Examining the differential effects of reformulations and elicitations on Turkish EFL learners' uptake and use of English past counterfactual conditionals

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ABSTRACT: The study investigated the differential effects of reformulations and elicitations during the use of a complex linguistic structure, namely, English past counterfactual conditionals. It also explored how proficiency level of learners mediated the successful use of the target form. Sixty Turkish EFL learners were employed and distributed into three groups: reformulations (n = 20), elicitations (n = 20), and control (n = 20). During the online delivery of courses due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the learners met their instructors synchronously outside class times over a period of five weeks for the administration of the treatment and data collection. To prompt the use of the target linguistic structure, the researcher developed an oral production task. The immediate learner uptake measures and pretest-posttest results were analyzed to evaluate the effectiveness of both feedback strategies. The analysis comparing the measure of learner uptake indicated a greater number of successful corrections for reformulations. The data from the pretest-posttest measures also suggested that the reformulations group outperformed the elicitations and control group. It was also revealed that the proficiency level of learners had a mediating role only for reformulations. The findings of the study were discussed with reference to pedagogical implications.
Keywords: elicitations, English past counterfactual conditionals, oral corrective feedback, reformulations, uptake

Examen de los efectos diferenciales de las reformulaciones y elicitaciones en la captación y el uso de condicionales contrafactuales en inglés por parte de estudiantes turcos de ILE

RESUMEN: El estudio investigó los efectos diferenciales de las reformulaciones y elicitaciones durante el uso de una estructura lingüística compleja, a saber, los condicionales contrafácticos del pasado en inglés. Se emplearon sesenta estudiantes turcos de ILE y se distribuyeron en tres grupos: reformulaciones (n = 20), elicitaciones (n = 20) y control (n = 20). Durante la entrega de cursos en línea debido a la pandemia de COVID-19, los alumnos se reunieron con sus instructores sincrónicamente fuera del horario de clases durante un período de cinco semanas para la administración del tratamiento y la recopilación de datos. Para impulsar el uso de la estructura lingüística diana, el investigador desarrolló una tarea de producción oral. Se analizaron las medidas de captación inmediata del alumno y los resultados de la prueba previa y posterior para evaluar la eficacia de ambas estrategias de retroalimentación. El análisis que comparó la medida de captación del alumno indicó un mayor número de correcciones exitosas para las reformulaciones. Los datos de las medidas pretest-postest también sugirieron que el grupo de reformulaciones superó al grupo de elicitación y control. También se reveló que el nivel de competencia de los aprendices tuvo un papel mediador solo para las refor-

mulaciones. Los hallazgos del estudio se discutieron con referencia a las implicaciones pedagógicas.
Palabras clave: captación, condicionales contrafácticos del pasado en inglés, elicitaciones, reformulaciones, retroalimentación correctiva oral

1. Introduction

The theoretical and pedagogical functions of oral corrective feedback in second language (L2) learning have been subject to an extensive debate over the past two decades (Nassaji & Kartchava, 2021). Oral corrective feedback (henceforth OCF) can be defined as reactions to learners' erroneous utterances signifying that a linguistically unacceptable or inappropriate account has been made in the learner output (Nassaji & Kartchava, 2017). OCF can take place in various forms, including but not limited to confirmation checks, clarification requests, repetitions, etc. and these forms of feedback are purported to make essential contributions to L2 learning by displaying what is possible in the target language, facilitating the noticing of target structures, revealing gaps in the linguistic knowledge, and pushing the correct forms of output (e.g., Gass, 2003; Long, 1996; Schmidt, 1990; Swain, 1985). As the mainstream language teaching pedagogies advocate the integration of meaning-oriented tasks with the opportunities to notice language forms and draw attention to formal properties of the lan-guage, OCF can readily serve for this cause, helping learners constitute form and meaning connections, necessary for L2 learning (e.g., VanPatten, 2004).

The ongoing debate surrounding OCF in L2 learning has increasingly focused on its effectiveness in facilitating the acquisition of complex grammatical structures (Lyster, Saito, & Sato, 2013). Considering the inherent challenges associated with these structures, researchers have recognized the need for more targeted OCF strategies, as learners often require specific support to overcome the complexities involved (Nassaji, 2019). English past counterfactual conditionals, for example, present a particular challenge due to their semantic complexity and syntactic requirements (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). This complexity makes them an ideal target for investigating the effectiveness of different OCF strategies.

Two prominent types of feedback, reformulations and elicitations, offer contrasting approaches to addressing the challenges of complex structures, and as such, have garnered significant attention due to their potential to facilitate language development (Lyster et al., 2013). Reformulations provide learners with the correct form directly, serving as a model for the target structure. Elicitations, on the other hand, encourage learners to self-correct, promoting greater cognitive engagement with the complex form. However, the relative effectiveness of these contrasting approaches, particularly in relation to structures like past counterfactual conditionals, remains a subject of debate.

The present study specifically addresses this gap by examining the differential effects of reformulations and elicitations on learner uptake and use of English past counterfactual conditionals. Additionally, it explores how learner proficiency mediates these effects, recognizing that individual differences play a crucial role in language learning processes. By focusing on these objectives, the study aims to provide valuable insights for both theoretical understanding and practical application in second language pedagogy. The findings of the study have the potential to inform more effective feedback strategies, particularly for teaching complex grammatical structures to learners at various proficiency levels.

