Improving literacy skills of Saudi English Majors through explicit and implicit corrective feedback modes at Shaqra' University

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Abstract: *This study was devoting to examining the effect of explicit and implicit corrective feedback modes on literacy skills of English majors at Shaqra' University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The instruments required for the study were the questionnaire of feedback, pre-posttest, and a follow-up interview. The participants of the study consisted of seventy five students, including those who participated in piloting the pre-posttests, the questionnaire of feedback and the interview. Two teachers affiliated to the English department participated in the application of the experiment . Two way-analysis of covariance was used, ANCOVA and ANOVA. The results indicated that there was a difference in literacy skills posttest in favor of the experimental group due to corrective feedback modes in favor of the implicit corrective feedback mode. Findings indicated that implicit corrective feedback improve students' literacy skills. The study calls for further investigation to examine the effect of corrective feedback on enhancing language accuracy and fluency.*
Keywords: *English majors , corrective feedback, literacy skills, Saudi education .*

I. Introduction
Literacy skills are complex cognitive activities, in which the students have to integrate reading and writing skills .Students have to master numbers of variables during practicing literacy skills, they have to determine the needed information, comprehend form inference, assess information, identify the organization of a passage, understand and analyze the ideas in a text, write a summary of the main ideas mentioned in the passage and master the mechanics of writing.

Genlott,(2013) referred that teachers have a responsibility to create a proper environment for the readers and writers and they should think of ways to integrate literacy skills in the English classroom in order to empower learners with the English language literacy skills .So, they have to suggest activities using authentic ,powerful and meaningful tasks for learners' communication. Hodges (2016) stated that reading overpowers writing, and also writing can be used as a tool for reading. Hence ,reading and writing are necessary skills and have the same importance so, the students have to practice and receive enough training to improve them equally.

Researches referred that many students have difficulty acquiring the necessary reading, comprehension and writing skills to access the content, as well as to practice what they have learnt (Almelhi 2014; Drucker 2012;Plank &etal 2014;Reinking 2011).Learning to read and write is a basic skill that unfortunately not all students acquire them sufficiently and teachers may be unaware of the role that reading and writing development plays in the development of literacy skills (Knell ,2018).

A challenge for teachers is to provide opportunities for students to develop their skills in reading and writing to improve literacy skills through engaging and training students in active and directed learning to improve their comprehension skills across teaching literacy academic courses.

Error correction in foreign language students' literacy skills is of great concern therefore, teachers should support their students with sustained writing and reading to avoid fossilization of errors .In order to achieve the effective community of readers and writers during practicing literacy skills, students should receive proper feedback to improve and edit their performance during reading and writing skills. One of the most effective types is corrective feedback, in which the instructor can make a mix between explicit and implicit modes. The instructors also can determine the most effective mode that can be sufficient through the performance and results of the students through the continuous evaluation during practicing the tasks. Hence, corrective feedback by its two implicit and explicit modes may provide promotion to the higher levels of literacy skills.

Context of the problem:
On checking the answer sheet results of the academic courses of level two students in Reading Comprehension Two and Composition One at English department , the results revealed that most of the

students at English department got low scores . To identify the students exact problems ,the researcher carried on a follow-up oral interview with the students to tap their responses to the low scores they obtained in reading and writing, and identify the problems and difficulties that faced students during literacy course . The interview consisted of fourteen open-ended questions .The results of the interview proved that 83% of second level students lack the literacy skills required for EFL learners, and also often do not receive enough feedback.

Statement of the problem :
Most of students at English department do not receive enough feedback and lack literacy skills required for English majors. This study investigates improving literacy skills of Saudi English majors through explicit and implicit corrective feedback at Shaqra' university ,Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Research Questions:
1-To what extent does explicit corrective feedback mode affect students' literacy skills?
2-To what extent does implicit corrective feedback mode affect students' literacy skills?

Hypotheses of the study:
1-There is no significant differencesat .05 level among the adjusted mean scores attained by the study groups in the post-test of literacy skills due to explicit corrective feedback regardless of implicit corrective feedback modes .
2- There is no statistically significant difference at 0.05 level among the adjusted mean scores attained by the study groups in the posttest of literacy skills due to implicit corrective feedback regardless of explicit corrective feedback modes .

The significance of the study:
The present study tackles major problems facing students at English department during learning literacy skills. It helps teachers and students to understand more about the modes of corrective feedback. Assessing students through receiving corrective feedback reinforces their performance, identifying strengths and weaknesses and supporting students move forward.

