

An analysis of uptake in two different contexts

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The typical teaching exchange introduced by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) in their analysis of classroom interaction consisted of three moves: teacher initiation, student response and teacher evaluation of student's response. McTear (1977) added a fourth move: student's repetition of teacher evaluation. This move has also been called uptake by some authors and it refers to a student's utterance which immediately follows teacher's feedback. We offer a review of the state of the art and then examine uptake in two contexts: secondary school and university students. We have noticed that university students make fewer errors than secondary students and most of the corrections are accepted by the former. We have also remarked that in most content and phonological errors students in both groups accept the correction. The non-accepted corrections are to blame to the topic continuation by the teacher or by another student.

Key words: feedback-uptake-secondary school-university students.

El típico intercambio del profesor, introducido por Sinclair y Coulthard (1975) en su análisis del discurso de aula, consistía en tres movimientos: pregunta del profesor –respuesta del estudiante– evaluación del profesor de la respuesta del alumno. McTear (19875) añadió un cuarto movimiento: repetición del alumno de la evaluación del profesor. Este cuarto movimiento se denominado también aceptación del alumno de la evaluación del profesor. En el caso de una corrección la aceptación puede ser positiva o negativa en el caso de que el estudiante repita o no la corrección. En primer lugar revisamos la literatura que existe relacionada con este tópico y a continuación ofrecemos los resultados del examen de la aceptación en los dos contextos, escuela secundaria y estudiantes universitarios. Hemos observado que los estudiantes universitarios hacen menos errores y aceptan más la corrección que los de enseñanza secundaria. Las correcciones de errores de contenido o

errores de tipo fonológico son las más aceptadas. La no aceptación de la corrección se debe a que el profesor continúa con el tópico explicando algo u otro alumno interrumpe haciendo una pregunta o una broma.

Palabras clave: corrección-aceptación de la misma-escuela secundaria-estudiantes universitarios.

L'échange typique du professeur, introduit par Sinclair et Coulthard (1975) dans son analyse du discours dans la classe, consistait en trois mouvements: question de professeur –réponse de l'étudiant– évaluation par le professeur de la réponse de l'élève. McTear (1975) ajouta un quatrième mouvement: répétition par l'élève de l'évaluation du professeur. Le quatrième mouvement a aussi été appelé acceptation par élève de l'évaluation du professeur. Dans le cas d'une correction, l'acceptation peut être positive ou négative selon que l'étudiant répète ou non la correction. Nous révisons d'abord la littérature sur le sujet et nous offrons ensuite les résultats de l'examen de l'acceptation dans les deux contextes: enseignement secondaire et universitaire. Les corrections d'erreurs de contenu ou erreurs de type phonologique sont les mieux acceptées. La non acceptation de la correction est due au fait que le professeur continue à expliquer son sujet ou qu'un élève interrompt le discours par une question ou une plaisanterie.

Mots cle: correction-acceptation de la correction-école secondaire-étudiants d'université.

1. State of the art

The concept of uptake has received much attention recently in the Second Language Acquisition literature. According to Smith (2005), it has been described in three different ways:

1. The term uptake comes from speech act theory. Austin (1962) describes the relationship between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts and notes that “the performance of an illocutionary act involves the securing of uptake” (Austin, 1962: 116).
2. Allwright (1984) employs the term uptake to refer to the language that the learners claim to have learnt from a lesson. Allwright (1984) suggests that such self-reported data can provide a way to investigate the relationship between classroom practice and language learning.
3. Recently, the term uptake has gone through another shift in use. Lyster and Ranta (1997) define uptake as “a student utterance that immediately follows the teacher’s feedback and that constitutes a reaction somehow to the teacher’s intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student’s initial utterance”(Lyster and Ranta, 1997: 49).

It is this third use of uptake that we are going to analyse in our study of feedback.

Lyster and Ranta (1997) observed that uptake helps learners to practice using items and thus may help them to automatize retrieval of them. Uptake may create the conditions needed for language acquisition to occur, and it is for this reason that it has attracted the attention of researchers.