2. Literature Review

Extensive scholarly inquiry and discussion have centered on the role of OCF in L2 acquisition. A wealth of empirical evidence, including numerous studies and meta-analyses, strongly supports the claim that OCF actively promotes L2 acquisition. For instance, research has consistently demonstrated that instruction incorporating OCF is more effective than instruction without it (Doughty & Varela, 1998; Loewen & Nabei, 2007; Lyster & Saito, 2010; McDonough, 2007). Furthermore, meta-analyses and individual studies have provided compelling evidence for the positive impact of OCF on language acquisition (e.g., Goo & Mackey, 2013; Li, 2010; Lyster & Saito, 2010; Mackey & Goo, 2007; Russell & Spada, 2006; Sheen, 2004). This robust support for OCF's efficacy has led researchers to investigate the types of OCF that are most effective and the factors that mediate their impact. Recent research has transitioned from a broad focus on whether OCF works to a more nuanced examination of which OCF strategies are most beneficial and why (Li & Vuono, 2019). This shift reflects a growing understanding of the complex interplay between feedback type, learning context, linguistic features of the target structures and individual differences (Nassaji & Kartchava, 2021). A key distinction in this research concerns two broad categories of OCF: reformulations and elicitations (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Li & Vuono, 2019). Reformulations are the type of OCF strategy which provide a restatement of learners' original erroneous utterance in its correct form. Since they present input in the target language, they have also been identified as input-providing (Ellis, 2009). Elicitations, on the other hand, do not sup-ply the correct form of the target structure. Instead, they are employed to prompt learners to provide the correct form of the erroneous utterance. Thus, they are often identified as output-prompting (Ellis, 2009). Table 1 below present a taxonomy of OCF with individual strategies classified under reformulations and elicitations (Nassaji & Kartchava, 2021, p.4). For the purposes of the present study, reformulations in the form of recasts and elicitations in the form of clarification requests were operationalized.

Table 1. *A Classification of OCF Strategies*

Reformulations (input-providing)	Elicitations (output-prompting)
Recasts: Rephrase all or part of an erroneous utterance into a correct form.	Clarification requests: Occur when an utterance is not fully understood and the learner is asked for clarification.
Direct correction: Rephrases an erroneous utterance into a correct form and also clearly indicates the erroneous part.	Repetition: Repeats the erroneous utterance with a rising intonation.
	Direct elicitation: Elicits the correct form, for example, by repeating the erroneous utterance up to the error and waiting for the correction.
	Metalinguistic cue: Provides metalinguistic information.

The relative merits of reformulations and elicitations as OCF strategies have been discussed with reference to distinct theoretical underpinnings. A key component of OCF in general, is its provision of negative evidence, alerting learners to errors and prompting them to notice the gap between their interlanguage and the target language (Gass, 2013; Long, 1996). This aligns with the Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990), which posits that such attention to errors promotes the cognitive processing necessary for learning. While both reformulations and elicitations offer this negative evidence, reformulations also provide positive evidence by modeling correct forms, giving learners an explicit target to emulate (Doughty, 2001). As no target-like input is supplied in elicitations, they aim to help learners discover the correct form and push them to provide self-corrections. Furthermore, the reactive nature of OCF, responding directly to learner needs at the moment of error, further enhances its effectiveness (Lightbown, 1998). This learner-centered approach (Oliver & Adams, 2021) facilitates the restructuring of interlanguage, guiding learners toward closer approximations of the target language system.

Motivated by these theoretical considerations, a substantial body of research has investigated the effectiveness of different OCF strategies in both experimental and observational studies, spanning laboratory and classroom contexts (see Li & Vuono, 2019 for a recent review). Specifically, investigations comparing reformulations in the form of recasts with no recasts have generally offered empirical support for the efficacy of recasts in promoting L2 development. For example, Loewen and Philp (2006), in their classroom-based study, found that recasts facilitated the acquisition of English question forms by adult ESL learners. Similarly, Lyster and Mori (2006) demonstrated the positive effects of recasts on the acquisition of French grammatical gender by English-speaking learners. These studies, among others, suggest that the explicit provision of the correct form through recasts can be beneficial for L2 learners. However, it's important to note that the effectiveness of recasts can vary depending on factors such as the target structure, learner proficiency, and the specific learning context. Furthermore, the relative effectiveness of recasts compared to other OCF strategies, such as elicitations, remains a subject of ongoing debate. For instance, several studies have directly compared recasts with various types of elicitations, yielding mixed results. Ammar (2008), Ammar and Spada (2006), and Lyster (2004) found various types of elicitations, including metalinguistic clues, clarification requests, and repetitions, more effective than recasts after an instructional intervention focusing on the target language form. Similarly, Yang and Lyster (2010) reported that Chinese learners of English benefited more from a combination of elicitation types than recasts when learning the past tense. On the other hand, Dilans (2010), Nassaji (2009), and Lyster and Izquierdo (2009) found comparable levels of effectiveness for elicitations primarily in the form of clarification requests and reformulations during dyadic interactions. More recently, Nassaji (2019) found evidence suggesting that reformulations might be relatively more effective than elicitations in the form of clarification requests for learners acquiring English relative clauses. Even though critical accounts have been provided on the role of OCF strategies, inconclusive findings have been produced in regard to the effectiveness of reformulations and elicitations on the acquisition of the target L2 structures and the production of repaired output following these types of OCF strategies. This underscores the complexity of the issue and the need for further research to clarify the conditions under which each strategy is most beneficial.