Variables of the study:
1) Independent Variables:
A) –Explicit corrective feedback.
B)- Implicit corrective feedback.
2)-Dependent variable:
One dependent variable is employed in the study:
"Literacy skills".

II.   Theoretical Background

Literacy skills:
Literacy is defined by (UNESCO ,2013) as the capacity of the learners to comprehend ,make inference , and successfully communicate using the written and reading materials of different texts to achieve and develop learning goals. Literacy also helps learners to develop their knowledge and participate effectively in society.

The operational definition of the study : The students' capacity to develop their skills, interpret , analyze , critically read different contexts and associated with writing well-organized pieces of compositions and summarization**.**

The close relationship between reading and writing has been widely discussed . Research proved that there is a continuous relationship between writing and reading and it is necessary to integrate them to improve literacy skills . Cho & Griffler (2015) explored a study that reported the perceived needs of Korean English language learners during learning reading and writing and how students integrated reading with writing instructions to impact their reading comprehension and summary-writing abilities. The participants of the study were ninety three participated in a needs survey, and sixty eight students at three proficiency levels received the integrated instruction. The study found that students desired extra help on their writing to gain balanced English competence; also they wanted to learn reading and writing together.

The previous studies are close to the present study in the importance of integrating reading with writing especially in advanced levels to improve reading comprehension courses and writing skills specifically writing a summary; also they indicated that the students suffer problem during learning literacy skills.

The role of the teacher is very crucial in directing ,supporting and providing students with the appropriate tasks to overcome literacy difficulties and integrate reading with writing . Gorzycki &etal (2016)

asserted that the efficacy of instruction relative to literacy and reading comprehension is dependent in part on how far the instructor dedicates time and energy in class to formative assessments and discussion of student work that provides insights to how student might improve their reading comprehension with the integration of writing skills.

Students should be aware of the difficulties and problems that faced them during literacy course and teacher should identify exactly these problem .Students also should be conscious of the empower of integrating reading with writing Pirttimaa (2015) explored adult students' descriptions and understandings of their reading and writing difficulties at the higher education level .The study used a qualitative, interview-based study that sought to improve students' understanding of these difficulties. The data were analyzed using content analysis, and findings are presented in terms of students' social experience, the expectations and solutions that students use to help them make a progress in their academic courses and the strategies employed by students to copy and integrate reading with writing during practicing tasks.

Feedback :

Feedback is defined as visual, auditory, or tactile indications that the student stated the incorrect response (Loewen, 2012).

The operational definition of the study: The ability of the teacher to make errors correction by using corrective feedback rubrics and control committing errors during teaching literacy skills through using two modes; implicit and explicit corrective feedback to inform, attract, interpret and interact with the students.

Numerous studies examined the effect of corrective feedback on students' performance and investigated the relationship between corrective feedback and different aspects of language arts . Ataman & Mirici (2017) examined the relationship between corrective feedback and English Language learners' writing skills development. The study used explicit feedback on the students written tasks. The results showed that corrective feedback had a positive impact on improving writing skills and helped to motivate students.

There are some studies that emphasized the importance of using corrective feedback for advanced levels to improve students' skills in all the aspects of language . Shen (2018) investigated a study to use feedback strategies in teaching English at the university level through direct and indirect corrective feedback to improve the English majors' writing. The study used analysis and questionnaires to investigate the effects of different types of corrective feedback in 250 essays of the first-year English major students and the students' responses to different feedback strategies.

Although the superiority of one type over another there is no definite answer can be still given, This may due to several reasons such as culture , experience of the students ,individual differences ,cognitive ability ,proficiency level and etc… .Fawbush (2010) investigated a study to examine the effect of explicit and implicit feedback on students' performance .The results showed that   implicit correction wasn't effective as explicit correction because it may not provide the learners with enough information. This could imply that implicit correction may be less effective in allowing learners to understand what is wrong with their incorrect utterance.

Shamiri (2016) explored a study to examine the effect of corrective feedback on EFL learners' speech and beliefs. The study compare between implicit and explicit corrective feedback on speaking skills and beliefs. The results revealed that there were no significant differences between the implicit and explicit groups on speaking skills ,whereas the results showed that the participants in the implicit group had more positive rather than explicit .