Several studies (Lyster and Ranta, 1997; Lyster, 1998; Pannova and Lyster, 2002) have described the relationship between type of corrective feedback and learner's uptake. Lyster and Ranta (1997) present a study of corrective feedback and learner uptake in four immersion classrooms at the primary level.

In their study, all student turns were coded as having an error or not. They classified errors as either phonological, lexical, or grammatical. They also included instances of the L1 unsolicited by the teacher in their category of error.

They distinguished six different types of feedback:

1. *Explicit correction.*
2. *Recast.*
3. *Clarification request.*
4. *Metalinguistic feedback.*
5. *Elicitation.*
6. *Repetition.*

Lyster and Ranta (1997) added a seventh category called *multiple feedback*, which referred to combinations of more than one type of feedback in one teacher turn.

In relation to the notion of uptake, they drew on speech act theory (Austin, 1962) to introduce the term into the error treatment sequence. Uptake in their model refers to a student's utterance that immediately follows the teacher's feedback and that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher's intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student's initial utterance. According to them, there are two types of student uptake:

1. Uptake that results in "repair" of the error on which the feedback focused.
2. Uptake that results in an utterance that still needs repair (coded as "needs-repair").

Repair in their model refers to the correct reformulation of an error as uttered in a single student turn and not to the sequence of turns resulting in the correct reformulation; nor does it refer to self-initiated repair. They analyzed repairs occurring only after prompting – what Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977) have called "other-initiated repair". They distinguished four types of other-initiated repair in their database:

1. *Repetition*: a student's repetition of the teacher's feedback when the latter includes the correct form.
2. *Incorporation*: a student's repetition of the correct form provided by the teacher, which is then incorporated into a longer utterance produced by the student.
3. *Self-repair*: a self-correction, produced by the student who made the initial error, in response to the teacher's feedback when the latter does not already provide the correct form.
4. *Peer-repair*: peer-correction provided by a student, other than the one who made the initial error, in response to the teacher's feedback.

Their category of "needs-repair" includes the following six types of utterances:

1. *Acknowledgement*: generally a simple "yes" on the part of the student in response to the teacher's feedback.
2. *Same error*: uptake that includes a repetition of the student's initial error.
3. *Different error*: a student's uptake that is in response to the teacher's feedback but that neither corrects nor repeats the initial error; instead, a different error is made.
4. *Off target*: uptake that is clearly in response to the teacher's feedback turn but that circumvents the teacher's linguistic focus altogether, without including further errors.
5. *Hesitation*: a student's hesitation in response to the teacher's feedback.
6. *Partial repair*: uptake that includes a correction of only part of the initial error.

This needs-repair category is one of the categories in their model that can lead to additional feedback from the teacher and hence allows for error treatment sequences to go beyond the third turn.

Finally, Lyster and Ranta (1997) define reinforcement as short statements that teachers often make following repair in order to reinforce the correct form before proceeding to topic continuation (e.g. "Yes!", "That's it!", "Bravo!" or repetition of the student's corrected utterance). In addition, teachers, according to them, frequently include metalinguistic information in their reinforcement.

In respect to the results of their study, the authors claim that their purpose was twofold: first, to develop an analytic model comprising the various moves in an error treatment sequence and second, to apply the model to a database of interaction in four primary L2 classrooms with a view to documenting the frequency and distribution of corrective feedback in relation to learner uptake. They mentioned the following findings:

- Teachers in their study used six different feedback moves: recasts (55%), elicitation (14%), clarification requests (11%),

metalinguistic feedback (8%), explicit correction (7%), and repetition of error (5%).

- The feedback types least likely to lead to uptake were the recast and explicit correction. The most likely to succeed was elicitation. Other good precursors to uptake were clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, and repetition
- The feedback types that allow for negotiation of form are the four that lead to student-generated repair, i.e. elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, clarification requests, and repetition.