Several factors may account for the inconsistencies observed in previous research comparing the effectiveness of reformulations and elicitations. First, many studies have combined OCF with explicit instructional interventions targeting the specific grammatical form under investigation (e.g., Ammar, 2008; Ammar & Spada, 2006; Lyster, 2004; Lyster & Izquierdo, 2009; Yang & Lyster, 2010). This makes it difficult to isolate the effects of the OCF itself, as the observed gains may be attributable to the instruction rather than, or in addition to, the feedback. Furthermore, some studies have employed a variety of elicitation techniques, including more explicit prompts like metalinguistic clues, alongside less explicit ones like clarification requests. This variation in explicitness makes it challenging to determine whether observed differences are due to the type of OCF (reformulation vs. elicitation) or the degree of explicitness of the feedback provided. Second, the linguistic complexity and saliency of the target structure may also influence the effectiveness of different OCF strategies. Studies investigating relatively simple target forms (e.g., English past tense, possessive determiners) have often reported greater benefits for elicitations (e.g., Ammar & Spada, 2006; Yang & Lyster, 2010). In contrast, research focusing on more complex structures like English relative clauses has found evidence favoring reformulations (e.g., Nassaji, 2019). While Mackey et al. (2000) suggested that learners may notice recasts more readily when the target form involves salient phonological or lexical features, Yilmaz (2012) found no interaction between OCF type and target form saliency. This lack of consensus further complicates the interpretation of previous findings. Finally, while learner proficiency has been identified as a potential mediating factor in OCF effectiveness (Nassaji, 2019), this variable has not garnered the due attention in previous research. A deeper understanding of how proficiency interacts with different OCF strategies is crucial for developing more effective pedagogical interventions.

To address the limitations of previous research, the present study investigates the differential effects of reformulations and elicitations on the acquisition of English past counterfactual conditionals, a complex linguistic structure. Crucially, this investigation is conducted without accompanying explicit grammatical instruction, allowing for a clearer examination of the isolated effects of the OCF strategies themselves. Furthermore, the study focuses on a single type of reformulation (recasts) and a single type of elicitation (clarification requests), minimizing the potential confounding influence of varying feedback explicitness. By employing a pretest-posttest design, the study also examines the role of learner proficiency in mediating the effectiveness of these OCF strategies. This focus on proficiency aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of how individual differences interact with different feedback types, contributing to more effective pedagogical interventions. Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. On a measure of learner uptake, are there differential effects for reformulations and elicitations during the use of English past counterfactual conditionals?
2. On a measure of pretest-posttest oral production test, are there differential effects for reformulations and elicitations during the use of English past counterfactual conditionals?
3. Does language proficiency mediate the differential effects of reformulations and elicitations during the use of English past counterfactual conditionals?

4. Methodology

4.1. Participants

The participants of the study were sixty (n = 60) Turkish learners of L2 English, all with Turkish as their first language. They were studying at a public university and enrolled in English-medium instruction (EMI) degree programs. However, at the time of the study, they were attending a preparatory-year intensive English program (PIEP) as their English proficiency had been assessed as insufficient for successful completion of their EMI programs. Students placed in EMI programs in Türkiye take an in-house proficiency test; those not passing are required to attend the PIEP, which aims to equip them with the necessary language and academic skills. PIEP students receive formal English instruction in different language level groups, ranging from A1 to B2, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Thirty students from each of the B1 and B2 levels were purposefully selected for this study, yielding a total sample size of 60. These proficiency levels were chosen because students at these levels had received prior instruction on the target structure. This sample size was deemed sufficient to ensure adequate statistical power for the planned analyses while also considering the practical constraints of conducting, transcribing, and analyzing individual video-recorded dyadic sessions with each participant. While a larger pool of students was available, equal representation of both proficiency levels (30 participants from each level) was prioritized to facilitate a balanced comparison of the effects of the OCF strategies across these proficiency groups. All participants volunteered for the study and participated outside their regular PIEP class hours. The participants were divided into three groups: reformulation (n = 20), elicitation (n = 20), and control (n = 20). Within each group, they were randomly assigned to either the B1 or B2 subgroup (n = 10 each) to ensure a balanced representation of proficiency levels across the treatment conditions. This balanced design allowed for investigation of the mediating role of language proficiency. Of the 60 participants, 28 were male and 32 were female, with ages ranging from 18 to 24 (M = 20.11).

3.2. Target linguistic form

English past counterfactual conditionals were targeted in the present study, specifically those following the IF+CONDITION+CONSEQUENCE structure (e.g., “If you had called me yesterday, I would have come to help you”). All target sentences maintained this consistent pattern, with the ‘if clause’ (condition) preceding the main clause (consequence). While other variations of past counterfactual conditionals exist (e.g., consequence-if-condition patterns or those requiring mixed counterfactual sentences), this study focused exclusively on the IF+CONDITION+CONSEQUENCE pattern to maintain consistency in the treatment and assessment.

The primary motivation for investigating this linguistic structure is two-fold: The first one concerns syntactic complexity of the structure, constituted by a main clause and a subordinate clause with a variety of structural combinations. The second relates to semantic complexity which unfolds itself with subtle changes in meaning depending on the structures

used (e.g. the use of past tense to address the present time or past perfect to address the past time, the use of a number of model verb structures conveying different meanings with slight changes in forms). In fact, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) note that conditional sentences, particularly counterfactual conditionals, are among the most challenging structures for English L2 learners due to the semantic and syntactic complexities involved. Supporting this consideration, Izumi et al. (1999) found that even though their subjects had some explicit knowledge of the conditional structure, they did not display a sound control over the target structure.

