their language accuracy. CF is an essential component of language learning as it helps students identify and correct errors, leading to improved language proficiency. In this regard, Ellis, Loewen and Erlam (2006) emphasize CF as an indication of error along with providing feedback or as a response to either the content or form of student utterances. Lightbown and Spada (1999) characterize CF as signaling to a learner whose use of the target language is incorrect. Lyster (2023) views CF as the practice of furnishing learners with information about their errors or mistakes to facilitate improvement in their second language development. Rohmah and Halim (2023) emphasize that CF involves the provision of feedback to students to enhance their English speaking skills. Ur (1996) describes CF as information given to learners about their task performance to enhance it.

Moreover, considering its ubiquity in ESL/EFL education, various terms such as error correction and negative evidence have been devised to refer to CF (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Scholars have also categorized CF based on immediateness, explicitness, and obtrusiveness (Doughty, 2001; Ellis & Shintani, 2013; Mackey, 2012; Nassaji, 2009; Russell, 2009; Tomasello & Herron, 1989). Explicit feedback strategies involve directly pointing out errors or prompting self-correction, while implicit feedback focuses on meaning over explicit correction (Ellis et al., 2006; Sato, 2021). Techniques for providing CF include clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, repetition, recasts, elicitation, and explicit translation (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Mackey, 2012). For instance, clarification requests solicit further explanation from learners, fostering collaborative error correction. Metalinguistic feedback enhances students' understanding of language rules, while repetition and recasts guide learners towards accurate language use. Elicitation prompts active engagement and self-correction, benefiting from leveraging learners' L1 background knowledge. These diverse techniques contribute to effective language learning and error correction in educational settings.

Furthermore, the significance of CF in language learning contexts, particularly in its function of delivering negative input, as noted by Panova and Lyster (2002) has frequently been underscored. Incorporating a diverse array of CF techniques into language teaching practices is instrumental in cultivating a supportive and enriching learning atmosphere tailored to meet the varied needs of learners and facilitate effective language acquisition (Lyster, 2023). This aspect of CF aids learners in recognizing the disparities between their current language performance and their desired proficiency levels, a critical step in the language learning process, as emphasized by Schmidt and Frota (1986).

In the context of this research, the dynamic relationship between politeness and CF plays a crucial role in influencing various language skills, particularly grammatical accuracy, as assessed through error-free clauses and error incidence per t-unit (Bygate, 2001). While considerable attention has been devoted to strategies for acquiring grammar proficiency (Song & Suh, 2008), the pedagogical emphasis has shifted from traditional form-centered approaches to communicative methodologies that prioritize meaning (Sharwood Smith, 1990). This evolution presents challenges for learners, as explicit grammar instruction is occasionally scrutinized within communicative frameworks (Lee, 2007; Lyster, 2002).

Meanwhile, CF, a cornerstone of form-focused instruction, has faced criticism for its perceived shortcomings in fostering automatization in language learning or facilitating the transition from controlled to automatic processing, also known as 'autopilot' (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). The ongoing discourse on grammar instruction methodologies revolves around the efficacy of explicit versus implicit approaches. Explicit teaching methods enhance accuracy but may inhibit spontaneous communication, while implicit approaches, aligned with Communicative Language Teaching principles, prioritize meaningful acquisition, potentially posing difficulties in balancing attention to both form and meaning simultaneously (Mohammad & Bani Tamim, 2022). As already explicated, the use of politeness markers may contribute to explicitness or implicitness of CF and the learning that may result from it.

Finally, various measures have been proposed to evaluate the effectiveness of CF in language learning contexts. Immediate learner repair (Uptake), immediate post-tests, delayed post-tests, and learners' repair following stimulated recall serve as significant indicators (Carrol & Swain, 1993; Doughty & Varella, 1998; Mackey et al., 2000). Immediate repair, also called uptake, is demonstrated through full or partial learner repair responses, encompassing simple affirmations, repetition of feedback, and self-correction (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Alternatively, learning outcomes can be observed from a delayed perspective, reflecting retention of corrections. Scholars like Lowen (2007), Doughty and Williams (1998), and Nabei and Swain (2002) consider delayed recall outcomes as a reliable gauge of learners' knowledge. This illuminates the dynamic interplay between CF and language acquisition, emphasizing the importance of both immediate and lasting impacts on developing learners' language proficiency.

