

Exploring the Preferred Application of Oral Corrective Feedback in ESL Classroom Settings

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ABSTRACT

In a language classroom, learners are constantly working towards achieving native-like proficiency thus making them vulnerable to errors. Educators play a crucial role as feedback providers, employing various strategies to enhance learning outcomes especially when language errors are noticed or being made. Corrective feedback, in particular, stands out as an impactful strategy in providing learners feedback in ESL learning. There are six distinct types of Oral Corrective Feedback: Explicit Correction, Recast, Clarification Request, Metalinguistic Clues, Elicitation and Repetition. This research utilised a purposive sampling method tested on 340 ESL students from a local public university. It was found out that Explicit Correction has the highest mean compared to other Oral Corrective Feedback types. Therefore, based on this research, it can be concluded that Explicit Correction is the most preferred form of feedback within the ESL classroom settings. This discovery emphasizes the importance of utilising specific feedback approaches to enhance language learning experiences.

Keywords: Feedback; Corrective Feedback; Oral Corrective Feedback; ESL classroom; ESL learners

INTRODUCTION

In any language learning classroom there exist various types of interactions between the individuals involved and learners are usually expected to produce the language as native-like as possible [1]. According to [2], due to such expectations from the learners, they are presented with the state of constantly being at high risk of producing errors. In some cases, it might not entirely be noticeable by the learners themselves, therefore, when errors are recognised during or in between interactions, educators should provide a type of response to the learners' errors and that can be made available to them through corrective feedback.

In the past, [3] defined corrective feedback as treatments of errors, which directs towards the teachers or educators to take action as the error detector and attempts in informing learners on mistakes made. [4] on the other hand specifies corrective feedback as contribution of input or idea offered to learners which could direct to appropriate output. Corrective feedback may be referred to as negative feedback, negotiated help or error correction. Based on [5], there are 6 types of Oral Corrective Feedback (OCF) which are similarly reflected by [6] and [7]. The types of Oral Corrective Feedback are *Explicit Correction*, *Recast*, *Clarification Request*, *Metalinguistic Clues*, *Elicitation* and *Repetition*. Below are the definitions of each type in the language learning context;

1. **Explicit correction:** Teacher indicates clearly of learners' incorrect use of words and the teacher provides the accurate form.
2. **Recast:** Without directly indicating that the learners' utterance was incorrect, the teacher implicitly reformulates the learners' error, or provides the correction.
3. **Clarification request:** By using the phrase like 'Excuse me?' or 'I beg your pardon?' or 'Can you repeat?' or just as simple as 'I don't understand', the teacher indicates that the message has not been understood or that the learners' utterance contained some kind of mistake and that a repetition or a

reformulation is required.

4. **Metalinguistic clues:** Without providing the correct form, the teacher positions some questions or provides comments or information related to the formation of the learners' utterance.
5. **Elicitation:** The teacher directly elicits the correct form from the learner by asking questions, by pausing to allow the learners to complete the teacher's utterance or by asking learners to reformulate the utterance. Elicitation questions differ from questions that are defined as metalinguistic clues in that they require more than a yes or no response.
6. **Repetition:** The teacher repeats the learners' error and adjusts intonation to draw the learners' attention to the error made.

The different types of corrective feedback is crucial to be understood by language instructors as providing them is one of the many methods for influential learning [8]. It was similarly reflected in a more recent study by [9] mentioning that oral corrective feedback plays a crucial role in language acquisition within instructional settings hence acknowledging feedback to be deemed powerful if it is executed correctly [10]. Corrective feedback comes in both oral or written forms. A considerable amount of attention had been given towards both oral and written corrective feedback because of their importance in the development of theories and had put a mark on L2 pedagogy [11]. In recent years, [12] mentioned that both oral corrective feedback (OCF) and written corrective feedback have demonstrated efficacy in fostering the second language (L2) development of learners.

In Malaysia, English language is taught as the second language and in learning a language that is different from their own mother tongue, the learners might encounter several setbacks such as being unable to acquire the language beyond comprehension as well as unable to manage the strategies well in the acquisition and production of the language. This could be due to reasons that learners are not being given enough opportunities to engage with the language beyond their language classrooms.

