TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ORAL CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN EFL SPEAKING CLASSES: A CASE AT COLLEGES IN THE MEKONG DELTA, VIETNAM

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Abstract:

Corrective feedback has received much attention in language teaching and learning, including English as a foreign language. However, little research has been done with regard to college teachers' perceptions about this area of interest in speaking language classes. The present study, therefore, focuses on teachers' perceptions about oral corrective feedback and its types at tertiary contexts within a local province of the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. This paper draws on data collected as part of a larger study consisting of questionnaires. The findings indicate that teachers had positive perceptions about oral corrective feedback. However, some considered oral corrective feedback as optional since they were concerned with learners' uptake when provided with corrective feedback. Elicitation was the most favored technique, followed by meta-linguistic feedback. Furthermore, implications are also presented.

Keywords: oral corrective feedback, speaking class, EFL college-school teachers, Mekong Delta

1. Introduction

In EFL situations, responding to learners' speech production is very important; for this purpose, oral corrective feedback is an important apparatus for teachers to deal with learners' oral errors. Drawing from classroom observations and personal communication with teachers of English at tertiary contexts, the authors of this paper realize the need for research into teachers' perceptions towards English oral corrective feedback. Teachers, therefore, are likely to consider changes to and tailor in their instructional approaches and strategies for effective teaching and quality of teaching and learning. Furthermore,

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teachers' perceptions of oral corrective feedback can help themselves as well as their colleagues improve the quality of second language teaching, especially in teaching English speaking. Likewise, a mismatch between teachers' attitudes and expectations and the realities they encounter in the classroom may prevent the improvement in language teaching. In addition, various researchers have carried out lots of topics related to the aspects of using corrective feedback in the world; however, there has been a dearth of research investigating the use of corrective feedback in speaking classes in college setting in my context.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Oral Corrective Feedback
Lyster and Ranta (1997) have described oral corrective feedback as the "strategies" the teachers use to correct learners' errors. A more inclusive and interactional definition of corrective feedback is offered by Lyster and Mori (2006) corrective feedback reflects the ability of the teachers to use feedback moves in a way that keeps up the flow of communication in the classrooms. In other words, this can maintain the interaction in the classroom. What is more, Williams (2001) summarized the importance of research on corrective feedback by saying that its central goal is to ascertain whether corrective feedback promotes L2 learning, and if so, what features of feedback lead to the greatest gains in L2 learning. Additionally, taking oral corrective feedback in the classroom, learners may have the chance to compare their own production with that of another (Ohta, 2001). Interestingly, Sheen (2011) points out that not all corrective feedback occurs because of a communication breakdown; teachers can use it to drawn the learners' attention to form even in those situations where they comprehend each other. This means that corrective feedback can carry negotiation of meaning and negotiation of form as well. It could be generalized that corrective feedback not only helps teachers to determine learners' understanding of what is taught, it also facilitates learners to improve the learning of the target language. Researchers who work out the importance of oral corrective feedback have shared consensus on the necessity of feedback in language teaching as well as learning.

2.2 Types of Oral Corrective Feedback
Lyster and Ranta (1997) identified six different types of corrective feedback which consisting of explicit correction, recast, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation and repetition.

A. Explicit Correction
Explicit correction refers to "*the explicit provision of the correct form*" (Lyster and Ranta, 1997). It means teacher lets students know clearly that they have just made errors in their utterances and the correct forms of errors are presented to the students.

For example,

S: But Nancy didn't stay and the Nancy came.
T: Nancy came, not the Nancy.
S: Nancy came and they met Nancy.
- Recast.

While the first type of corrective feedback, explicit correction, is carried out explicitly, the second type of corrective feedback, recast, is considered as implicit correction. Recast is defined as "*the teacher's reformulation of all part of student's utterance, minus the error*" (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). It means that the teacher implicitly corrects their student's erroneous utterance without indicating that the student has just made an error. The following conversation adopted from Slimani's study (1992) can clarify the characteristics of recast.

For example,

S: I looking for my pen.
T: You are looking for your pen.
- Clarification Request

Clarification requests are the requests teachers use to indicate that students' messages have not been expressed clearly or their utterances contain errors, and that a reformulation is required (Spada & Frohlich, 1995).

For example,

S:…………..
T: Pardon?
S: ………….
- Metalinguistic Feedback

When metalinguistic feedback is used, "comments", "information", or "questions" related to students' utterance are given. The correct form of the error is not provided. However, hints of the error are often indicated in the teacher's feedback. The following conversation can illustrate the current type of corrective feedback. (Lyster and Ranta's study 1997, p.47).