3.3. Treatment procedures

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all instruction at the university where the participants were studying was transitioned online. PIEP classes were delivered synchronously using Zoom videoconferencing. For the purposes of the present study, each participant was scheduled to virtually meet their English language instructors outside class hours using the same videoconferencing tool. Before the study, three English language instructors originally teaching English to the participants in the PIEP were provided instructions and a number of training sessions on the provision of the target oral corrective feedback strategies (reformulations and elicitations) and they were individually assigned to the designated groups as interlocutors interacting with the participants during the study.

The experimentation took place within a five-week period. During the first week, participants were contacted and their consent to participate was obtained. The following week, each participant completed a pretest with their assigned instructor. Two days later, the treatment session was conducted, followed by an immediate posttest the next day. A delayed posttest was administered three weeks after the treatment. An oral production task, adapted from previous research (Izumi & Bigelow, 2000; Song & Suh, 2008), was used to elicit the target structure (English past counterfactual conditionals). The task entailed the instructor describing a particular situation illustrated by two images and the participants' role was to answer the question prompting the use of the target structure. More specifically, during a single episode of the treatment, the instructor presented two images and described them to set the scene and then provided introductory information with regard to the situation. Then, the instructor posed a question/s that would prompt the participant to orally formulate the necessary conditional statement appropriate for the situation. The images and the relevant information were presented through the use of a slideshow on Microsoft PowerPoint. Each slide corresponded to a single situation including two images and the introductory information with the question posed by the instructor in the end (see Appendix for sample situations). A total of fifty situations prompting the use of English past counterfactual conditionals were presented in the treatment. If the participant produced the correct form of the target structure, the instructor moved on to the following slide. If not, the instructor afforded the participant a reformulation in the form of a recast for the reformulation group, an elicitation in the form of a clarification request for the elicitation group and no feedback for the control group. No explicit information or metalinguistic explanations were included in the instructors' feedback. The images, the introductory information and the questions were piloted with a group of students who did not participate in the experiment and revisions were made as needed. The

entire treatment session for each participant were video-recorded using the local recording feature of Zoom to be transcribed for the analysis of learner uptake.

Reformulations provided in the treatment were operationalized as recasts which were the reformulated forms of the participants' erroneous output by the instructors. To achieve comparability across the participants, only full recasts were provided without any additional emphasis during the relevant feedback episodes. A sample of reformulation used in the study was presented in the below example:

Participant: If she was faster, she would have caught her plane.

Instructor: I agree. If she had been faster, she would have caught her plane.

Elicitations were operationalized as the type of feedback which attempted to prompt the participant to self-correct their erroneous utterance, rather than providing the correct form. To make sure that the participants received the same kind of elicitation, only clarification requests were used and metalinguistic cues, which are considered more explicit types of elicitations, were avoided. A sample elicitation provided in the study was illustrated in the following example:

Participant: She spent all her money. She could buy a new phone if she save some money.

Instructor: Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't get it. Can you repeat that?

3.4. Assessment

The following assessment measures were used in the present study: 1. learner uptake observed during the treatment sessions. Learner uptake was operationalized as the instances when learners attempt to repair or modify their original erroneous utterance after the provision of feedback; 2. pre/posttest performance. Similar to the task used in the treatment, the researcher designed three different versions of the prompted oral production task, which was administered as a pretest, immediate posttest and delayed posttest. Each task included thirty (30) novel situations that were developed to prompt the use of the target linguistic form and similar procedures detailed in the treatment were applied during the administration of the tests. Namely, the instructor presented the images, set the scene by providing introductory information and posed a question in the end prompting the use of the target structure. The only exception was that the participants were not provided any types of OCF in the pretest and posttests to see if they could learn from the feedback provided in the treatment. The instructors carried out each test individually and video-recorded the session for each participant to be transcribed for analysis. A group of students that were not involved in the experiment were employed to pilot the tests and necessary revisions were applied by the researcher.

3.5. Data analysis

The video-recorded data were transcribed by the instructors administering the treatment and verified by the researcher. The data from the treatment were analyzed to identify the utterances involving the erroneous target structure, types of oral corrective feedback strategies and learner uptake. The analysis of uptake was performed in line with its operationalization for the present study, therefore, categorized with regard to the extent to which uptake resulted in satisfactory repair: successful uptake, partly-successful uptake, unsuccessful uptake. Successful

uptake suggested the provision of the corrected form of the initially ill-formed utterance, partly-successful uptake referred to the partial correction of the utterance and unsuccessful uptake entailed failure to produce the correct form of the initial erroneous utterance.

As for the pre/posttest performance, the responses of the participants during the administration of tests were scored dichotomously (correct/incorrect) using the following criterion: Did the participant's utterance with the English past counterfactual conditional involve an error? Each correct utterance received 1 point and an incorrect utterance 0, yielding a score range of 0-30.

4. Results

Data on learner uptake was collected during the treatment sessions. Each of the 40 learners participating in the treatment (20 in the reformulation group and 20 in the elicitation group) had 50 opportunities to produce the target structure (English past counterfactual conditionals). This resulted in 2000 total opportunities for uptake (40 learners x 50 occasions each). Of these 2000 opportunities, 532 (27%) resulted in correct initial responses, indicating that learners produced the target structure accurately without the need for corrective feedback. Of the 1468 erroneous utterances, 1042 contained the target structure (71% of errors), while 95 utterances (6% of errors) did not include conditionals at all. The remaining 331 utterances (23% of errors) contained accurately produced target structures but were erroneous in terms of contextual appropriateness. These utterances were grammatically correct but contextually inappropriate, failing to convey the intended meaning or fitting the situational context described in the task. Therefore, they were not included in the analysis. It's important to note that uptake analysis typically focuses on learner responses following corrective feedback. In this context, the 1042 error instances are the relevant data for examining uptake patterns. The initial correct responses, while important for understanding overall participant performance, are not directly related to uptake as traditionally defined in the literature (see Nassaji & Kartchava, 2021).

