

Oral corrective feedback in efl classroom: a meta-analysis

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Oral corrective feedback (hereafter, OCF) has played a pivotal role in second language acquisition, both in research and pedagogy, throughout the years. It is a kind of feedback that highly contributes to language learning, promotes learner's motivation, and ensures linguistic accuracy, which are considered fundamental if it will be traced back to behaviorist and cognitive theories of language learning, and structural and communicative approaches to language teaching (Ellis, 2009).

One of its earliest definitions is established by Chaudron (1977 in Mendez & Cruz, 2012) claiming it as “ any reaction of the teacher which clearly transforms, disapprovingly refers to, or demands improvement of the learner utterance” (p. 64). Meanwhile, Li (2013) provides a simpler and a more recent explanation of OCF, saying that it refers to teacher and peer responses to learner's erroneous second language (L2) production. Other researchers share common ground in defining OCF as they posit that it manifests in any form of response to learner's utterances that contain linguistic error(s) and it has become a pedagogical technique that teachers use for further language improvement as it offers students wide range of opportunities to perceive and process differences with regard to their language output and teacher's input by means of negotiations of meanings.

Methodologists and researchers have provided taxonomies on types corrective feedback moves and strategies that are all from descriptive and empirical studies. In this paper, the classification of OCF strategies identified by Lyster and Ranta will be the one presented below since majority of the studies covered in this meta- analysis used their taxonomy as the framework in analyzing which OCF type is the most frequently used, preferred, and <https://assignbuster.com/oral-corrective-feedback-in-efl-classroom-a-meta-analysis/>

perceived as effective by both teachers and learners in their respective setting.

Based from the table above, it can be noticed that Lyster and Ranta (1997) noted six different CF types along with definition and example for each type. It is also evident that it goes from an explicit (learners are given direct reformulation of targeted error) to a very implicit (e. g. metalinguistic feedback, since learners have to figure out the error and self- repair) continuum.

Another aspect that has been the focus of the studies included in this meta-analysis is the timing of OCF, in which teachers and researchers attempted to answer the question on whether OCF should be delayed or provided immediately. Immediate feedback happens when the learner utters a thought then commits an error, the teacher immediately corrects the student. Delayed feedback as the opposite, happens when the teacher waits for the learner to finish his/her sentence that contains error(s) before correcting him/her. In this respect, this can be viewed upon the intended focus of the activity in the classroom, i. e., whether it is form-focused or meaning-focused.

Since the relevant and current studies on OCF done in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom contexts are the foci in this meta-analysis, it is worth mentioning the distinction between English as a Second Language (ESL) and EFL settings. The primary feature of an ESL classroom is when classes take place in a certain country where English is already the main or one of the recognized official languages that people use in everyday set up.

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The best example would be Philippines, since English is one of the official languages and people's usage of such language is not classroom-constrained - meaning they can converse in English even outside the classroom context and they have opportunities to maximize and practice the use of it. EFL classes, on the other hand, take place in countries such as Japan, China, South Korea, and Taiwan where English is not a major language spoken. Typically in these countries, learners study English language either as a need to cope with demands in an academic setting or as a personal desire in preparation for travel, work, or study in an English-speaking country. OCF as a complex phenomenon in EFL context has its own particularities and one of these is the fact that classroom is the only setting where learners can encounter and practice English, and as well as to receive corrective feedback for a focused language input (Mendez & Cruz, 2012). Interestingly, results of the study of Loewen et al. (2009 in Lee, 2016) show the differences with regard to the role of OCF in both EFL and ESL setting. In their study, they found that (1) participants in EFL setting have a more positive attitude towards teachers' OCF than the participants in ESL setting; and (2) as EFL learners prioritize grammar instruction and error correction more, ESL learners pay more attention to their communication skills development. Hence, making OCF as an integral and a vital part in EFL pedagogy.

The role of OCF in EFL classrooms has varied to great extent and extreme measures depending on the existing tenets of language methods and teacher's values and perspectives since it is a highly multifaceted phenomenon that accounts for several functions and dimensions. As what Ellis (2009) specifies, it can come from audiolingual perspective wherein

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errors and negative assessments have to be avoided as it may impede potential learning; in contrast is the humanistic view by which assessments should be positive in order to promote learning and boost motivation and self-confidence of language learners. Promulgating a similar line of thought, other group of researchers mention that OCF can be viewed from a cognitivist perspective wherein it views OCF as facilitative of L2 development and emphasizes that errors are regrettable, but unavoidable part of learning process most especially when learners focus on meaning; however, these errors should be corrected to prevent them from occurring again and to avoid fossilization of errors.

In opposition to the aforementioned concept, Selinker (1972 in Hussein & Ali, 2014) argues that errors are not regrettable, but an integral and crucial part of language learning and correcting such errors is a way of letting the learner's inter-language be on a par with his/her target language; thus, applying the inter-language approach. Furthermore, in a more contemporary view of language, a communicativist would believe that the major aim of language learning is to deliver meaningful messages and be understood in return; hence there is no need to correct all mistakes and only the ones that inhibit meaning and understanding (Lyster et al., 2013).

Current Oral Corrective Feedback Practices

A plethora of research have addressed OCF in terms of its efficacy, effects, timing, and preferences in both classroom and experimental/ laboratory contexts. However, the researchers decided to analyze studies that used classroom setting as the context of their studies, given that it is more natural

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setting for both teachers and students, with regard to language learning interaction. In this section, selected researches that explored on teachers' current practices in giving OCF in relation to their perceptions, types, timing, and target errors to be corrected would be reviewed and examined.

