Teachers and students' perspectives of oral corrective feedback in non-English major classes in Nguyen Tat Thanh University

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Abstract

Oral corrective feedback plays an important role in EFL classes because it contributes to the development of speaking skills among language learners. However, many studies have shown that the teachers' and the students' perspectives in giving oral corrective feedback have been undertaken in the Vietnamese context in general and in non-English major classes in Nguyen Tat Thanh University in particular. Therefore, the objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between teachers and students' perspectives on the contribution and sources of oral corrective feedback. This study focuses solely on quantitative and qualitative data collected from the questionnaires and interviews, respectively for the investigated phenomena. The data consisted of questionnaires with 102 students and 18 teachers, interviews with 10 students and 5 teachers who completed the questionnaires. The findings show that both teachers and students appreciated the importance of providing and receiving oral corrective feedback in classes. However, regarding the sources of oral corrective feedback, while teachers liked peer correction as well as appreciated the role of self-correction, students lacked their confidence in correcting their mistakes by themselves and they preferred being corrected by teachers.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

As a matter of fact, speaking is always the most stretching task for the Vietnamese students who have been mainly and persistently undergone the Grammar-Translation Method during high schools. Making impeccable English oral productions is impossible since they often incur phonological, grammatical, lexical, and discursive errors. In addition to offer the students with several opportunities for speaking practice, providing them with appropriate feedback from which they are able to learn is of great significance [1] hence the name "the teachers' responses to learners' erroneous utterances" [1].

Corrective feedback whose core mission is to propose good models of speaking and interaction is viewed as a part of input, which "can help learners notice their errors and create form-meaning connections, thus aiding acquisition" [2].

Non-English major classes refer to courses or academic programs designed for students who are enrolled in fields of study other than English or English-related disciplines to align with the content of the students' major discipline. For teachers, finding the plausible teaching method to maximize learners' potentials as well as improve weaknesses is a major problem. In the context of non-English major classes at Nguyen Tat Thanh University (NTTU), oral corrective feedback (OCF) has played an important role during the process

of teaching and learning. Especially, inspired by the motto "learning from mistakes", or "trial and errors", the teachers here always concern about the sensible use of OCF so that their students can speak English correctly and fluently. In reality, the question if there is a mismatch between teacher and learners' perspectives for OCF has been still inconclusive pertinent to socio-cultural, psychological, contextual factors, so an investigation on the teacher's and learners' perspectives of the contribution and sources of OCF is urgently important.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Definition of Oral Corrective Feedback (OCF)

The term OCF has been defined at various times in a quite similar way. In classroom settings, one of the earliest definitions refer OCF to "any reaction of the teacher which clearly transforms, disapprovingly refers to, or demands improvement of the learner utterance" [3]. Similarly, it concerns "how competent speakers react to learners' language errors" [4], which can be reflected by indicating that an error has been made, supplying the correct target language form, or giving metalinguistic information about the nature of error [5]. From these definitions, the researcher defines OCF as any corrective method used by teachers to address students' errors, either by explicitly providing the correct form or by offering prompts for self-correction.

1.2.2 Contribution of OCF

Learning a foreign language is a continuing process in which errors such as lexical, phonological, or syntactic errors are likely to occur in all stages. If the learners' errors are not corrected, they may become petrified or fossilized which impresses in learners' mind and delays the students to achieve the progress of linguistic competence [6]. Therefore, OCF can stimulate students' willingness, motivation and self-confidence in learning English if it is given by the language teachers in an appropriate way [7, 8]. Specifically, the willingness to communicate is defined as individual's readiness in initiating a communication in a specific circumstance with a specific interlocutor and by specific contextual factors [9], leading students to speak the target language more fluently and confidently. To sum up, the contribution of OCF in non-English major classes may be underscored by two aspects which are , preventing fossilization of errors, and increasing speaking willingness.