Of all 1042 utterances including erroneous conditionals, 448 (43%) were treated with reformulations in the form of recasts in the reformulation group, 594 (57%) were treated with elicitations in the form of clarification requests in the elicitation group. A Chi-Square test of independence was conducted to determine if the difference in the number of errors treated with reformulations and elicitations was statistically significant. The analysis did not reveal a significant difference, $\chi 2$ (2, N = 1042) = 0,46, $p > .05$. This finding does not indicate an inherent preference for or more frequent use of elicitations over reformulations in naturalistic settings. Rather, it reflects the controlled nature of the experimental design, where instructors were required to provide a single type of oral corrective OCF strategy in accordance with their assigned group. The observed difference in the number of errors treated with each feedback type, while not statistically significant, may be attributed to several factors. One possible explanation could be related to individual differences among learners, particularly in their ability to handle the demands of task. Although proficiency level was controlled for in the study, subtle variations in learners' linguistic competence, cognitive processing abilities, or familiarity with different feedback types could have influenced their production of erroneous utterances.

When the erroneous utterances from both experimental groups were analyzed with reference to learner uptake, it was observed that of the 448 utterances that received reformulations, 134 (30%) resulted in uptake attempts. On the other hand, 362 (61%) of the 594 utterances receiving elicitations resulted in uptake attempts, and this difference was measured to be significant: $\chi 2$ (2, N = 1042) = 204,84, $p < .05$), as indicated by the Chi-Square test. This indicates that learners were significantly more likely to attempt to correct their errors when provided with elicitation compared to reformulation. Elicitations, by their design, encourage learners to produce the correct form themselves, which may lead to a greater number of attempts at correction. This feedback type effectively prompts learners to engage cognitively with their errors, potentially leading to increased awareness of their linguistic output. In contrast, reformulations provide the correct form directly, which may not always elicit an immediate response from learners, as they might perceive the recast as a continuation of the conversation rather than a prompt for self-correction. Therefore, this finding should also be interpreted in conjunction with the subsequent analysis of uptake quality, which reveals important differences in the success of learner repairs following each feedback type.

The analysis of uptake success revealed a stark contrast between the two feedback types. Of the 134 uptake attempts following reformulations, 109 (81%) resulted in partially or fully successful corrections. In sharp contrast, only 54 (15%) of the 362 uptake attempts following elicitations led to such successful repairs. This significant difference ($\chi 2$ (2, N = 496) = 157,57, $p < .001$) is further illustrated in Table 2. The data clearly indicate that reformulations in the form of recasts were far more effective at leading to successful learner uptake with satisfactory repair and modifications in the original erroneous utterances. On the other hand, elicitations in the form of clarification requests were more effective at prompting uptake attempts, not necessarily resulting in successful repair.

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics for the frequency of errors and learner uptake*

	Target Structure with Errors	Uptake Attempts	Successful or Partly-Successful Uptake	Unsuccessful uptake
Reformulations	448	134	109	25
Elicitations	594	362	54	308
Total	1042	496	163	333

As for the pre/post-test performance, means and standard deviations were displayed in Table 3 below. The scores of three groups from the pretest were subjected to a one-way ANOVA and indicated no significant difference F (2, 59) = .067, p = .884. In contrast, the immediate posttest and delayed posttest results yielded a significant difference with F (2, 59) = 7.69, $p < .001$ and F (2, 59) = 5.32, $p < .05$, respectively. The effect sizes, calculated using of partial eta-squared (η_p^2), were .31 for the immediate posttest and .18 for the delayed posttest, suggesting large and medium effect sizes, respectively, based on Cohen's (1988) benchmarks.

Table 3. *Means and standard deviations for the pretest-post-test results*

	Pretest		Immediate Posttest		Delayed Posttest	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Reformulation	5,79	5,67	15,28	6,61	13,84	6,57
Elicitation	5,51	4,40	8,47	5,01	8,87	5,40
Control	5,25	5,19	6,33	5,71	6,23	6,94
Total	5,52	5,47	10,70	6,63	9,31	6,79

To investigate the potential mediating role of proficiency and the type of OCF strategy, a two-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted. Proficiency and feedback strategy were treated as between-group factors, while time (pretest, immediate posttest, delayed posttest) served as the within-group factor. The analysis revealed a significant main effect for time, $F(2, 108) = 27.21$, $p < .001$, indicating overall improvement in performance from the pretest to the delayed posttest, irrespective of the OCF strategy. A significant main effect for feedback strategy was also observed, $F(2, 54) = 5.07$, $p = .05$, suggesting differences in performance across the reformulation, elicitation, and control groups. Furthermore, a significant time-by-group interaction emerged, $F(4, 108) = 11.52$, $p < .001$, indicating that the effect of OCF strategy on performance varied across the testing sessions. Effect sizes, calculated using partial eta-squared (η_p^2) were large for time ($\eta_p^2 = .40$) and the time-by-group interaction ($\eta_p^2 = .30$), and medium for feedback strategy ($\eta_p^2 = .13$) based on Cohen's (1988) benchmarks.