For example,

S: Euhm, le, le éléphant. Le éléphant gronde.
(Uhm, the, the elephant. The elephant growls.)
T: Est-ce que qu'on dit le éléphant?(Do we say the elephant?)
- Elicitation

Elicitation is used to "*directly elicit the correct form from the student*" (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). It means that the correct form of the error is not provided and students have to correct their errors with the teacher's guides. Teachers can elicit their students by three ways: asking open questions, demanding students to reformulate their utterance, and pausing for students to complete the utterance.

For example,

S: He has a long white beard.
T: He has …
S: He has long white beard.

The previous conversation adopted from Safari's study (2013, p.1171) how the first technique to elicit the student's correction. The teacher restarted his student's erroneous utterance and paused right before the error for his student to reformulate. By this way, the student could realize the incorrect part and could make a self-correction.

B. Repetition

When repetition is carried out, only the part with error is repeated and is emphasized by teacher's intonation. It exactly points out the error for students to reformulate. The following conversation adopted from Safari's study (2013) demonstrates the usage of repetition in the classroom.

For example,

S: They telling a story.
T: They telling?
S: A story. They are telling a story.

In general, this current type of corrective feedback requires only the repetition of the error, and it also one of the types that need students to correct the errors themselves.

2.3 Feedback During Speaking Activities

Most students want and expect their teachers to give them feedback on their performance. However, all speaking production should not be dealt with in the same way. Harmer (1991) asserts that the decisions that the teachers make about how to react to students' performance will depend upon the stages of the lesson, the activities, the types of mistake made and the particular students who is making that mistake. If the teachers correct whenever there is a problem, the conversational flow as well as the purpose of the speaking activity will be destroyed (Harmer, 1991). If the students are corrected all the time, they can find this very demotivating and become afraid to speak. They suggest that the teachers should always correct the students' mistakes positively and with encouragement (Baker and Westrup, 2003).

2.4 Related Studies

Capturing individual differences greatly contributes to the effectiveness of corrective feedback; therefore, many researchers have conducted studies about this issue. The results from the recent study of Méndez, E.H., & Cruz, M.R.R. (2012) stated that almost all of the instructors agreed on the need to correct learner's errors in speaking. Correspondingly, corrective feedback has a positive impact on the process of language learning. However, the instructors cannot accept corrective feedback completely. Understanding the corrective feedback perceived by teachers and learners is crucial since their perceptions towards the value of corrective feedback actually helped teachers as well as learners be better in language teaching and learning, particularly in speaking skill. Katayama (2007) used a questionnaire of 5-point Likert-scale to investigate the attitudes of 586 EFL students from six universities located in three different cities in Japan towards classroom oral error correction; their preferences for correction for different types of oral errors; and their preferences for particular correction methods. The results show that the students had strongly positive attitudes towards teacher corrective feedback, and they preferred the way teacher gave the student a hint enabling them to notice the error and self-correct. Tran and Nguyen (2018) carried out to explore teachers' practices of delivering oral corrective feedback on students' speaking performance within a Vietnamese high school context. The participants in this study were two teachers and fifty students at a private secondary school located in a city in the Mekong Delta. The findings indicate that recast was the most frequently used corrective feedback type. However, metalinguistic cue was considered the most successful corrective feedback type in this study because it results in students' repair uptake more than recast and other CF types. The findings of the present study contribute to the CF language teaching literature with regard to students' speaking performance at high schools particularly in Vietnam in several ways.

Review of the existing literature related to corrective feedback and speaking performance reveals that a balance of different corrective feedback types selected in the light of various contextual, linguistic, and cognitive factors. Since the effectiveness of corrective feedback on speaking performance is different across classroom contexts, it evidently necessitates teachers in particular contexts to know what may work best for their learners. Therefore, in order to find out the most effective corrective feedback types in Vietnamese EFL contexts, more studies need to be carried out. For this reason, to bridge this gap, the present study entitled "Teachers' perceptions about oral corrective feedback in EFL speaking classes" is designed to find out the patterns of teachers' oral corrective feedback types and speaking performance in Vietnamese EFL classrooms.

3. Methodology

This study used quantitative approach; specifically, a questionnaire was used to collect information from teachers about their perceptions about EFL corrective feedback in speaking performance. The study was expected to provide the opinions as well as

insights into the issue, and the comparison between the perceptions and practices of the issue.

3.1 Participants

The participants of the study were sixty-two teachers who were teaching speaking to college students at colleges in Soc Trang province. At the time of this study, these teachers had five to 18 years' teaching experience in teaching English at colleges.