Empirical Studies

The realm of education has been a focal point of extensive research exploring the relationship between politeness strategies, CF, and language learning. These studies meticulously examine the intricate dynamics of teacher-student interactions, delving into how the implementation of polite feedback strategies can significantly influence learners' levels of engagement, motivation, and general language proficiency within the classroom environment (Beschieru, 2021). Additionally, scholarly inquiries have elucidated that learners may strategically utilize impoliteness as a means to establish dominance or evade participation, underscoring the paramount importance of fostering positive communicative dynamics in language learning settings (Beschieru, 2021).

The exploration of CF in the area of language acquisition has brought to light its substantial role in shaping learners' short term and long term learning. Longitudinal studies have undertaken a thorough examination of the immediate and delayed effect of CF on the processes of language acquisition, providing valuable insights into the effectiveness of various feedback strategies in enhancing linguistic knowledge (Carroll & Swain, 2002; Long et al., 1998). Through an investigation of diverse CF types such as recasts, metalinguistic explanations, elicitations, and explicit feedback, researchers have underscored the nuanced ways in which learners interpret and respond to corrective input, ultimately influencing their subsequent language production and accuracy (Doughty & Varela, 1998; Panova & Lyster, 2002).

Empirical studies have also meticulously examined learners' immediate uptake and response to different forms of CF, shedding light on the intricate nature of learner reactions and interpretations of CF. Works by Lyster and Ranta (1997) and Panova and Lyster (2002) have brought to the forefront the observation that while recasts are frequently employed in classroom feedback settings, they may not consistently lead to significant error eradication or learning. Crucial factors such as the instructional context, the type of feedback provided, and the underlying social dynamics between educators and students significantly determine the efficacy of immediate learning outcomes following CF (Russel, 2009).

Gharibe and Sadeghi (2020) also conducted a study to explore the comparative impact of explicit instruction and two forms of CF on understanding politeness markers (including play-downs, consultative devices, forewarning, scope-staters, understaters, agent avoiders, committers, hesitators, politeness markers, downtoners, and hedges). Three upper-intermediate intact classes were selected and randomly divided into two experimental groups (reformulation and elicitation) along with a control group. Throughout a 5-week period, the reformulation group, elicitation group, and control group received explicit instruction on politeness markers. Results from the pretest revealed no significant variances in pragmatic marker knowledge among the groups. However, following the post-test, it was evident that while all three groups exhibited significant improved performance, the elicitation and reformulation groups showed higher mean performance than the control group, with the elicitation group notably exhibiting improved performance than the other groups.

Furthermore, the quality of feedback offered and the specificity of target structures addressed have been highlighted as critical factors influencing learners' capacity to integrate CF effectively. Hoang and Storch's (2024) work revealed that generic forms of CF often worked better than specific feedback in rectifying learners' errors, underscoring the pivotal role of feedback quality and precision in enhancing language accuracy. Additionally, the choice of target structures addressed in feedback sessions can wield a substantial effect on learners' immediate learning (uptake), emphasizing the necessity for tailored feedback strategies that align with individual learner needs and linguistic objectives.

In conclusion, the intricate nexus between polite feedback strategies, corrective input, and language acquisition underscores the significance of cultivating supportive and engaging learning environments for language learners. By amalgamating insights from empirical studies on CF dynamics and politeness strategies, educators can fine-tune their feedback methodologies to optimize learners' language development, bolster communicative proficiency, and foster a positive and nurturing learning ambiance. Ongoing research in this domain remains imperative in unraveling the complexities of feedback provision and its profound implications for language learning outcomes.