1.2.3 Sources of OCF

Who should provide OCF in non-English majo classes is another important question to be addressed. Pertinent to the sources of OCF, a study proposes three types of providers, that is, teacher, peers, and self-correction [10]. Firstly, teachers are believed to be the most common, reliable and effective source of OCF [11]. Secondly, peer feedback happens when one student helps another student notice his or her erroneous utterances [12], making the speaking classroom atmosphere more learner-centered, non-threatening, cooperative and autonomous [12]. Yet, learners seem to ignore peer corrective feedback and heavily rely on teacher corrective feedback as they believe that the latter is more reliable and trustworthy. Thirdly, despite time-consuming, self-correction is effective in promoting autonomy and acquisition because it reflects students' ability to be critically correct their own mistakes [2] when they realize that they have made errors and repair them by providing correct forms [17]. Similarly, the students can raise a sense of achievement and confidence if they are encouraged to treat their errors [12].

1.2.4 Previous Studies on Teachers and Students' Perspectives on Contribution and Sources of Oral Corrective Feedback

A comparative study on OCF was conducted between two groups of 86 pre-intermediate students and 28 teachers participated [13]. In general, most of the students displayed their positive attitudes about the contribution of corrective feedback to their speaking learning. Besides, a qualitative research study was carried out within an open-ended questionnaire to probe 30 EFL undergraduate Indonesian students' preferences and willingness to types, time, and source of OCF during their speaking lessons [9]. The results show that these comments could enhance their learning motivation and self-confidence as well as willingness to speak out the language.

Regarding sources of OCF, students preferred receiving corrections from their teachers rather than self-correction or peer correction. Despite this preference, they recognized the effectiveness of self-correction for their learning and expressed a desire for their teachers to offer training on how to effectively perform peer and self-correction. [14]

2 Methodology

2.1 Research Design and Participants

This study was carried out in non-English major classes in NTTU in HCMC, Viet Nam. In this study, data were collected from 18 English teachers who earned a Master degree and were in charge of non-English major classes, and 102 students who were at elementary level of language proficiency. Around two-thirds of the teacher participants (66.7 %) were from 25 years to 36 years old. Considering gender, three-quarters of the teacher community (72.2 %) were females, and the other quarter (27.8 %) were males. The age range of the elementary students was from 18 to 22 years old. Among 102 students, up to 79 students were females, making up 77.5 %, and 22.5 % were males.

2.2 Data Collection Instrument

The instrument for data collection included a questionnaire and semi-structure interviews for students and teachers. Questionnaire is referred to as a written tool by which the participants choose the most appropriate option or answer among the existing ones [15]. The researcher purposely employed this quantitative instrument owing to two notable reasons. The first reason was that it could be managed among a large quantity of respondents [16]. The second reason was that it helped the researcher save much time and effort, especially in collection and analysis procedures [17].

As for the questionnaire for the teachers and students, a consent package was constructed such as the title and purpose of the study, the privacy (i.e., anonymity, confidentiality), as well as the right (i.e. voluntary participation, withdrawal) was provided in the first section. The second section was added to garner demographic profile of the teacher and student participants. As the most important section of the questionnaire, the third one with total 24 items numbered from 1 to 24 was to probe the teachers' perspectives and students' perspectives about OCF in non-English major classes under different aspects including value (3 items), strategies (7 items), timing (4 items), sources (3 items), focus (4 items), and amount (3 items) of OCF. All these items of this section were rated on a five-point Likert scale: 1 = totally disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = uncertain; 4 = agree; 5 = totally agree. However, only items probing teachers

and students' perspectives of the contribution and sources of OCF were reported on in the present article. Moreover, the items to explore the contribution of OCF to L2 to speaking learning and teaching' were adapted and rephrased according to previous studies [2, 9]. To avoid any difficulties in language on the part of the students, the questionnaire was administered in Vietnamese, the participants' first language.

Thus, to clarify the similarities and explain for the divergences between the teachers and students' perspectives about OCF sought in the questionnaires, the researcher decided to further used the interviews for the sample. An interview is referred as to a conversation or talk between the interviewer and the interviewee to clarify the given topic questions [18], providing answers to the question "why" [19]. Specifically, the researcher employed semi-structured interviews as flexibility is one of the prominent values of this interview type in researching participants' subjective judgements or opinions [20]. In other words, the researcher could add, alter, or re-arrange the original order of the interview questions, according to the ongoing flows of verbal communication. The interview question items were constructed and developed from the in-depth OCF previous studies [10-12].