Their results indicate that recasts accounted for the largest number of repairs, but they claim that this is so due to the inordinately high frequency of recasts. When calculated as a ratio, they state that only a small percentage of recasts led to repair, and all of these repairs involved repetition of the teacher's recasts. The authors think that there is a great deal of ambiguity in those communicative classrooms as students are expected to sort out if the teacher's intentions are concerned with form and meaning. They find that feedback types other than recasts (metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, clarification requests and teacher repetition of error) eliminate this ambiguity by allowing students themselves to either self-correct or correct their peers. They add that explicit correction eliminates ambiguity as well, but does not allow for student-generated repair.

Finally, Lyster and Ranta (1997) conclude that their data indicate that the feedback-uptake sequence engages students more actively when there is negotiation of form, that is, when the correct form is not provided to the students—as it is in recasts and explicit correction—and when signals are provided to the learner that assist in the reformulation of the erroneous utterance. Hence, according to them, the negotiation of form involves corrective feedback that employs either elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, clarification requests, or teacher repetition of error, followed by uptake in the form of peer- or self-repair, or student utterances still in need of repair that allow for additional feedback.

Lyster (1998) presents a study of the relationships among error types, feedback types, and immediate learner repair in four French immersion classrooms at the elementary level.

In his study, recasts were found to be the most widely used technique. He examined not only the distribution of different feedback types, but also the ways in which learners reacted to the different types of feedback in turns immediately following corrective feedback, that is, what he refers to as learner uptake. He coded those utterances as either repaired or still in need of repair. His findings revealed that recasts resulted in the lowest rate of uptake, and neither recasts nor explicit correction led to any peer- or self-repair because they already provide correct forms to learners. On the contrary, elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests, and repetition of error led to higher rates of uptake and all were also able to elicit peer- and self-repair. He regrouped those four interactional moves under the name of negotiation of form and distinguished them from recasts and explicit correction. He then attributed a didactic function to the

term negotiation of form: «the provision of corrective feedback that encourages self-repair involving accuracy and precision and not merely comprehensibility» (Lyster and Ranta, 1997: 42). Lyster (1998) concluded that the negotiation of form provides learners with opportunities to make important form-function links in the target language without interrupting the flow of conversation and while maintaining the mutuality inherent in negotiation.

Lyster's (1998) model used to code the interactional data takes into account four main error types: grammatical, phonological, lexical, and unsolicited uses of the first language (as his interest was in focus-on-form, errors related to content were not analyzed).

This study examined the four error types in relation to the three main feedback types (i.e., negotiation of form, recasts, and explicit correction) and in relation to learner repair. Lyster (1998) refers to repair as the correct reformulation of an error as uttered in a single student turn, not to the sequence of turns resulting in the correct reformulation, and nor does it refer to self-initiated repair. He found four types of other-initiated repair: student's repetition of the teacher's reformulation, student's incorporation of the teacher's reformulation, student-generated repairs in the form of peer-repair, and student-generated repairs in the form of self-repair.

According to the results, the answers to the research questions were:

- Grammatical and phonological errors tended to invite recasts, while lexical errors tended to invite negotiation of form more often than recasts.
- The majority of phonological repairs were learner repetitions following recasts and the majority of grammatical and lexical repairs were peer- and self-repairs following negotiation of form.

Lyster (1998) argued that the findings suggested that the four teachers provided corrective feedback somewhat more consistently and less randomly than teachers observed in previous studies, as their treatment of oral errors showed some degree of systematicity.

Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen (2001) analysed learner uptake in focus-on-form episodes occurring in 12 hours of class. They took a broad perspective of uptake, to acknowledge that uptake can occur even when the previous move does not involve corrective feedback. The definition of uptake they proposed is as follows:

- Uptake is a student's move.
- The move is optional (i.e., focus on form does not obligate the student to provide an uptake move).
- The uptake move occurs in episodes where learners have demonstrated a gap in their knowledge (e.g., by making an error, by asking a question, or by failing to answer a teacher's question).
- The uptake move occurs as a reaction to some preceding move in which another participant (usually the teacher) either explicitly or implicitly provides information about a linguistic feature.