Method

Design

In this quasi-experimental study, with a pre-test-post-test (immediate & delayed) design, Plus Polite recasts and elicitations served as independent variables of the study. The participants' performance in terms of grammatical accuracy was the dependent variable measured through their scores in immediate learning (uptake rates) and delayed posttests.

Participants

A convenient sample of 60 intermediate male and female EFL learners, ranging in age from 16 to 24, was initially selected from the total population of 250 learners at a private language institute in Tabriz. These participants were distributed across four intact, homogeneous classes, each consisting of 15 students. Through random assignment, the participants were divided into two experimental groups and two control groups. The Plus Polite Explicit CF (+PEF) group received polite elicitations, while the Minus Polite Explicit Group (-PEF) received direct elicitations without politeness markers. Additionally, the Plus Polite Implicit Feedback Group (+PIF) received polite recasts, whereas the Minus Polite Implicit Feedback Group (-PIF) received recasts without politeness markers.

Instruments and Materials

A Preliminary English Test (PET) with listening, reading comprehension, speaking, and writing subtests was firstly administered in order to ensure the homogeneity of the 60 participants. Additionally, a 40-item written multiple-choice test, previously piloted and validated, served as both the pretest and delayed posttest. This test included 20 items focusing on present tenses and another 20 on past tenses. The researcher-developed multiple-choice test underwent piloting and finalization with feedback from expert colleagues to ensure Item Facility (IF), Item Discrimination (ID), and Choice Distribution. The test demonstrated a reliability coefficient of 0.93 as measured by Cronbach's Alpha.

To minimize practice effect, a counterbalanced design was implemented, with participants randomly assigned to different test sequences for the pretest and posttest measures. Moreover, instructions were provided to participants emphasizing that the posttest should be approached independently of the pretest, encouraging them to treat each assessment as a separate measure of their language proficiency. Participants were also asked not to review or study the specific test items between the pretest and posttest sessions to further minimize practice effect.

'American English File 3' by Oxenden et al. (2008) was the textbook used in the study. In alignment with the language school's syllabus, the target structures included *'simple present, present progressive, present perfect, simple past, past progressive'* and *'past perfect'*. Task *A* to *E* were carefully constructed to elicit oral production samples immediately on simple present, present perfect, and present progressive tenses, while tasks *F* to *J* were designed to elicit performance samples on simple past, past continuous, and past perfect tenses. All tasks started with written prompt accompanied by a picture or graph, requiring learners to use the target structures in their oral production. In case of errors, the teacher provided +polite or -polite CF, and the learners' immediate performance after CF was recorded and later transcribed for analysis. The number of successful immediate uptakes was counted as a measure of learners' immediate learning and was later statistically analyzed.

All participants were already informed of the purpose of the study, and recording their voices was acknowledged, to which they consented. Moreover, the institute granted a 10 percent discount on student's tuition for participating in the study.

Procedure

After administering the pretest and instructing the participants on the target structures, each group engaged in a 20-minute speaking task during every session, and each group received a specific CF type: +PEF, -PEF, +PIF, and -PIF. In +PEF group, participants were prompted to rephrase their incorrect statements using polite elicitations that included politeness markers such as modals, tag questions, personalization, mitigators, and softeners like *'please.'* Additionally, non-verbal cues for politeness, such as a sincere and polite tone of voice and friendly facial expressions, were utilized. The following excerpt provides an example from the +PEF group:

T: *Where does your father live?*

    S: *There <u>live</u> in a house.*

    T: ***Would*** *you **please** say your sentence again?*

    S: *They <u>live</u> (:) they live in a house.*

    T: ***Sorry, can you say it again?*** *Where does your father live?*

    S: *He <u>live</u> in Tabriz.*

    T: ***Please****, say it again.*

    S: *(:) He **LIVES** in Tabriz.*

In -PEF (the first control group), elicitations with no politeness markers were used:

    S: *My friend, Mehran, did sports and he <u>practice</u> volleyball game [[…]]*

    T: *What did your friend do?*

    S: *He did sports and practice volleyball (:)*

    T: *No. Say it again.*

    S: *He did sports and (:) PRACTICED (:?)*

    T: *OK*

Building on the work of Fujii and Inoguchi (2007) and Wang and Johnson (2008) and Ivanova and Mikhaleva (2023), implicit politeness in this study was indicated not only through verbal markers but also through non-verbal cues such as a friendly tone of voice, pauses, and a slower speech rate while correcting errors. As a result, the second experimental group received +PIF in the form of recasts:

    S: *… and in the class when the teacher or professor <u>read</u> my name,*

    T: ***I understand that you mean*** *when the professor reads your name? **Am I right?***

    S: *Yeah, when professor reads my name, ur ……*

The second control group (-PIF) received recasts with no politeness markers as shown in the following sample:

    S: *There is a singer whose name is Hami, you know, when I first <u>listen</u> to his songs*

    T: *What happened when you first listened to his songs?*

    S: *When I listened to his songs, I felt…*

To mitigate the practice effect, the allocation of speaking turns for participants was randomized without prior notice. During each treatment session, three participants were given a five-minute opportunity to speak on the designated topics of the tasks.

The interactions in the speaking sessions were recorded, resulting in approximately 600 minutes (10 hours) of recorded material. Subsequently, the researcher and a colleague, possessing an M.A. degree and 23 years of English teaching experience, transcribed and analyzed the recordings, identifying and categorizing instances of CF episodes. A high correlation of 97% was observed between the uptake scores provided by the researcher and the expert colleague. The recorded data revealed a total of 256 immediate learning or uptake instances, with 78, 57, 62, and 59 successful uptakes for +PEF, -PEF, +PIF, and –PEF groups, respectively. Following this, all participants in the four groups underwent the posttest assessment two weeks later. To answer research questions 1, 2, and 3, three independent samples t-tests were run, and to answer research questions 4, 5, and 6, ANCOVA was utilized.

Results

The Results of Immediate Learning across the Groups

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for *PEF, -PEF, +PIF, and –PIF groups in terms of immediate learning*

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for +PEF, -PEF, +PIF, and –PIF Groups in terms of Immediate Learning (Uptake)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
+ PEF	15	5.13	.74	4.72	5.54	4.00	6.00
-PEF	15	3.80	.56	3.48	4.11	3.00	5.00
+PIF	15	4.13	.74	3.72	4.54	3.00	5.00
-PIF	15	3.93	.92	3.68	4.51	3.00	6.00

According to Table 1, the mean score of participants in *PEF, -PEF, +PIF, and –PIF groups was 5.2, 3.80, 4.13, and 3.03, respectively.* Table 2 also summarizes the results of independent samples t-test for immediate learning of +PEF and -PEF groups.

Table 2
Independent Samples T-Test Results for Immediate Learning of +PEF and -PEF Groups

	T	df	P value	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Eta Squared
						Lower	Upper	
Immediate Learning	5.54	28	.001	1.33	.24	.84	1.82	0.52

As Table 2 shows, there was a significant difference between the immediate learning of the +PEF group ($M = 5.13, SD = 0.74$) and the -PEF group ($M = 3.80, SD = 0.56$) ($t (28) = 5.54, p = 0.001 < 0.05$), and the magnitude of the difference in means was large (eta squared = 0.52), with +PEF explaining 52% of the variance in learning. Therefore, the answer to the first research question was positive since +PEF improves learners' immediate learning significantly.