Teachers or language educators are known as a guide or as an 'agent' or as a medium for learners to have as a platform for inquiry in assisting them being informed on errors made throughout their production of language. Teachers are there to intervene in between or after verbal interactions to provide corrections towards mistakes made that learners are not aware of. [13] mentioned that teachers are advised not to provide corrections while the learners are speaking and interrupt the speech flow even when the teachers perceive that it is necessary but that is dependent on the how and what type of feedback is being given to the learners. As a result, the act of providing the intervention or feedback can either be positively or negatively perceived by the learners despite the purpose of such intervention is to prevent fossilisation of error ([4]; [14]; [15]; [16]). In other words, teachers and language educators are to provide feedback in facilitating understanding towards correctness of language use to promote motivation and avoid mismatches.

A. Problem Statement

[17] claimed that for years, many researchers have argued on the role and usefulness of corrective feedback on whether it presents a significant importance towards a learner's language development in relation to L2 learning and instructions while there are others claiming that it is necessary for a successful L2 acquisition. There are also debates regarding the method of learning that provide opportunities for learners to participate in classroom interactions. In other words, the methods of teaching should comprise learners learning or acquiring the language with sufficient opportunities to use the language with the intention to enhance their communicative ability.

The problem that could come from these claims is, not every teaching and learning period or methods used would be able to provide enough opportunities that could cater to the number of learners present in a classroom. There are limitations that come with the claims. As insufficient opportunities for participation are provided, not all learners are able to express themselves in being able to be involved in language classroom interactions as required in moving towards the learners' language learning development. As opportunities decrease, the less the learners would be able to practise the usage of the language and without it, the learners would not be able to know or make aware when or if there are errors in their utterances. Hence, leading to the lack of knowledge on

Oral Corrective Feedback to be implemented and being necessary for learning.

Receiving feedback can be daunting for non-native English speakers. Based on the claims made and on past studies available on the mention of corrective feedback, especially on oral corrective feedback and its relation to language learners, it showed that although there are studies that match the criteria, there are still gaps that exist within the area.

Gaps in literature were observed through past studies which seemed appropriate for the researcher to attempt to fill with the current study. In a study by [12], there present the lack of insights of students' preferences regarding Oral Corrective Feedback (OCF). Studies by [18] and [19] showed a similar type of study conducted on smaller sample size in exhibiting the OCF preferences among learners thus a gap requiring exposure towards a bigger sample size is needed to be done. Another study by [20] in relation to OCF showed that the teachers of EFL, prefer Elicitation, Repetition and Recast hence, indicating the need for further exploration regarding the perspective of OCF especially towards ESL learners in the Malaysian context.

B. Research Objective

The objective of this study is;

To identify the preferred type(s) of Oral Corrective Feedback used in ESL classroom settings.

C. Research Question

This study sought to answer the research question as follow;

Which is the preferred type(s) of Oral Corrective Feedback used in ESL classroom settings?

D. Significance of Study

This study aimed to find out in detail the preferred type(s) of oral corrective feedback being applied in the ESL classroom taken at a tertiary level in one of Malaysia's public universities. The study of corrective feedback can be enhanced by taking multiple perspectives hence, it was important for the researcher to attempt a study on the issue due to the significance it will provide [21].

English language teachers or educators may benefit from this study as their awareness would be increased regarding the preferred type(s) of oral corrective feedback that are available for them to apply within their own classrooms. The matter could avoid mismatches between teachers' and learners' interpretations of error correction [22].

The study would shed some light on the purpose of error corrections and learners would be able to have a better distinction towards noticing the gaps between what they produced with the intended production, and thus improve their language accuracy [23]. Hence, produce a sense of reflection in which the learners would be able to be cooperative towards a better learning and not be demotivated or become uninterested in getting involved in other language learning interactions when they know that the teachers would comment if there were language mistakes made. Learners will also be able to reflect and perceive that feedback is beneficial for their process of learning and use it to their advantage to improve on their language skills.