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons were performed to examine the effects of type of feedback over time using the Bonferroni correction to adjust for multiple comparisons. On the immediate posttest, the reformulations group performed significantly better than both the elicitations group ($p < .05$) and the control group ($p < .01$). The difference between the elicitations and control groups was not statistically significant ($p = .611$) on the immediate posttest. The analysis on the posttest results indicated that while the reformulations group significantly outperformed the control group ($p < .001$), there was no significant difference between the reformulations group and elicitations group ($p = .541$). No significant difference was observed between the elicitations group and the control group on the delayed posttest ($p = .873$). It is important to note that no corrective feedback was provided during the administration of the pretest, immediate posttest, or delayed posttest. Therefore, the significant differences observed between groups on the posttests reflect the sustained effects of the different feedback types provided during the treatment phase, rather than a simple repetition effect. The results of the pairwise comparisons are summarized in Table 4 below.

Table 4. *Post-Hoc pairwise comparisons of feedback types (Bonferroni-Correction)*

Comparison	Immediate posttest (p-value)	significance level	delayed posttest (p-value)	significance level
Reformulations vs. Control	.002	Yes	.000	Yes
Reformulations vs. Elicitations	.021	Yes	.541	No
Elicitations vs. Control	.611	No	.873	No

To explore the mediating role of proficiency, pairwise comparisons were conducted separately for B2 and B1-level learners. The results of these comparisons, presented in Table 5 below, indicate that among B2-level learners, the reformulations group demonstrated a significant advantage over both the elicitations group ($p < .05$) and the control group ($p < .001$) on the immediate posttest. This pattern persisted on the delayed posttest, with the reformulations group again outperforming the elicitations group ($p < .05$) and control group ($p < .001$). In contrast, among B1 learners, the reformulations group performed better than the elicitations and the control group on both posttests, but these differences were not statistically significant. It is interesting to note that the elicitations group did not show a significant difference in performance compared to the control group at either proficiency level on either posttest. While these findings suggest that proficiency level may play a mediating role, with B2 learners exhibiting greater benefits from reformulations, the observed trend of greater benefit from reformulations warrants further investigation, as the comparisons for B1-level learners did not reach statistical significance.

Table 5. *Post-Hoc pairwise comparisons of feedback types within proficiency levels (Bonferroni-correction)*

Level	Comparison	Immediate posttest (p-value)	significance level	delayed posttest (p-value)	significance level
B2	Reformulations vs. Control	.000	Significant	.000	Significant
	Reformulations vs. Elicitations	.013	Significant	.039	Significant
	Elicitations vs. Control	.352	Not Significant	.415	Not Significant
B1	Reformulations vs. Control	.071	Not Significant	.082	Not Significant
	Reformulations vs. Elicitations	.089	Not Significant	.128	Not Significant
	Elicitations vs. Control	.484	Not Significant	.621	Not Significant

5. Discussion

This study explored the differential effects of reformulations and elicitations on the acquisition and accurate use of English past counterfactual conditionals by Turkish EFL learners. Two primary measures were employed to examine these effects: (1) immediate learner uptake during an oral production task, and (2) pretest-post-test oral production tasks assessing learners' ability to accurately produce the target structure in new contexts. The first research question focused on whether reformulations and elicitations differentially affected learner uptake. The analysis revealed distinct patterns for these two types of OCF strategies. Reformulations, operationalized as recasts, resulted in a significantly greater number of successful corrections, indicating their efficacy in facilitating immediate and accurate self-repair of the complex linguistic form. Elicitations, on the other hand, while prompting a significantly greater number of correction attempts, did not lead to a comparable level of successful uptake. This suggests that while elicitations may effectively encourage learners to respond and engage with their errors, they may not be as effective as recasts in guiding them toward accurate production of the target structure. This finding aligns with previous

research indicating that the efficacy of feedback is not solely determined by whether it elicits a response, but also by the quality and accuracy of that response (Nassaji, 2011).

The second research question examined whether reformulations and elicitations differentially affected learners' performance on the pre/post-test oral production tasks. The analysis revealed that the participants who received reformulations during the treatment performed significantly better than the control group on both the immediate and delayed post-tests. While the reformulation group exhibited an immediate advantage due to direct exposure to the correct form during the treatment phase, this advantage does not fully explain the significant and sustained gains observed on both the immediate and delayed post-tests. The significant differences in performance on these tests, where no feedback was provided, underscores the durable effect of reformulations in facilitating the acquisition and accurate production of the target structure, even in new contexts and after a delay. Indeed, as argued by Nassaji and Kartchava (2017), "the durability of the effects of feedback is an important theoretical and pedagogical issue" (p. 179), and several studies have, in fact, documented the long-term benefits of reformulations, even in cases where immediate gains are not readily apparent. Moreover, on the immediate post-test, the reformulation group also outperformed the elicitation group, highlighting the relative advantage of providing the correct form directly, especially for immediate gains. In contrast, the elicitation group did not significantly outperform the control group on either post-test, suggesting that elicitation alone may not be sufficient to promote significant learning or accurate production of the complex target structure.

The third research question investigated whether language proficiency mediated the differential effects of reformulations and elicitations. The data revealed a significant interaction between proficiency level and feedback type. Specifically, among B2-level learners, the reformulation group exhibited substantially greater gains than the elicitation group. However, this pattern was not observed among the B1-level learners, for whom the difference between the reformulation and elicitation groups was not statistically significant. These results collectively underscore the importance of considering learners' proficiency level when designing and implementing OCF strategies.