There has been an established consensus among previous researchers that the main distinction instructors make, whether to provide an immediate or delayed feedback when it comes to timing, is highly dependent on the notion of fluency versus accuracy, i. e., if the nature of the activity focuses either on meaning or on form. Instructors who prioritize a focus on meaning and negotiation of it should pay more attention to developing fluency, hence, prefer delayed OCF; on the other hand, if the activity focuses on forms and linguistic accuracy is of top emphasis, immediate OCF is therefore encouraged. This claim corresponds to the findings of Ozmen and Aydin (2015) on the study of student-teachers' practices and beliefs toward OCF in Turkish EFL classroom, wherein the participants reported to provide OCF depending on the nature of the task/ discussion for the day. However, other studies in relation to OCF timing revealed quite interesting results. In the study of Ananda et al., (2017) in an Indonesian EFL classroom, it was found out that teachers do delayed feedback regardless of the focus of the lesson/ activity and wait for the students to finish sentences (even the long ones) despite the grammatical errors for the reason of encouraging them to practice their speaking ability. Such kind of practice does not match with what the students prefer since they claim that they want to be corrected immediately so they will not forget the error they have made. Another noteworthy is the study of Yasaei (2016) in an Iranian EFL classroom wherein

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the focus of her study is on the use of OCF and its effects on the writing skill and accuracy of students. Results show that teachers' use of both immediate and delayed OCF had significant effect on students' writing accuracy.

Apart from the timing in providing OCF as the subject of empirical studies, a growing number of research have centered also on which among all the types of OCF is commonly used and is considered successful in the language learning of EFL students. Across the previous studies, recast is the frequently adopted OCF type by most language teachers. Studies across EFL contexts particularly the researches of Fungula (2013) in a Chinese EFL classroom; Hussein and Ali (2014) in a Sudanese EFL context; Roothoof (2014) in a Spanish EFL classroom; Ozmen and Aydin (2015) in Turkish EFL context; Solikhah (2016) in an Indonesian EFL classroom; and Demir and Ozmen (2017) on the study of CF by native and non-native English teachers in Turkish EFL classroom share common ground and findings as they claim that using such strategy does not make the students confused, is successful in grammatical errors correction, not time consuming, and not too direct as a form of language output modification.

The study of Ozturk (2016) in a Turkish EFL classroom setting also posits that teachers used recast more frequently as compared to other types of CF strategies; although, since the correct form is being provided by the instructors almost most of the time, negotiation of form is neglected in communicative tasks, often resulting to negative implications in classroom interactions. Surprisingly, such kind of practice of teachers providing the correct form of the errors is justified as a part of cultural origins, particularly

in Turkey, in which teachers are strongly viewed as the source of knowledge in the classroom. Considering such socio-cultural context, teachers who participated in the study had to correct students' errors in order not to "damage this cultural perception, and because of this, their way of corrective feedback might have been more teacher-based" (Cerit, 2008 in Ozturk, 2016, p. 32). This result confirms congruence to the argument of Nicholas, Lightbown, and Spada (2001 in Li, 2013) that recasting may be the most frequently used CF strategy by language teachers, but is not always successful and can be ineffective depending on the context and language learners.

Meanwhile, there are also remarkable studies that contributed other explorations with regard to teachers' practices and the types of OCF they use. For instance, the study of Saeb (2017) in Iranian EFL context, concludes that elicitation is frequently used by the participant teachers for the reason that it promotes learner autonomy and it actively involves the students in the production and modification of their committed linguistic errors.

Additionally, the attempt of Zhang and Rahimi (2014) in Iranian EFL context too, and Rassaei (2013) in Persian EFL context suggest other findings, claiming that explicit correction as a more obtrusive kind of CF is often used by instructors and viewed as more effective in their setting than the implicit ones.

With regard to the types of errors that teachers correct in an EFL classroom, there has been a general consensus among researchers and instructors that grammatical or morphosyntactic errors ranked first as the top priority of

teachers in providing corrective feedback, which means that they tend to pay more attention to language structures rather than pragmatic meanings. This findings reveal the reality in EFL pedagogy – that EFL instructors heavily rely on “ grammaticality” or the accuracy of linguistic forms; whereas the ESL context would be the other end of the continuum since ESL instructors, therefore, focus more on developing the “ intelligibility” or the fluency and native-like communicative ability of learners.

Despite the prominent practices of teachers in providing OCF and its importance in language learning, researchers still have reservations on this matter. Teachers/ participants in the studies of Mendez and Cruz (2012), Agudo (2013), Fungula, (2014), Roothoof (2014) and Ozturk (2016) argue that they choose not to correct their students when the errors do not impede meaning and if the message can still be conveyed. This is for the reason that they do not want to hinder the flow of interaction and communication within the classroom and they value students’ affective domain, i. e., students’ response to such over-corrections, self-esteem, and their motivation to learn the language. Moreover, Storch (2010 in Agudo, 2013) added that teachers should know what to correct and how to correct such errors, and most importantly, they should be the first ones to know how these corrections would affect their students based on their individual personalities and sensitivity.

To sum it up, there might still be disparities with regard to the use of oral corrective feedback by teachers in EFL contexts; however, one cannot deny the fact that because of the very nature of learning English in a foreign

setting, there is a great need for instructors to provide OCF for learners to gain accuracy and fluency, and it must be an integral part of language learning.

Furthermore, when providing OCF, teachers are not only after linguistic accuracy, but also embedded within such practice is the instilling of “ values such as confidence, independence, and reasonable ability to communicate”.