E. Limitations of Study

This study has the limitation of methods. The study only emphasised on descriptive analysis of data thus only providing the general overview of ESL learners' perception of preferred type(s) oral corrective feedback. Limitation of the study was also directed to the amount of sample size used which was only 340 ESL learners from a specific learning curriculum from a specific public university. The learners came from different types of backgrounds thus the results are taken into consideration only for the purpose of this study and not able to be generalised towards the whole community of ESL learners throughout other learning environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Oral Corrective Feedback

The effectiveness of OCF on second language (L2) learning has been the subject of debate, particularly concerning the identification of the ideal strategy. A recent study by [24] has addressed that the discrepancies between instructors' and learners' preference on OCF is one of the main factors that could hamper language learning. However, that view was challenged by [25] where the study reveals that OCF can be effective and successful given the positive outlook of instructors upon the students and their pedagogical methods. In other words, the uptake of OCF among students is very much dependent on the instructors' attitudes towards the learners, pedagogical settings and implementation of OCF.

Another recent study by [12] identified the mismatch between instructors' and students' of Vietnamese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) course's preference in receiving oral corrective feedback. While both highly valued the efficacy of feedback, students were more inclined towards receiving prompt feedback which became a factor of concern among the instructors. [12] highlighted that the instructors positioned students' emotional state highly by ensuring that OCF given did not disrupt their positive attitudes about learning. Therefore, this study underscores the importance of delineating a middle ground to address the mismatches in preferences within the context of OCF.

A rather similar study involving EFL settings by [20] which investigated Taif's university teachers' perception of OCF on their students. Tested on 57 teachers, the result indicated that among the highest preferences of OCF were elicitation, repetition and recasting [20]. It was further justified by the participants that these OCF are the most effective on the students' language learning performance. While this study addresses a notable gap by examining instructors' views on OCF, it was only focused and limited on instructors in EFL classrooms. Hence, a more comprehensive investigation on a broader spectrum of language learning classes is imperative to further devise a more universally applicable and efficient OCF.

B. Language Learners and Oral Corrective Feedback

Recent studies have elucidated and accessed how students rate and perceive OCF in classroom settings. It was retrieved that several factors such as proficiency levels and ethnic backgrounds affected students' acceptance of the different types of OCF. This observation is substantiated by a study done by [18] who have discovered that 150 students consisting of Malay, Chinese and Indian students of different proficiency levels exhibit distinct preferences of OCF in language learning. By utilising a survey by [26], Malay and Indians of lower proficiency levels viewed constant OCF more favourably than Chinese students. This means that they do not mind receiving continuous feedback on all errors made during learning sessions. However, in general, lower proficiency students viewed OCF more positively than higher proficiency students.

In reflection to that, [19] have similar objectives in unfolding the views of 82 ESL or EFL students on OCF and their efficacies. Interestingly, this study uncovers that students' proficiency levels were not the only factor that impacted their outlook on being corrected in classrooms. Background knowledge on pronunciation, grammar and accent of the language learnt plays an important role in cultivating agreements and disagreements among the students [19]. This finding is consistent with what was discovered by [27] which indicated that learners' personality (e.g., introvert or extrovert) is an important aspect in second language (L2) learning, in which teachers may adjust OCF according to individuals. In short, these investigations are vital to not only understand the learners' uptake on OCF and the factors that aid their effectiveness. While past studies have uncovered better understanding on perception and systematic use of OCF, a persistent limitation resides in the small sample sizes. Therefore, this study hopes to reveal ESL learners' perceptions on OCF within a larger population to curate best practices for teaching and learning especially in language classroom settings.

C. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis which has been mentioned when discussing corrective feedback. The noticing hypothesis opens up a new understanding on the matter as for investigating the

repercussion of the implementation of corrective feedback as it involves interaction. Therefore, for meaningful interaction to take place, understanding one's role in the situation one is being put in requires noticing one's surroundings, including what one says, does not say, mistakes made and how to move oneself forward from receiving feedback.

Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis is claimed to be important in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) along with attention and both can be achieved through interactions which exist in the process of learning through teacher-learners exchanges. Thus, this showcases a promising chance that learning through noticing is being developed. According to [28], input will not be reflected as intake for language learners unless the mistakes or corrections are consciously made aware to them, hence the noticing. Simply put, the input has to be registered to the language user for noticing to happen.