Another t-test was run to examine the difference between the +PIF and -PIF groups' mean grammatical accuracy; the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Independent Samples T-Test results for Immediate Learning (Uptake) of +PIF and –PIF Groups

	T	df	P value	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Eta Squared
						Lower	Upper	
								0.7
Uptake	.43	28	.66	.13	.30	-.49	.76	

Table 3 shows that there was not a significant difference between the immediate learning of +PIF (*M = 4.13, SD = 0.74*) and -PIF (*M = 3.93, SD = 0.92*) (*t (28) = 0.43, P = 0.66 > 0.05*). Therefore, the second research question was answered negatively, showing that polite implicit CF does not significantly improve immediate learning (Uptake).

To answer the third research question on the significant difference between +PEF and +PIF groups in terms of their effect on immediate grammatical accuracy of the participants, another independent samples t-test was run, the results of which are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Independent Samples T-Test Results for Immediate Learning (Uptake) of +PEF and +PIF Groups

	T	df	P value	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Eta Squared
						Lower	Upper	
uptake	3.68	28	.00	1.00	.27	.44	1.55	0.32

Table 4 also shows a significant difference between the immediate learning of +PEF (M = 5.13, SD = 0.74) and +PIF (M = 4.13, SD = 0.74) (t (28) = 3.68, P = 0.00 < 0.05, Eta Squared: 0.32). Therefore, the answer to the third research question was positive, indicating that the participants in the +PEF group significantly outperformed those in the +PIF group, and +PEF leads to higher immediate learning.

The Results of Delayed Learning across the Groups

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics for delayed learning scores of all experimental and control groups.

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics for +PEF, -PEF, +PIF, and –PIF Groups in Terms of Delayed Grammatical Accuracy

	Pre test				Post test			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
			Lower	Upper			Lower	Upper
+ PEF	23.33	3.04	21.65	25.02	30.73	2.94	29.11	32.36
-PEF	24.07	2.05	22.93	25.20	27.67	2.85	26.09	29.24
+PIF	23.60	2.03	22.48	24.72	28.67	0.72	28.27	29.07
-PIF	24.13	1.55	23.27	24.99	27.73	3.17	25.98	29.49

As seen in the table, the mean score of the +PEF group (30.73) is higher than that of the +PIF group (28.67), pointing to the better delayed recall of the former group. However, inferential statistics were used in order to come up with dependable generalizations and to answer research

question 4-6. Table 6 shows ANCOVA results comparing the delayed learning scores of +PEF and -PEF groups.

Table 6
Analysis of ANCOVA Comparing the Delayed Grammatical Accuracy Scores of +PEF and -PEF Groups

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	*P* value	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
Feedback group	75.45	1	75.45	8.95	.006	.24	.82
Pretest	6.75	1	6.75	.80	.378	.02	.13
Error	227.51	27	8.42				

As the results of ANCOVA in Table 6 indicate, there is a significant difference in terms of delayed performance in grammatical accuracy between the +PEF group (*M = 30.73, SD = 2.94*) and the -PEF group (*M = 27.67, SD = 2.85*), (*F (2, 28) = 8.95, P = 0.006 < 0.05*). Moreover, the value of Eta Squared is 0.24, suggesting that 24 percent of the variance in retention scores is related to the feedback group, and the observed statistical power is 0.82, meaning that the analysis had 82 percent accuracy in exploring the significant differences. Furthermore, Table 7 shows the final estimate after controlling for delayed scores in the pretest for the +PEF and -PEF groups.

Table 7
Final Estimate after Controlling Pretest Scores of +PEF and -PEF Groups

	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
+ PEF	30.80	.75	29.25	32.34
-PEF	27.59	.75	26.05	29.14

Table 7 shows that the mean and standard deviation of the +PEF group are 30.80 and 0.75 (*M = 30.80, SD = 0.75*), respectively. In contrast, the mean retention score and standard deviation for the -PEF group are 27.59 and 0.75 (*M = 27.59, SD = 0.75*), indicating a significant difference (*F (2, 28) = 8.95, p = 0.006 < 0.05*). The results indicate the answer to the fourth research question was positive, suggesting that +PEF leads to better delayed recall than -PEF.

ANCOVA results in Table 8 compare retention scores in +PIF and -PIF groups.