The findings, which indicate greater benefits for reformulations in the form of recasts, are consistent with previous research demonstrating the facilitative role of reformulations in L2 development (e.g., Loewen & Philp, 2006; Lyster & Mori, 2006; Saito & Lyster, 2011). A key advantage of recasts lies in their dual provision of both positive and negative evidence: positive evidence through modelling the correct linguistic form, and negative evidence by implicitly signalling the mismatch between learner output and target language through the juxtaposition of incorrect and correct forms. While elicitations can effectively signal the need for correction (negative evidence), they do not provide learners with models of correct usage (positive evidence). This distinction becomes particularly significant when considering that the current findings contrast with some previous studies reporting advantages for elicitations over reformulations (e.g., Ammar & Spada, 2006; Lyster, 2004). However, these earlier studies typically combined various forms of elicitations with explicit instruction on the target structure, potentially amplifying their effectiveness. The present study's more controlled design, focusing on single type of reformulations and elicitations without explicit instruction, allows for a clearer examination of the feedback types' inherent effects.

The complexity of English past counterfactual conditionals, the target structure in this study, likely played a crucial role in the observed outcomes. Unlike simpler structures such as

the English past tense examined in previous research (e.g., Ammar & Spada, 2006; Yang & Lyster, 2010), counterfactual conditionals present significant syntactic and semantic challenges (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999), requiring a higher degree of explicit knowledge for successful production. This complexity particularly affects the efficacy of elicitations, which rely on learners' ability to self-correct. When learners lack sufficient explicit knowledge of such complex structures, the mere prompting for output through elicitations may not facilitate improved accuracy (Long, 2007). The greater effectiveness of the reformulation group in achieving successful uptake and modifications can be attributed to recasts' comprehensive feedback approach: they not only highlight discrepancies between learner output and target forms but also provide clear models for learners to emulate. (Long, 1996; Nassaji & Kartchava, 2017). This combination proves especially valuable for complex structures where learners may not possess adequate linguistic resources to self-correct effectively based solely on negative evidence (Doughty, 2001; Lyster et al., 2013).

The results also demonstrated a significant mediating role for language proficiency, particularly in the case of reformulations. The differential effects of reformulations were notably more pronounced for higher-proficiency learners, with B2-level participants showing significantly greater gains from reformulations compared to B1-level participants. Interestingly, this proficiency-based difference was not observed for elicitations. A clear pattern emerged where reformulations produced significantly better results than elicitations among higher-proficiency learners, while no such significant difference was found among lower-proficiency learners. This suggests that B1-level participants did not benefit from reformulations to the same extent as their B2-level counterparts. The enhanced effectiveness of reformulations for higher-proficiency learners may be attributed to their increased developmental readiness; as learners achieve higher levels of proficiency in the target language, they appear better equipped to benefit from reformulations, having developed the necessary linguistic foundation to effectively process and incorporate this type of feedback (see Pawlak, 2021).

The observed findings regarding the mediating role of proficiency present an interesting contrast with Ammar and Spada's (2006) research, which found that higher-proficiency learners benefited equally from both elicitations and reformulations, while lower-proficiency learners showed greater benefits from elicitations than reformulations. However, the present findings align more closely with Nassaji's (2019) results, which documented greater benefits from reformulations for high-proficiency learners in their acquisition of English relative clauses. This apparent discrepancy in findings might be explained by examining the varying degrees of explicitness in the OCF types employed across these studies. Notably, Ammar and Spada (2006) compared implicit reformulations with various forms of elicitations, many of which were more explicit in nature. The present study's findings suggest that learners with higher proficiency levels are better positioned to benefit from reformulations precisely because they possess sufficient linguistic knowledge to recognize and interpret these implicit forms of feedback. The relationship between proficiency and feedback effectiveness appears to be particularly pronounced with implicit feedback types, as supported by Nassaji (2010), who found that proficiency level significantly mediated learning from implicit feedback but not from explicit forms. This suggests that while higher-proficiency learners may be better equipped to benefit from the subtle cues provided in implicit reformulations, the effectiveness of explicit feedback may be less dependent on proficiency level.

The sustained benefits of reformulations observed in the delayed post-test corroborate previous research documenting the extended effects of implicit feedback (Ellis et al., 2006; Li, 2013; Loewen & Nabei, 2007, Nassaji, 2019). Li's (2010) meta-analysis further supports this finding, demonstrating that implicit feedback, such as the reformulations used in this study, tends to produce stronger effects on delayed measures. This pattern may be attributed to two key factors: First, while implicit feedback like reformulations may initially be less noticeable than explicit feedback (Schmidt, 1990), their effectiveness appears to be enhanced when learners successfully notice their corrective intent (Nassaji, 2019). This aligns with Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis, which posits that conscious attention to linguistic features is crucial for L2 learning. In the present study, the intensive, focused nature of the feedback—targeting a single linguistic construction—may have increased the salience of the reformulations, making them more noticeable to learners despite their implicit nature (Doughty & Williams, 1998). This enhanced noticeability, combined with the implicit learning mechanisms activated by reformulations, appears to promote more lasting learning outcomes (Long, 1996; Mackey & Goo, 2007). Second, the systematic and repeated exposure to reformulations focusing on a specific language feature likely contributed to their effectiveness, supporting previous research on the benefits of intensive OCF (Doughty, 2001; Kamiya, 2015; Mackey & Goo, 2007).