In another study by [29], the researcher highlighted the assertion made by [28] - that the Noticing Hypothesis is both "necessary and sufficient" for learners to transform input into intake. In other words, a learner's progress in acquiring a language cannot start until they become aware of the linguistic features present in the input. [29] then concluded that noticing is recognized as a crucial factor that connects input with output and bridges the gap between implicit and explicit learning. This further confirms that the prerequisites to language acquisition involves noticing mistakes and errors made, which can assist language instructors to strategically utilise the right type of corrective feedback in assisting learners.

While [28] was confronted with several arguments with regards to its heavy reliance on learners' acknowledgement between their grammar proficiency and the targeted grammar production, this research aims to evaluate students' perception on the types of OCF that they prefer best. Understanding these preferences highlights the continued significance of individual awareness in language acquisition, as students' preferred OCF reflects their self-assessed language proficiency and how they perceive their progress in mastering the language.

METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The study employed a descriptive study design that emphasised on measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of collected data through polls, questionnaires, and surveys. The chosen method was sufficient for the study because [30] explained on quantitative method focusing on numerical data and generalising it across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon. The method benefitted the researcher by being able to collect sufficient information required in the attempt to generalise and report on a particular phenomenon based on the data collected towards the selected population. This study focused on implementing surveys and measured using a set of questionnaires.

B. Population and Sampling Procedure

The population selected for this study was the ESL learners from Centre of Advancement Language Competence (CALC), UPM. The selection for samples for the current study was determined through purposive sampling. According to [31], purposive sampling is a sampling technique that relies on researcher's own judgement when members of a population is chosen in participating in a study.

Purposive sampling can be categorised into 6 types and the current study focused on homogenous sampling that focused on one particular subgroup which all the sample members are of a similar trait – ESL Learners that were enrolled in the credited subject (Academic Interaction and Presentation) offered at Centre of Advancement of Language Competence (CALC).

The total population of ESL learners from the Academic Interaction and Presentation course came to about 2972. The total sample size of the study was determined through a calculation using [32], "Determining Sample Size for Research Activity". After the calculation of the required sample size, the researcher rounded off the number to 340 samples based on [32]. To achieve the intended number of samples suitable for the study, the researcher used convenience sampling. The following shows how the sample size was calculated if we put the numbers into

the formula;

$$s = 3.841 * 2972 * 0.5 * (1-0.5) / (0.05)^2 (2971) + 3.841 (0.5) (0.5)$$

$$s = 340.28$$

C. Description of Instrument and Scoring, and Validity and Reliability of Instrument

A set of questionnaires were used as the instrument for this study. The results gathered from the questionnaires assisted the researcher in analysis of data. The instrument consisted of 2 sections that included learners' demographic background in section A and the presence of different types of teacher corrective feedback within the classroom in section B.

Section A was constructed with basic questions in gaining the learners' background information and level of interest in the language. The construction of the questionnaire for section B was adapted from a study conducted by [33] which did a study on Students' Perceptions of Corrective Feedback. It was taken into consideration because of the straightforwardness of the questions.

The questions asked managed to incorporate the reply using all six different types of corrective feedback. Additional questions were inserted and were based on the definitions of oral corrective feedback by [6] and [7] with the intention to provide further added input on what needed to be measured.

The scoring type for the current study was finalised using the four-point Likert-type scale. Items are positively stated and are fixed at a range of 0 to 3 which translate to 0 (Never), 1 (Seldom), 2 (Sometimes) and 3 (Always). The Four-point Likert scale used provided the researcher with a more precise data input for measuring frequency. Dual-language approach was used in the questionnaires.

To gain validity of the instrument, an expert was approached in getting the content validity. The validator is acknowledged as an expert in the field of teaching. Reliability of instrument was done after achieving validation of instrument. The reliability of the instrument was tested through Alpha Coefficient or known as Cronbach alpha calculation. The results Alpha Coefficient for Section B came to 0.921. For an instrument to be reliable, it has to reach at least .70 coefficient value. As the results showed a higher number than .70, it is concluded that the instrument is reliable.