Table 8
ANCOVA Results for Comparing the Delayed Grammatical Accuracy Scores in +PIF and -PIF Groups

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	*P* value	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
Feedback group	5.50	1	5.50	1.01	.32	.36	.16
Pretest score	1.44	1	1.44	.26	.61	.10	.07
Error	146.82	27	5.43				

As indicated in Table 8, there was not a significant difference in terms of delayed recall between the +PIF group (*M = 28.27, SD = 0.72*) and the -PIF group (*M = 25.98, SD = 3.17*), (*F(2, 28) = 1.012, P = 0.32 > 0.05*). Table 9 shows the final estimate after controlling for pretest scores in the +PIF and -PIF groups.

Table 9
Final Estimate after Controlling Pretest Scores in +PIF and -PIF Groups

	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
+ PIF	28.63	.60	27.39	29.87
-PIF	27.76	.60	26.52	29.00

Table 9 shows that the mean delayed grammatical accuracy score and standard deviation, after eliminating the effect of the covariate, for +PIF are 28.63 and 0.60 ($M = 28.63, SD = 0.60$), respectively. However, the mean delayed grammatical accuracy score and standard deviation for -PIF were obtained as 27.76 and 0.60 ($M = 27.76, SD = 0.60$), respectively, indicating a lack of significant difference ($F (2, 28) = 1.012, P = 0.32 > 0.05$). This suggests that the answer to the fifth research question was negative, indicating that the politeness element in implicit CF does not lead to better delayed grammatical accuracy.

Finally, to answer the sixth research question on the existence of significant difference between +PEF and +PIF on learners' delayed grammatical accuracy, another ANCOVA was conducted, the results of which are presented in Table 10.

Table 10
ANCOVA results for Comparing the Delayed Grammatical Accuracy Scores in +PEF and +PIF Groups

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P value	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
Feedback group	33.56	1	33.56	7.47	.01	.21	.75
Pretest score	7.06	1	7.06	1.57	.22	.05	.22
Error	121.20	27	4.48				

There was a significant difference in terms of retention across the +PEF group ($M = 30.73, SD = 2.94$) and the +PIF group ($M = 28.67, SD = 0.72$), ($F (2, 28) = 7.47, P = 0.01 < 0.05$). Moreover, the value of eta squared is 0.21, indicating that 21 percent of the variance in retention scores is related to the feedback group, and the observed statistical power is 0.75, indicating that the analysis had 75 percent accuracy in exploring the significant differences. Table 11 shows the final estimate after controlling for pretest retention scores in the +PEF and +PIF groups.

Table 11
Final Estimate after Controlling Pretest Scores in +PEF and +PIF Groups

	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
+ PEF	30.75	.54	29.63	31.88
+PIF	28.64	.54	27.51	29.76

The final estimates for delayed grammatical accuracy scores in +PEF and +PIF in Table 11 show that the mean retention score and standard deviation, after eliminating the effect of the covariate, for the +PEF group are 30.75 and 0.54 ($M=30.75, SD=0.54$), respectively. The mean retention score and standard deviation for +PIF are 28.64 and 0.54 ($M=28.64, SD=0.54$), indicating

significant differences between the +PEF and +PIF groups in terms of delayed grammatical accuracy (*F (2, 28) = 7.47, P = 0.01 < 0.05*). Therefore, the answer to the sixth research question was positive, meaning that the +PEF group outperformed the +PIF group in delayed grammatical accuracy post-test.

Discussion

The results of the present study offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of CF in enhancing Iranian EFL learners' language proficiency, in general, and their grammatical accuracy, in particular. Contrary to non-interventionist perspectives that question the efficacy of CF, the findings align with the interventionist viewpoint, highlighting the significance of educational interventions such as CF (Cook, 1985; Krashen, 1987; Lightbown & Spada, 2007; White, 1990). By incorporating insights from DeKeyser (2007), Ergul (2021), Ioannu and Tsagari (2022), Leeman (2007), Long and Robinson (1998), Ranta and Lyster (2007), Sato (2021), and Shirkhani and Tajeddin (2016), this study underscores the importance of targeted instructional strategies like CF in language learning.