They distinguished two types of focus on form: conversational and didactic, which reflect Van Lier's (1988) discussion of repair in the L2 classroom. He noted that repair occurs implicitly in the context of a conversational move or explicitly in the form of an overt correction. Similarly, focus on form can deal with a problem in a conversational side-sequence that does not explicitly draw attention to a deviant or misused form, or it can function didactically by making the problem the explicit topic of the side sequence.

They also mentioned an additional classification of focus on form as pre-emptive or reacting (Long and Robinson, 1998). Pre-emptive focus on form indicates an attempt by the teacher or a learner to initiate explicit attention to a linguistic point because they notice that it is problematic at a particular moment in the discourse. Pre-emptive focus on form does not mean that a learner has made an error, rather it is caused because something has motivated attention to a form. Reactive focus on form occurs because a learner has said something that contains an error and the teacher or another learner responds to this error.

The results indicate that uptake was most frequent in Student-Initiated focus on form episodes. In Teacher-Initiated exchanges focus on form the level of uptake was notably lower. Although there were more than two times as many episodes involving negotiation of form as negotiation of meaning, uptake was more likely to occur in episodes involving negotiation of meaning.

On the other hand, the type of negotiation had no significant effect on the level of success of uptake.

The authors claim that their study has provided clear support for focus on form as an instructional option. They have shown that focus on form can take place regularly in the context of message-oriented communicative lessons without disturbing the flow of communication, and also that it can lead to high levels of learner uptake, much of which is successful.

Smith (2005) explores whether a negotiation routine's complexity affects learner uptake and if this uptake affects lexical acquisition in a synchronous computer-mediated environment. In his paper he describes the different variables involved in his research: computer-assisted language learning and learner uptake.

After a revision of literature related to the two variables, the author concludes the following about uptake:

Taken together, the most recent studies suggest that uptake is most likely to occur and be successful in FFEs (Focused on Form Episodes) that a) involve negotiated interaction, b) are complex rather than simple in nature, and c) are student rather than other initiate (Smith, 2005: 39).

About the relationship between uptake and acquisition, the author states that the relationship between them is still developing. He adds that establishing a clear link between the two is problematic because uptake neither guarantees that a feature will be acquired nor is it always present when a feature is acquired.

His study focused on the acquisition of lexical items by intermediate students in an American University. His results indicate that uptake moves that were successful in the conventional sense occurred very rarely in the data.

The author concludes that, though there is a theoretical basis for arguing that uptake can contribute positively to second language acquisition, the data in his study suggest that uptake had no effect on whether target items were acquired or not. He remarks that uptake is a type of pushed output, according to Swain's output hypothesis (1985, 1995). Uptake has also been considered a means to practice linguistic items, with the result of helping learners to automatize retrieval of these items (Lyster and Ranta, 1997). According to Ellis *et al.*, (2001), uptake may help learners test and subsequently revise faulty hypotheses about the target language. Nevertheless, in Smith's (2005) study, neither in the conventional definition nor in the expanded definition of uptake does it facilitate the acquisition of the linguistic items. He remarks that his finding calls into question the positive role of uptake in second language acquisition; he also hypothesizes that, even through negotiation may elicit considerable successful uptake in a synchronous computer mediated communication context, the benefits of lexical acquisition may come from other elements of negotiated interaction, rather than successful uptake.

Donough and Mackey (2006) investigated responses to recasts and they distinguished two types:

1. When a learner immediately repeats some or all of the recast in the third turn and
2. When a learner produces a new utterance using the syntactic structure that was provided in the recast, either immediately or a few turns later.

They found that both types of responses to recasts and development of acquisition were significantly associated. They also suggested studying the incidence of the different recast types and acquisition.

From our review we can conclude that the relationship between uptake and second language development seems to be accepted by most researchers.

2. Subjects and Method

Subjects in this study were two types of classes: one of fourth year of secondary education (4th of E.S.O.) and the other class of third year teacher training students of philology speciality. We have analysed the transcriptions of 30 classes of English as a Foreign Language. From now on we will refer to them as class A (ESO class) and class B (university class).