The Experimental Design of the Study:

The present study adopts the quasi- experimental design, where three intact groups from the second level students at English department, Faculty of Science & Humanities, Shaqra' University, were assigned to the experimental and control groups. The treatment was given to two experimental groups to enhance the students' literacy skills. The control group didn't receive such treatment.

The participants of the study:

Three groups of seventy five female students were chosen from level two ,English department , shaqra' University . The participants were assigned to answer the pre- post literacy test and participated in piloting the questionnaire of feedback and the checklist of literacy questions at the follow- up interview. The experimental groups were divided into two experimental groups of fifty students each one contained twenty five and the control group was twenty five. Two teachers affiliated to English department participating in applying the experiment.

The instruments of the study are:
1-The questionnaire of feedback.
2-The pre- post literacy test to compare the effect of implicit and explicit feedback.
3- A follow-up interview

1-The questionnaire of feedback:
The aim of the questionnaire was to determine the students' preferences   according to the type of feedback (explicit or implicit) which is provided by the teacher during teaching literacy skills. The questionnaire consists of a list of (16) characteristics of implicit and explicit feedback. The students indicate the degree to which they believe for each of these items by marking whether they (5) strongly agree, (4) agree, (3) are undecided, (2) disagree, or (1) strongly disagree that it applies. There are no rights or wrong answers.

Validity of the questionnaire:
Before presenting the final versions of the questionnaire of feedback to the students at English department, Faculty of Science and Humanities , they were presented to a jury of professors of teaching English as a foreign language to elicit their comments and suggestions. The members were requested to read the items of the questionnaire and give their responses and opinions. Comments and suggestions of the professors were taken into consideration when making the last versions of the questionnaire.

Reliability of the questionnaire:
The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire of feedback was determined using Cronbach Alpha coefficient The reliability coefficient computed for the(16)items was 0.86, which indicated that the questionnaire was of high reliability making it ready for administration.

2-The literacy test:
         In order to measure the effect of feedback on literacy skills two parallel tests were applied. Because the period between applying the first test and the second test was shorter than five weeks   ,and students still memorize the information given in the first test ,hence the researcher designed an equivalent test to avoid unwanted results that may affect the answers of the students , a pretest was given to the experimental groups and the control group at the beginning of the experiment after four weeks of the beginning of the course ; the mid-test was given to the experimental group after four weeks and after another four weeks the posttest was given to the experimental group at the end of the experiment. The test was used to evaluate the students' literacy skills before and after the use of implicit and explicit feedback.

Validity of the test:
The test was presented to a jury of professors specialized in TEFL to elicit their comments and suggestions. The members were requested to read the items of the test and give their responses and opinions. Comments and suggestions of the professors were taken into   consideration when making the last versions of the test.

Reliability of the literacy test:
         The reliability coefficient of the literacy test was determined using interrater reliability which refers to the consistency of two or more independent raters. Three raters independently scored the students' answers and Pearson correlation coefficient was computed among them using SPSS. The following table shows the interrater reliability coefficients computed among the three raters.
Table (1):

Interrater reliability of the literacy test

		Rater 2	Rater 3
Rater 1	Pearson Correlation	0.934**	0.927**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000
	N	10	10
Rater 2	Pearson Correlation	---------------	.857**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	---------------	0.002
	N		10

         The table above shows that Pearson correlation coefficient computed between the 1st and the 2nd raters were 0.934 which is significant at 0.01 level. It also showed that the correlation coefficient computed between the 1st and the 3rd raters were 0.927 which is significant at 0.01 level. Moreover, the correlation coefficient computed between the 1st and the 3rd raters were 0.857 which is significant at 0.01 level. These interrater reliability coefficients indicated that the test was of high interrater reliability making it ready for administration.

3- A follow-up interview:
         The researcher carried on an oral interview with the students before starting the experiment to identify the problems and difficulties that face students during learning and teaching literacy skills .The researcher designed a checklist of questions to determine students responses and opinions for each one. The checklist

consists of (14) questions that measure their abilities in literacy skills .The results of the interview proved that 83% of second level students faced problems during literacy skills.

Homogeneity between groups in the literacy test:
Determining the homogeneity between groups guarantee the comparability between them in the posttests. Doing so, descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA test was used.