Furthermore, our results are consistent with meta-analyses conducted by Li (2023), Lyster (2023) and Sato (2021) which highlight the effectiveness of CF across various English language teaching contexts. The observed improvements in post-treatment mean scores across both the experimental and control groups underscore the efficacy of CF as a technique for form-focused instruction (Van Patten, 1977). The present study also emphasizes the impact of incorporating politeness into CF practices. Specifically, combining politeness with explicit CF softens the potentially face-threatening nature of corrective interactions, leading to enhanced immediate and delayed recall outcomes. This finding supports the assertions of Mitchel and Myles (2004) regarding the role of discourse features in instructional settings.

While polite implicit CF through recasts did not significantly impact short-term and delayed recall in our study, the results provide insights into the nuanced effects of different CF strategies. This observation resonates with Gharibe and Sadeghi's (2020) study on the implicit nature of recasts and supports the notion that politeness can influence the efficacy of implicit CF techniques (Ellis & Shintani, 2013; Nassaji, 2009).

The superior performance of the explicit politeness-enhanced CF group over the implicit politeness-enhanced CF group in terms of both immediate and delayed retention challenges the notion of equal effectiveness between explicit and implicit forms of CF (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). The findings of this study suggest that explicit CF reinforced by politeness elements can lead to better learning retention, emphasizing the importance of reinforcing prior knowledge through targeted feedback.

Moreover, drawing on Sato's (2021) insights on the explicitness of CF and its synergistic relationship with politeness markers, this study points to the enhanced effectiveness of explicit CF when combined with polite elements in instructional settings.

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggests that Iranian EFL learners may benefit from receiving CF in a manner that aligns with their societal expectations in terms of politeness. By providing polite CF, educators can create a more conducive learning environment that promotes language acquisition

among Iranian EFL learners. In addition, in line with Holstun and Bohecker's (2024) support for a culturally sensitive approach to providing CF, taking a humanistic approach in teaching is necessary, and incorporating elements of politeness into CF can enhance its effectiveness in this context.

Furthermore, the use of different types of CF, such as explicit elicitations and implicit recasts, allows educators to cater for individual learning styles and preferences. By tailoring feedback to students' needs, educators can enhance the effectiveness of language learning and ultimately improve grammatical accuracy in the long run. This study underscores the importance of considering cultural elements in language education, and suggests that incorporating politeness and varied feedback strategies can have a positive impact on the language learning process.

However, the second and fifth questions were answered negatively suggesting that politeness is more suitable for explicit CF than implicit CF. Additionally, It seems that the inclusion of politeness further increases the indirect and implicit nature of recasts, which already inherently possess these characteristics (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Nassaji, 2009).

Furthermore, in the context of awareness-raising, in the +PEF group, a significant portion of the brain's processing capacity is directed towards the CF activity and the target structure. In contrast, in the +PIF group, insufficient mental resources are allocated to the task, hindering instant learning from CF. Regarding delayed recall, it is important to note that +PEF contributes to better automatization or proceduralization of declarative knowledge acquired. On the other hand, +PIF further emphasizes the implicit nature of CF, reducing cognitive load and resulting in lower levels of proceduralization and automaticity.

Future research endeavors should consider addressing these constraints to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the subject. Possible limitations include the small sample size, the specific focus on Iranian EFL learners, and the short duration of the study, which may have limited the generalizability of the results. Moving forward, researchers may wish to explore the effects of polite CF on the acquisition of other language components beyond grammatical accuracy. Additionally, investigating the incorporation of politeness markers into teachers' questioning techniques presents a promising avenue for further inquiry. By recognizing and addressing the limitations of this study, future research can build upon these findings to deepen our knowledge of effective language learning strategies and pedagogical approaches.

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