D. Procedure for Data Collection

In conducting the study, permissions were needed to be granted before the researcher could administer the intended study to the intended samples. Once permission was granted, to be ethically inclined, the researcher must gain the participants' consent. The information of consent was presented in the set of questionnaires. The researcher was able to distribute the finalised version of the questionnaires to the samples and started the collection of data. The distribution of questionnaires was done by hand and the researcher was involved in the period of answering of the questionnaires. A total number of 340 ESL learners managed to answer the questionnaire and the researcher was able to proceed to analysis of data.

E. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted by means of SPSS version 25. Descriptive analysis was conducted and translated into tables. Section A, the demographic information of the samples is presented and tabulated listing the frequency and percentage. Section B, descriptive analysis is presented in a table to show the frequency, and mean numbers obtained. It was with the intention to use it to answer research question 1.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter reports the findings of this research. The major subheading for this research is reported through descriptive analysis for the one research question - RQ: Which is the preferred type(s) of Oral Corrective Feedback used in ESL classroom settings?

Descriptive analysis was used in analysing the data gathered from Section A (demographic profile) and Section B (types of oral corrective feedback) of the questionnaire for the research question presented in the study. In doing so, the researcher analysed the frequency, mean score, percentages, and standard deviation of the data.

A. SECTION A (Demographic profile)

Table 1: Frequency And Percentage of Participants' Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-20	292	86
21-23	40	12
24-26	8	2
Total:	340	100

Table 1 displays the demographic information of the samples that participated in the study. The results show that the majority (86%) of the samples are between 18-20 years old while 12 percent are between 21-23 years of age and only 2 percent are at 24-26 years of age.

Table 2: Year of Learning English

Years of learning English	Frequency	Percentage (%)
6-11	35	10
More than 11 years	305	90
Total	340	2

Table 2 presents the demographic information of the learners and their years of learning the English language. 90 percent of the learners have more than 11 years of experience in learning the English language while there are 10 percent that have between 6-11 years of English language learning experience.

B. SECTION B (Types of Oral Corrective Feedback)

Table 3: Mean For Types of Oral Corrective Feedback

Types of Oral Corrective Feedback	Mean (m)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Explicit Correction	2.24	0.71
Recast	1.94	0.60
Clarification Request	1.48	0.77
Metalinguistic Clues	1.63	0.71
Elicitation	1.60	0.71
Repetition	1.76	0.70

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation for types of oral corrective feedback. The highest mean is at 2.24 (sd: 0.71) for Explicit Correction. At 1.94 (sd: 0.60) is for Recast, followed by 1.76 (sd: 0.70) for Repetition. At 1.63 (sd: 0.71) is Metalinguistic Clues and at 1.60 (sd: 0.71) is Elicitation. The lowest mean for types of oral corrective feedback is at 1.48 (sd: 0.77) for Clarification Request. The standard deviation values suggest that there is a moderate amount of variability for participants' preferences on these types of feedback.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is clear that Explicit Correction is the most preferred method of corrective feedback among the participants, with Recast coming in second. This current research finding contradicts past studies like [20] which found that EFL learners preferred Elicitation, Repetition, and Recast instead of Explicit Correction for oral feedback. However, when it comes to oral feedback in ESL classrooms, this study's larger sample size (compared to [18] and [19]) reinforces the learners' strong preference for direct and explicit correction by the teachers.

As the findings highlighted the preference for Explicit Correction, it is undeniable that ESL learners would welcome more of a clear and specific feedback from the teachers to identify their mistakes and thus, improve their language performance. This implication is similar to those of [34] in which the learners acknowledged the usefulness of feedback. As learning a second language is indeed a challenging task for the majority of students in Malaysia, supplying them with the corrected version of their language errors will guide them to acknowledge the mistakes and take the responsibility to make amendments in their language learning. Therefore, this directly supports the study's findings that lean towards Explicit Correction that would contribute the most in their learning progress.

Nonetheless, the main aim of feedback is to ensure that the learners' progress or move forward in their learning process. As the study indicates the preferences of types of oral corrective feedback from the learners, it further supports the claim by [35] that having corrective feedback or oral corrective feedback is more towards an advantage rather than not having any corrections at all. Especially in relation to those required to produce the language orally in their language learning period.

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