Table (2): Descriptive statistics of the literacy test

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Experimental 1	11.33	*4.740	.670	9.98	12.68
Experimental 2	10.06	*4.382	.620	8.81	11.31
Control Group	11.22	*4.803	.679	9.85	12.59
Total	10.87	*4.650	.380	10.12	11.62

The mean scores and standard deviation of the literacy pretest as shown in Table (1) above indicated that there is no much variance among the three groups. The first experimental group yielded M=11.33 with a standard deviation of 4.740, the second experimental group computed M=10.06 with a standard deviation of 4.382, and the control group yielded M=11.22 with a standard deviation of 4.803. This initial look at the mean scores shows that the three groups might start at a slightly similar level.

Table(3): Procedures of the experiment as summarized in the following table:

Groups	Test	Round 1	Round 2	Test
		Feedback mode	Feedback mode	
	Pre - test			Post-test
Group 1		Explicit	implicit	
Group2		Explicit	Implicit	
Group3		Regular	Regular	

III.   Presentation of Results and Discussions

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to test this hypothesis. Figure (1) below shows descriptively the differences between the mean scores attained by the study groups in the posttest of literacy skills based on the corrective feedback mode they received regardless of their teachers' socio-communicative styles

Figure (1): Raw mean scores of literacy skills posttest among the study groups based on corrective feedback modes

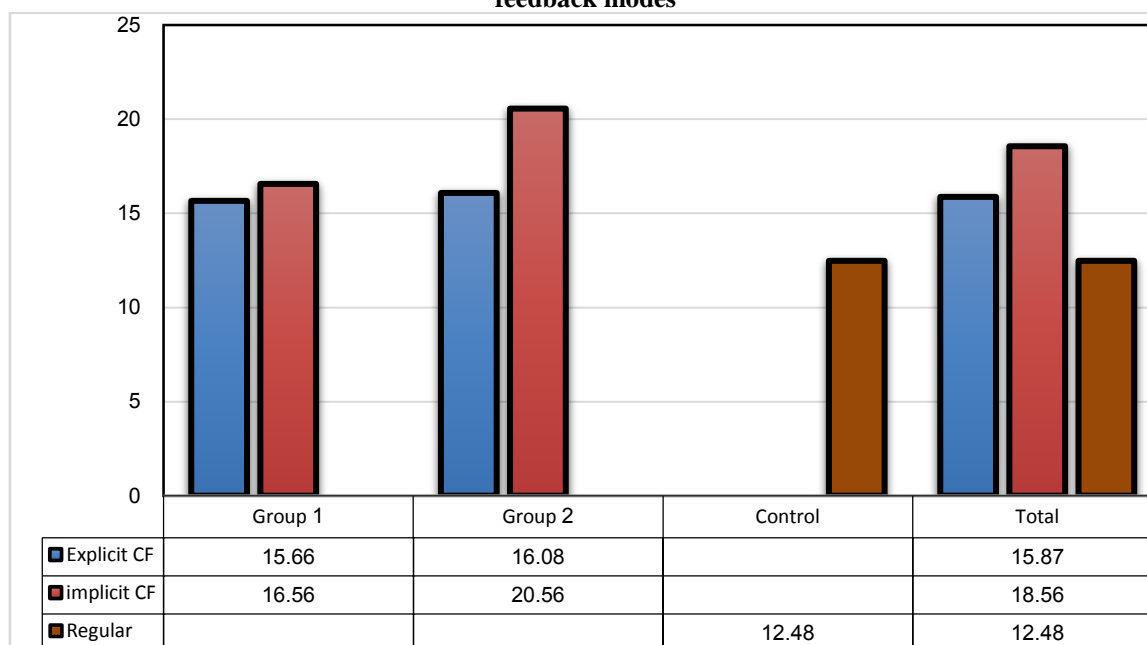|	Group 1	Group 2	Control	Total
Explicit CF	15.66	16.08		15.87
implicit CF	16.56	20.56		18.56
Regular			12.48	12.48

Figure (1) above shows descriptively the differences between the study groups' students in their posttest scores of literacy skills based on the corrective feedback mode they received regardless of their teachers' socio-communicative styles. The observable differences between groups when received different corrective feedback modes are not large. The first experimental group students' posttest mean scores when explicit corrective feedback was 15.66, while they scored a mean equals 16.56 when they received implicit corrective feedback, the matter that shows a slight difference. The same results were with the second experimental group students (Implicit CF (M=20.56); Explicit (M=16.08)), and for the control group students who received the regular method of feedback (M=12.48).

ANCOVA was used to compare the adjusted mean scores of the three groups on their literacy skills posttest scores based on the corrective feedback mode (explicit – implicit – regular) they received (Table 1 below).