Questionnaire was used as an efficient tool to generate straightforward information from participants in social and educational research as noted by Fraenkel et al (2012). For this study, the questionnaire was developed and designed to collect data and answer the research questions regarding teachers' perceptions of corrective feedback and their practice in speaking classes. In addition, online questionnaire using Google form was administered as the main instrument of this study because this research was conducted at the time of outbreak of Coronavirus pandemic as well as conducting online questionnaire was considered as an effective and rapid way to collect data, since it could bring many benefits for researcher including accessing to individuals in distant locations (Garton, Haythornthwaite, and Wellman, 1999; Wellman 1997). Besides, the results could be quickly quantified either by a researcher or through software.

3.2 Designing the Questionnaire

Questionnaire was designed based on Katayama's (2007) & Sheen's (2011) frameworks. The questionnaire consists of three major sections. In each section, the participants were given the options for explaining the reasons for their rating. Three types of item scales were used in constructing all items in the questionnaire. Firstly, I designed the questionnaire by using the Likert scale with the primary concern of making sure that all those items were measuring the same thing. The system of scoring was from one to five; *the highest scale 5 (strongly agree)* and *lowest scale 1 (strongly disagree)*. Secondly, I aimed to design the system of scoring frequency scale which the participants correct learners' oral errors and how often they use techniques of oral corrective feedback. The system of scoring consisted of *(1) never, (2) rarely, (3) sometimes, (4) often,* and *(5) always*. Thirdly, preference scale in which the participants was asked to state their preferences towards oral corrective feedback strategies were also used. The system of scoring included *(1) I dislike it very much, (2) I dislike it, (3) I have no idea, (4) I like it,* and *(5) I like it very much*.

There were three sections in the questionnaire. The first one focused on the participants' demographic information including four questions. In this survey, the participants were asked some questions about *"school's information", "year of teaching English", "age",* as well as *"gender"*. The second section was to ask teachers' general views towards English oral corrective feedback in speaking classes including two subcategories *(1)* teachers' general opinions towards English oral corrective feedback including ten statements, *(2)* technical aspects of corrective feedback on learners' oral errors containing ten statements. In addition, the last section was to ask the teachers' preferences for different techniques used to provide English oral corrective feedback and its frequency

of use. What is more, the questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese and then proof read by five teachers of English who had experienced in doing research in order to ensure its original validity and ease of use. Specifically, I have sent the questionnaire in Vietnamese to those teachers and they returned me in English. Some minor adjustments such as the wording or the use of the Vietnamese equivalents in the translation were made.

4. Results

The results from the questionnaire present participants' views on oral corrective feedback (OCF): teachers' opinions about the importance of OCF, technical aspects as well as OCF types in speaking classes.

4.1 Teachers' views of Oral Corrective Feedback in English

The findings from the cluster 1 which related to teachers' views or opinions of OCF in their teaching context suggested an inconsistency in the responses from the mean scores of 3.26 to 4.47. Generally, the findings revealed that there is a high tendency (M=4.47, SD=.53) to agree on the necessity of correcting learners' errors in speaking. They announced that corrections made by teachers on learners' oral errors led to the learners' development of English. The majority of the participants agreed that corrective feedback would help learners to become aware of their errors, as they believed that "if learners are not corrected, they will not learn and they will not know their mistakes". In relation to the participants' views on learners' reactions and attitudes towards English OCF, most of the participants (M=4.11, SD=.62) had a neutral idea of the statement that learners do not get angry when provided with OCF. They also stated that correction of learners' oral errors has negative impacts on the learners besides positive benefits of error correction in speaking.

The mean score of item "learners favor group correction than individual corrective feedback" (M=3.29, SD=.94) was at a medium level. The participants indicated that there was high percentage of participants believed that learners preferred group correction to individual correction.

Table 4.1: Teachers' views/opinions of oral corrective feedback in English

Items	Mean score	SD	SD&D (%)	N (%)	SA&A (%)
English oral corrective feedback is necessary for EFL speaking classes.	4.47	.53	7.4	29.4	63.2
Teachers need to correct learners' mistakes/errors in English speaking.	4.32	.59	8.8	35.3	55.9
Teachers should correct only oral errors which may motivate learners.	3.76	.71	4.0	25.4	70.6
Learners do not get angry or feel bothered when provided with English oral corrective feedback.	4.11	.62	8.9	56.6	34.5

The use of English oral corrective feedback types depends on the learners' levels of English proficiency.	4.21	.55	1.0	16.7	82.3
Learners prefer teacher's correction to peer correction.	4.41	.50	2.0	10.8	87.2
Learners favor group correction rather than individual corrective feedback.	3.29	.94	2.0	27.4	70.6
Learners prefer the teacher to provide corrective feedback immediately just after an error has been made.	3.79	.71	64.7	30.4	4.9

Note: SD&D=strongly disagree & disagree; N=Neutral; SA&A=strongly agree & agree.