The class of E.S.O. consisted of 10 females and 6 males. In the class of teacher training there were 20 intermediate adult students: 15 females and 5 males.

The teacher in the ESO class was a young teacher and the teacher of the teacher training class was quite more experienced. Both teachers used a communicative method and the communication between teachers and students was always in English.

We used tape recorders to record the interaction in the classroom and as observers we were present in the classes.

The methodology we used was based on Lyster and Ranta (1997) adapted to our context and Lyster (1998) in the distinction of types of errors and their relation to uptake.

In the distinction between types of tasks we followed Hymes (1972) and Selinker and Douglas (1985) and Riley (1998) who distinguished two types of tasks; communicative and pedagogical

3. Results

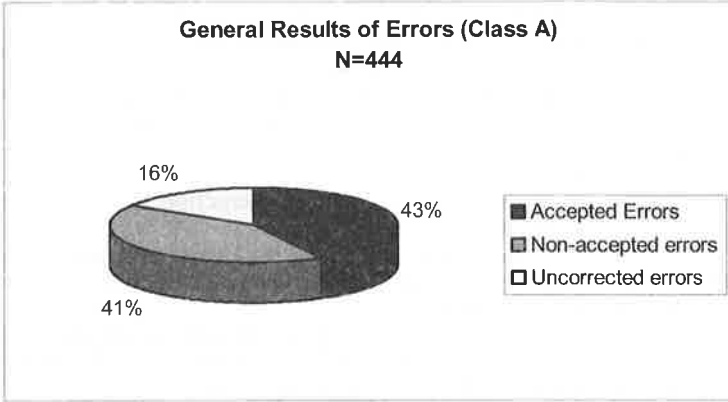
Once the two groups of lessons were analysed, we offer a table with the general results concerning the total number of errors, the number of them which were not corrected, the number of them which were or not accepted and the number of confirmation moves by the teacher in the feedback exchange.

TABLE 1. GENERAL RESULTS ON ERRORS, ACCEPTANCE AND CONFIRMATION.

	<i>Class A</i>	<i>Class B</i>
<i>Total Number of Errors</i>	N=444	N=303
<i>Corrections Accepted by Students</i>	188 (42,3%)	218 (72%)
<i>Corrections Non Accepted by Students</i>	184 (41,4%)	65 (21%)
<i>Uncorrected Errors by Teacher</i>	72 (16,2%)	20 (7%)
<i>Teacher Confirmation of Acceptance in Feedback Exchange</i>	138 (37% of the corrected errors)	80 (37% of the corrected errors)

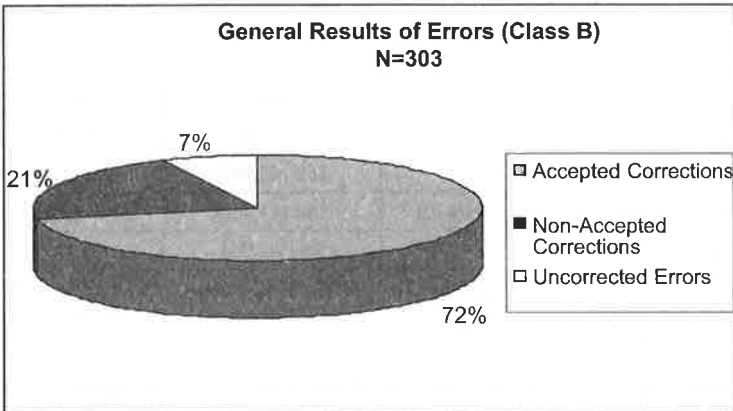
Looking at the results, we can claim that there is a higher percentage of number of mistakes in class A. However, there is also a higher number of uncorrected errors in this class. Although class B shows greater proficiency in the language, the number of uncorrected errors is very low. This could be due to the fact that teacher in class B concentrated on form most of the time, whereas the teacher in class A focused more on communication.

These results and the causes for them become clearer when showed in different graphs.