Table (4): Results of ANCOVA in literacy skills posttest based the corrective feedback mode (explicit – implicit – regular)

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	873.995	5	174.799	8.212	.000
Intercept	854.264	1	854.264	40.134	.000
Groups	122.103	1	122.103	5.736	.018
CF_Mode	180.903	1	180.903	8.499	.004
Groups * CF_Mode	143.521	1	143.521	6.743	.010
Error	3065.120	144	21.286		
Total	42483.250	150			
Corrected Total	3939.115	149			

Results of ANCOVA (Table 3 above) showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the study groups in their posttest adjusted mean scores of literacy skills based on the corrective feedback mode they received at 0.05 level (F = 8.499; sig. = 0.004). Hence, Post hoc test in the form of Scheffe's test, being the most flexible and contrastive, was used to explore all possible pair-wise comparisons of means.

Table (5): Results of ANOVA Scheffe Post hoc test of literacy skills among the sudy group students based on CF modes

	Means	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Explicit	15.87	4.195	-2.690*	.953	.021
Implicit	18.56	4.968			
Explicit	15.87	4.195	2.210	.953	.071
Regular	13.66	5.081			
Implicit	18.56	4.968	4.900*	.953	.000
Regular	13.66	5.081			

* Significant at 0.05 level

The results of ANOVA Scheffe Post hoc test shows that there was a statistically significant difference in the posttest of literacy skills between the mean scores attained by the study groups' students of explicit CF mode and those of the implicit CF mode with a mean difference 2.960 which is significant at 0.05 level (sig. = 0.021) in favor of the implicit CF mode (M=18.56). It also revealed that that there was a statistically significant difference in the posttest of literacy skills between the mean scores attained by the study groups' students of implicit CF mode and those of the regular mode with a mean difference 4.900 which is significant at 0.05 level (sig. = 0.000) in favor of the implicit CF mode (M=18.56). However, the results above showed that there was no statistically significant difference at 0.05 level between the mean scores attained by the study groups' students of explicit CF mode and those of the regular mode with a mean difference 2.210 (sig. = 0.071).

Table (6): Results of ANCOVA in the questionnaire of feedback

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
implicit	75	3.8899	.49447	.05710
explicit	75	2.2507	.42443	.04056

Table(7): Results of Scheffe's Multiple Comparison Test of the questionnaire of feedback

	Test Value = 0				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
implicit	68.130	75	.000	3.88993	3.7762	4.0037
explicit	43.682	75	.000	2.25073	2.1301	2.3714

The results of the feedback questionnaire indicated that students prefer implicit corrective feedback rather than explicit corrective feedback. Results showed that there was a statistically significant difference in favor of the implicit corrective feedback modes at 0.05 levels (sig. 4.0037) more than explicit corrective feedback mode (sig. 2.3714)

According to the quantitative results of the present study proved that there was a statistically significant difference in favor of the implicit corrective feedback modes at 0.05 levels (sig. 4.0037) more than explicit corrective feedback mode (sig. 2.3714) . According to the qualitative results may be related to the culture and personality types of the Saudi girls students. There was a difference in the posttest of literacy skills between the mean scores attained by the study groups' students of implicit corrective feedback mode in favor of implicit feedback mode and this may be related to the characteristics of Saudi students, the girls are very shy, prefer indirect commands and instructions to avoid coyness .The results of the questionnaire of feedback showed that there was a difference between the mean scores attained by the study groups' students of explicit corrective feedback mode and those of implicit corrective feedback mode in favor of implicit and this was consistent with the results of the test.

IV. Conclusions

Although, multiple studies were done to compare which type of corrective feedback is more effective for L2 learners. The majority of studies asserted in their results that explicit feedback was the more effective form of corrective feedback. .The researcher at the beginning of the experiment expected that explicit feedback will be effective for the students ,but based on the findings of the study, the quantitative and qualitative results concluded that implicit corrective feedback modes proved to be effective in enhancing literacy skills of the second level Englishl majors at Shaqraa University and beneficial for developing students' performance through tasks which are related to what they need in their academic course. Students also, in the present study were motivated to identify their errors and tackle their weakness in reading and writing during practicing literacy course.

Suggestions for further studies:

There is lack of observational studies that explore the effect of corrective feedback on improving oral skills so, future studies might be required to cover this area. There are also several areas for further development and applications that needed sorely to explore the issue of how to help the students at several and different levels to develop and enhance literacy skills.

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