4.2 Technical Aspects of Corrective Feedback on Learners' Oral Errors

Regarding the technical aspects of corrective feedback on learner' oral errors, the results from this category were further divided into major areas: when, which and how oral errors should be corrected. The findings for the aspect of when correcting oral errors stated that the participants agreed to both options: correcting oral errors at the moment the errors occurred; and correcting oral errors at the end of class time. However, the participants' agreement was at the average level identified from the mean score of 2.82 and 2.36. This means participants were unsure as to when correcting learners' oral errors would be appropriate and thus agreed to both situations.

Concerning teachers' correction of which oral errors should be corrected, it was found that the participants gave more emphasis to the statement of not only general errors made by the whole class should be corrected, but also individual errors from the mean score of 2.5, while average emphasis (M=2.6, SD=.38), accounting for half of the participants was given to the statement of teachers should correct only errors that interfere with meaning and with getting the message across.

The results from the aspect of how providing OCF indicated that most of the participants had an agreement on the equal roles of teacher and learners in correcting oral errors (M=4.26, SD=.43). It means that both teacher and learner can correct oral errors made by learners. However, the engagement of learners in self-correction can be in companion with the help of the teachers or instructors.

Table 4.2: Technical aspects of corrective feedback on learners' oral errors

Items	Mean score	SD	SD&D (%)	N (%)	SA&A (%)
When would correcting oral errors be appropriate?					
Teachers should provide oral corrective feedback immediately after the learners have made an error.	2.82	.63	3.2	35.5	61.3
Teachers should provide the whole class with oral corrective feedback at the end of the class time.	2.36	.80	2.2	32.5	65.6
Which spoken errors should be corrected?					
Teachers should not only correct errors made by the whole class, but also individual's errors.	2.52	.28	6.0	30.4	63.6
Teachers should correct only errors that may change the meaning of the messages.	2.65	.38	24.4	51.0	24.5

How should speaking errors be corrected?					
Speaking errors should be corrected by teachers.	3.52	.43	10.7	35.3	54
Speaking errors should be corrected by learners themselves.	3.20	.66	17.6	29.4	52.9
Speaking errors should be corrected by learners themselves with teachers' help.	4.26	.43	0	12.7	87.3

4.3 Results of Oral Corrective Types Preferred by Teachers

In order to explore the survey in relation to oral corrective types teachers prefer providing in the classroom, the results from this survey were divided into two categories: teachers' preferences of OCF types used and their frequency of use. The findings from the category of participants' preferences on OCF types suggested that participants liked to use different types of OCF consisting of recasts, explicit correction, repetition, elicitation, meta-linguistic feedback, and clarification requests.

As can be seen from table 3.3., among six types of OCF, elicitation was the most favored types used by most of the teachers (M=4.00) and clarification requests was following favored types used by the participating teachers (M=3.74). The other types of OCF types were distributed in decreasing preferences as follows: meta-linguistic feedback (M=3.91), recasts (M=3.62), and explicit correction (M=3.50). From these findings, it would appear that the participants focused less on recasts than the other techniques (M=2.68) in which of the respondents did not like this type.

The findings from the aspect regarding the corrective feedback types' frequency of use were categorized into five levels of reported frequency: never, rarely, sometimes, often, always. Table 3.3 illustrates that the type of oral corrective feedback most frequently used by the teachers in their correction of learners' oral errors was elicitation. Almost all of corrective feedback types were regarded as high frequency (mean score of 4), with only types of corrective feedback (explicit correction, recasts, repetition and classification request) showing a slightly lower frequency level (mean score of 3). The comparison of the mean scores of all types of corrective feedback listed indicated that all of them were similarly used since no type of corrective feedback shows less frequently used (mean scores of 1 and 2).

From the findings of the survey regarding oral corrective types teachers prefer providing in the classroom, it is evident that elicitation was the most favored technique used by almost all of the participants (M=4.03) and next was meta-linguistic feedback (M=4.01).

A contradiction was identified in the findings of the two previous categories in relation to oral corrective types teachers prefer providing towards learners' oral errors in the classroom. Explicit correction was suggested less frequency corrective feedback technique (M=3.12), which accounted for not over 20% of the total number of errors types used to correct learner' oral errors.