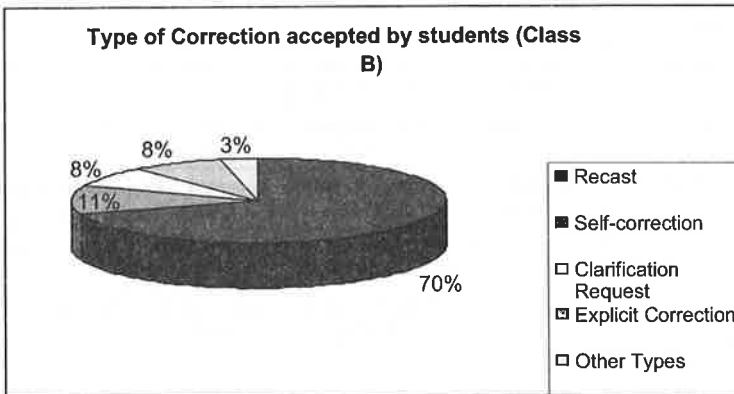
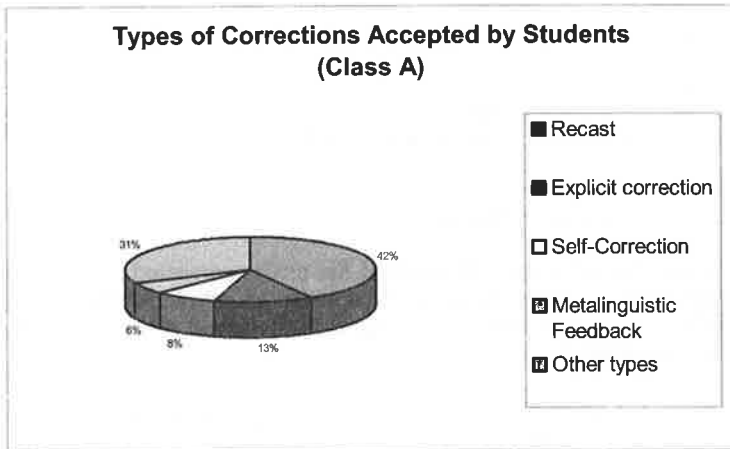
In class A, 16% of the errors were left uncorrected and the rate of acceptance on the part of students is of 43% of them.

The results are different for class B, where the uncorrected errors were only 7% of the total number and the unaccepted errors on the part of the students were 21%. This fact may be due to the situation of the students who were much older and mature:



We now show the types of corrections that were most accepted by students in both classes. In contrast with Lyster and Ranta (1997) and Lyster (1998), we found that recasts were the most accepted type of correction in both classes. We also found that there was more diversity of correction types in class A than in class B.

Self-correction is slightly greater in number in class B, but we expected a bigger difference between the two classes because older students tend to correct themselves more.



In table 2 we present the relationship between recasts and type of error. We found that, being recast the most accepted type of correction, it would be interesting to analyse the relationship between this type of correction and the types of errors. We can observe that for both teachers phonological errors corrected by recast are mostly accepted by the students. This confirms Lyster (1998) who stated that phonological errors tended to be followed by recasts and were successfully accepted. Here we offer two examples of phonological errors corrected through recast and accepted by the student:

Class A

T: O.k., María.

S: (reading) Not only did Sandra learn to scuba dive, she also decided to swim one day with sharks. That was /defi'nitli/ the most.

T: *definitely*.

S: *definitely* the most frightening experience of my life.

Class B

T: and the weather in Madrid?

S: very cold, some degrees bellow zero /θero/

T: bellow zero.

S: bellow zero.

T: was it snowing in Madrid?

In the case of teacher B most of the errors corrected through recast whatever the type were accepted by most of the students. However, we found that in class A only phonological and content errors were mostly accepted by students.

TABLE 2. RESULTS ON ACCEPTANCE OF CORRECTION
DEPENDING ON TYPE OF ERROR (RECAST).