The present study also contributed to the strand of investigations comparing reformulations and elicitations with reference to the relevance for L2 classroom setting as the study was an experimental one administered outside the natural setting of an instructional environment. As a laboratory-based investigation, the present research examined the impacts of predetermined feedback types focusing exclusively on a designated linguistic form. It can be argued that this might differ from what actually occurs in language classrooms where teachers provide feedback if needed in response to erroneous utterances of various linguistic structures. Nonetheless, it is also common for teachers to provide feedback selectively when they focus on specific error types depending on the objective of the task/lesson. Therefore, the results of the study could be taken to be relevant and applicable for selectively focused feedback provided in classroom contexts. In a similar vein, this also leads to the discussion of the outcome of the study with regard to its experimental nature. Unlike naturalistic classroom research where it is fairly challenging to control for the confounding variables inherent in an intact classroom environment, experimental research frequently encompasses dyadic interactions which are potentially free from a wide variety of distractions and most of the linguistic issues occurring in classrooms (Mackey & Goo, 2007). Thus, in cases where the effects of an instructional intervention (e.g., OCF types) is aimed to be systematically explored with a strict control of the confounding variables, it can be helpful to conduct laboratory-based experimental research.

Lastly, while the dyadic nature of this study might raise questions about its generalizability to whole-classroom settings, where the predominant interaction pattern is teacher-whole class, the findings remain relevant for L2 instruction. Although classroom interactions often involve larger groups, one-to-one exchanges constitute an important component of language teaching practice. Research has documented that teachers regularly provide OCF during both individual interactions and small-group work (Li & Vuono, 2019). Therefore, understanding the effectiveness of different feedback strategies in dyadic contexts can inform pedagogical

practices across various instructional settings, from one-on-one teacher-student interactions to small-group activities within the broader classroom environment.

6. Conclusion

Teaching practices prioritizing meaning along with opportunities to focus on language forms are strongly supported by the mainstream second language theory and research as language teaching professionals are becoming more and more aware of how crucial it is to integrate focused attention to grammatical features or linguistic forms within meaningful communication. In this respect, OCF strategies such as reformulations and elicitations have come forward as convenient procedures to achieve form-meaning connections during meaning-based interactions. The majority of the previous work comparing these OCF strategies, especially those reporting favourable results for elicitations have accompanied OCF with explicit instruction. In this study the effects of reformulations and elicitations were examined with a research design attempting to control for the impact of explicit instruction. The findings affirmed that reformulations have a facilitative role in the L2 learning process. It is also evidenced that reformulations could be more helpful than elicitations for L2 learners, at least for the use of complex linguistic forms similar to the one examined in the present study. It might be argued that elicitations offer affordances for learners to develop competency in L2 when they have explicit knowledge of the structure in question or when elicitations are provided in conjunction with explicit instruction. On the other hand, it appears that reformulations also afford opportunities to facilitate learning of linguistic forms that are novel to learners or about which learners lack sufficient explicit knowledge as reformulations provide both negative and positive evidence. This suggests that reformulations not only present learners with the accurate form of the target structure (positive evidence) but also might facilitate learners' noticing of how their erroneous utterances deviate from the actual target structure (negative evidence). It should be acknowledged, however, that further investigations are necessary to evaluate the factors accounting for the effectiveness of these OCF strategies as a number of variables could impact how effective these strategies could become. Specifically, more research is required to examine the effectiveness of OCF strategies in naturalistic L2 classroom settings controlling for the effects of particular instructional interventions.

7. References

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8. Appendix

Sample Oral Production Test

Source: *https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/education-school-distant-learning-concept-happy-2168470557*

Source: *https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/children-education-learning-concept-sad-student-1518423047*

Rachel had an exam, but she didn't study for it and instead she played games on her tablet. Unfortunately, she failed the exam and she regretted it.

What would Rachel say in this situation? Complete the following sentence:

If I _____

Source: *https://www.shutterstock.com/tr/image-photo/square-ball-432411532*

Source: *https://www.shutterstock.com/tr/image-photo/male-unhappy-soccer-football-player-palm-1071709910*

Our team did not play very well yesterday, so we could not win the game. Roberto missed a great opportunity and did not take an easy chance.

What would the fans say in this situation? Complete the following sentence:

If Roberto_____

More Sample Situations and Target Sentences

Situation 1
[Image 1: Empty wallet, Image 2: New smartphone in store display]
Zeynep couldn't buy the new phone she wanted because she didn't save enough money.

What would Zeynep say in this situation? Complete the following sentence:
If I *had saved enough money, I would have bought the new phone.*

Situation 2
[Image 1: Broken laptop, Image 2: No backup files]
Burak didn't back up his files and lost all his work when his computer crashed.

What would Burak say in this situation? Complete the following sentence:
If I *had backed up my files, I wouldn't have lost all my work.*

Situation 3
[Image 1: Student sleeping at desk, Image 2: Empty classroom]
Ali missed his morning class because he overslept and didn't hear his alarm.

What would Ali say in this situation? Complete the following sentence:
If I *hadn't overslept, I wouldn't have missed my morning class.*

Situation 4
[Image 1: Empty concert venue, Image 2: Sold out sign]
Can forgot to book concert tickets in advance and couldn't attend the show.

What would Can say in this situation? Complete the following sentence:
If I *had booked the concert tickets in advance, I would have attended the show.*

Situation 5
[Image 1: Student looking confused in a lecture, Image 2: Same student sleeping in bed]
Derya couldn't understand the lecture because she skipped the previous class.

What would Derya say in this situation? Complete the following sentence:
If I *had attended the previous class, I would have understood the lecture.*