Table 4.3. Results of oral corrective types preferred by teachers

Teachers' preferences	Mean score	Dislike very much (%)	Dislike (%)	Neutral (%)	Like (%)	Like very much (%)
Recasts (Teacher presents the correct response or partial response) T: I *did* my homework or *"did"*	3.62	0	18	26.5	44.5	11
Explicit correction (Teacher points out the error and provide the correct response) T: It's not *"I do"*, but *"I did"*	3.50	0	2.0	23.5	47.0	27.5
Repetition (Teacher repeats the learner's error and adjusts the intonation in that error) T: I *do* my homework yesterday	2.68	1.0	1.9	32.4	47.1	18.6
Elicitation (Teacher repeats learner's utterance up to the error and waits for self – correction) T: *"I …"*	4.00	0	0	14.7	61.8	20.6
Meta-linguistic feedback (Teacher lets learners correct by themselves. Meta-linguistic feedback is grammatical explanation on any particular language use) T: *You need "past tense" here.*	3.91	1.0	1.0	9.4	57.8	30.8
Clarification requests (Teacher carries questions indicating that learner's utterances have been misunderstood) T: What did you do yesterday? St: Homework T: *Sorry? / Pardon me?*	3.74	0	5.9	32.4	44.1	17.6
Total Mean = 3.56 (*M*=3.56)						

Corrective feedback types' frequency of use	Mean score	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Always (%)
Recasts	3.29	13.7	14.5	49.2	18.6	3.9
Explicit correction	3.12	0	7.8	23.5	50.0	18.6
Repetition	3.79	0	2.5	19.1	46.2	32.2
Elicitation	4.03	0	3.4	14.6	52.2	29.8
Meta-linguistic feedback	4.01	0	3.2	42.7	48.8	5.3
Classification requests	3.79	2.0	1.0	13.8	57.8	25.4
Total Mean = 3.67 (M=3.67)						

5. Discussion

5.1 Teachers' Views towards Oral Corrective Feedback in Speaking Classes

The findings from the questionnaire indicate that almost all of the teachers expressed that correcting leaner' oral errors could undermine learners' self-esteem and that learners could feel bored and get angry when provided with OCF. This means that correcting their mistakes may discourage them from language learning, especially in speaking English classes. Apart from this, encouraging self-correction and peer correction demonstrated teachers' knowledge and corrective feedback providers helped learners to recognize their errors (Cohen, 1975) and led to the repair of erroneous utterances (Zhao, 2009). In other words, by learners' preferences for self-correcting their own oral errors according to the participants, the learners may have shown that they wanted to be autonomous with their own learning, regarded as essential to be competent in a target language (Lyster and Ranta, 1997).

All the claims made by the participants in the findings discussed earlier indicated that teachers had positive views towards OCF.

5.2 Results of Oral Corrective Types Preferred by Teachers

The finding from the questionnaire regarding oral corrective feedback types preferred by teachers are in contrast to those of other studies, noted by Lyster and Ranta (1997). In this study, elicitation was found to be most favored technique and most often used by the teachers; however, in previous studies, recasts were most often used to correct students' speaking errors (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Panova & Lyster, 2002; Tsang, 2004; Yoshida, 2008). Another significant finding of the current study is that recasts were not used as frequently as they are used in other studies (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Tsang, 2004).

The findings also indicate that, in terms of corrective feedback types, meta-linguistic feedback was the type favored and more often used by the teacher to deal with learners' oral errors. Similarly, the teachers focus much on learners' competence in language learning as they desired their learners to correct their errors by themselves. This is likely due to the frequency of types of oral corrective feedback given to learners to correct their own errors in speaking.

6. Conclusions

The findings of this study have led to practical aspects of EFL teaching and learning among EFL teachers in Vietnam.

From the findings, it was evident that feedback on learners' errors is necessary and teachers need to correct oral errors made by learners. Thus, there should be a change in teachers' practice from largely regardless of learners' errors to providing appropriate corrective feedback on these errors. Additionally, teachers may try to discover the potential effects that corrective feedback has to offer to learners while learning speaking.

Understanding the benefits of corrective feedback would allow teachers to maximize the potential of their classroom instruction to improve learners' learning of speaking.

What is more, the findings in relation to corrective feedback types reveal a preference by the teachers for elicitation, meta-linguistic feedback, not much time for recasts. It can be inferred that teachers referred a balance to various types of corrective feedback. As a matter of variability, many possible corrective feedback types could be exploited in the classroom. Using a wide range of corrective feedback types could be practiced by teachers since different types are likely to base on their judgment to different learners in terms of their English proficiency level and needs.

With limited time to complete this study, it was impossible to explore every aspect of oral corrective feedback in EFL context of Vietnam. Further research is needed to address other aspects of English use to provide insights into issues related to oral corrective feedback.

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