RECAST	Teacher A		Teacher B	
<i>Phonological</i>	Accepted: 67 (56,8%)	Non-Accepted: 51 (43,2%)	Accepted: 46 (92%)	Non-Accepted: 4 (8%)
<i>Lexical</i>	Accepted: 1 (16,7%)	Non-Accepted: 5 (83,3%)	Accepted: 14 (78%)	Non-Accepted: 4 (22%)
<i>Gramatical</i>	Accepted: 7 (26%)	Non-Accepted: 20 (74%)	Accepted: 143 (75%)	Non-Accepted: 46 (25%)
<i>Use of L1</i>	Accepted: 1 (50%)	Non-Accepted: 1 (50%)	Accepted: 4 (67%)	Non-Accepted: 2 (33%)
<i>Content</i>	Accepted: 2 (100%)	Non-Accepted: 0 (0%)	Accepted: 40 (100%)	Non-Accepted: 0 (0%)

In order to examine the reasons why correction was not accepted, we analysed the transcriptions and found three different reasons: the teacher continued with the topic of the lesson not allowing the student to repeat the correction, another student could interrupt the feedback flow with a comment, joke, question, etc, or the same student who is being corrected does not pay attention to the correction and continues the flow of communication. We can observe that in both classes the results are very similar. In general, it is the teacher who does not allow the students to accept the correction, as we show in the following examples:

Class A

T: Merce... What day is today?

S: veintisiete.

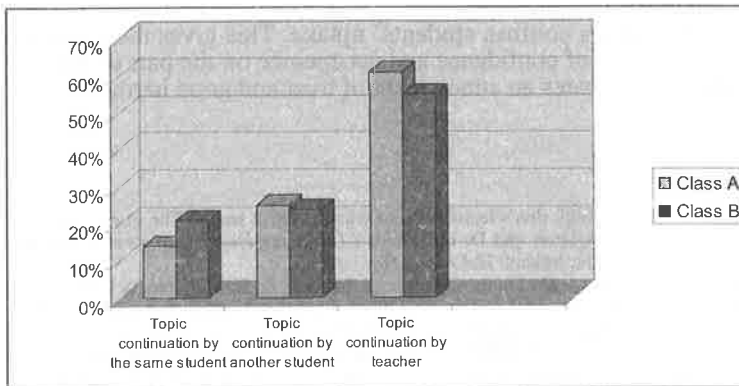
T: twenty-seventh...o.k., now, I told you to read the text, I told you to read the text...

Class B

S: It seems as if the motor is damaged /damad3/

T: damaged, damaged. Instead of motor, what word can you use?

Ss: engine.



3. Conclusions

We can observe that there are more errors in class A, where students are less proficient. The students in class B make fewer errors and the errors they make are almost all corrected by the teacher. In class A the number of uncorrected errors is larger.

There are more errors which are accepted by the students in class B than in class A. We attribute this fact to the different situations. Adult students are more aware of the errors they make than younger students.

If we analyse the type of correction that is most useful for all levels, we must agree with Lyster (1998) who says that recasts are very convenient to correct phonological errors. We have been able to observe that in phonological errors recast is the type of correction that is most accepted.

In the correction of other types of errors like grammatical and lexical, it seems that adult students benefit more from recasts than younger students. Adult students accept recast in all situations; however, younger students do not feel so comfortable with recasts and they accept other types of correction like clarification request or modelling.

For this reason, we recommend recast to correct phonological errors at all levels. For structural and lexical errors we recommend other types

of correction, like clarification request, for younger students and recast for adult students.

In the case of the reasons for not applying uptake, in both classes, we find that it is the teacher to blame, most of the times, for leaving the students no room for repeating the correction. The reasons are that the teacher explains the rules for correcting the error, asks another student, makes a joke, etc. We would recommend teachers to concentrate on the error and allow students to repeat the correction.

As for self-correction, we have observed that adult students self-correct more than their younger counterpart. We recommend self-correction at all levels of teaching, it seems the best way for students to perceive the error and correct themselves.

Both teachers confirm students' uptake. This gives the communicative class a sense of confidence and acceptance on the part of the teacher to student, and creates an atmosphere of trust and good harmony.

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