3 Data Analysis And Discussion

3.1 Teachers and Students' Perspectives on the Contribution of OCF

3.1.1 Questionnaire Result

As shown in Table 1, S.D. values of three items were more than 1, proving the fact that there was a variation in teachers' perspectives on the contribution of OCF. Two-thirds of the teachers (22.2 % agree, 44.4 % strongly agree) believed that giving OCF to their pre-intermediate learners' speaking was of importance (Item 1, M = 3.94). Specifically, more than 70 % of the teachers (33.3 % agree, 38.9 % strongly agree) thought that practicing OCF in speaking classes could help prevent fossilization of errors made by their learners (Item 2, M = 3.83). In addition, more than half of the teachers (33.3 % agree, 22.2 % strongly agree) considered that enacting OCF could help increase their learners' speaking willingness when they were able to produce accurate utterances learners (Item 3, M = 3.44).

Table 1 Contribution of OCF in non-English major Classes: Teachers' Perspectives

No.	Value	SD*	D*	U*	A*	SA*	M	S.D.
1	OCF to learners' speaking is important.	5.6	5.6	22.2	22.2	44.4	**3.94**	1.21
2	OCF helps prevent fossilization of errors in the learners' speaking.	11.1	5.6	11.1	33.3	38.9	**3.83**	1.34
3	OCF helps increase the learners' speaking willingness.	11.1	11.1	22.2	33.3	22.2	**3.44**	1.29

(*): SD = Strongly disagree; D = Disagree; U = Uncertain; A = Agree; SA = Strongly agree

As Table 2 presents, a large number of the learners affirmed the importance of receiving OCF from their teachers (Item 1, M = 4.00, 19.6 % agree, 49.0 % strongly agree), which could help them prevent from the repetition of the errors in their speaking next times (Item 2, M = (3.48, 18.6) % agree, 30.4 % strongly agree). However, the majority of the student informants were doubtful whether OCF could increase their speaking willingness or not (Item 3, M = (2.77, 40.2) % uncertain, 21.6 % disagree, 15.7 % strongly disagree). Strikingly, there was a variation in learners' perspectives on the important role of OCF, whose S.D. values in 3 items were quite high, more than 1.

Table 2 Contribution of OCF in non-English major Classes: Students' Perspectives

No.	Value	SD*	D*	U*	A*	SA*	M	S.D.
1	OCF in my speaking is important.	3.9	9.8	17.6	19.6	49.0	**4.00**	1.19
2	OCF helps prevent the repetition of the errors in my speaking next times.	10.8	9.8	30.4	18.6	30.4	**3.48**	1.31
3	OCF helps increase my willingness.	15.7	21.6	40.2	14.7	7.8	**2.77**	1.13

(*): SD = Strongly disagree; D = Disagree; U = Uncertain; A = Agree; SA = Strongly agree

3.1.2 Interview Result

All the teacher interviewees (100 %) highly approved of the importance of OCF. More specifically, three teachers, including T1, T3, and T4, stated that OCF could help increase the level of accuracy in their learners' speaking. Besides, three teachers, that is, T2, T3, and T5, added that OCF benefited their learners' self-confidence of speaking. One teacher T4 considered that OCF could make the speaking lessons more interactive between among the teacher, the learners, the classmates.

Through the interview, eight out of ten interviewed learners, excluding S2 and S7, admitted the necessary importance of receiving OCF in their EFL speaking learning. More specifically, among these eight student participants, four learners (i.e., S1, S4, S6, and S9) explicated that taking OCF could help them to grasp the reasons for the inaccuracy of their utterances, while the other four learners (i.e., S3, S5, S8, and S10) applauded that OCF would make their utterances more accurate in forms and understandable in meaning.

Nevertheless, only two learners, that is, S2 and S10, disregarded the necessity of OCF since the fact that overcorrection could make them less confident of their speaking.

3.2 Teachers and Students' Perspectives on the Sources of OCF

3.2.1 Questionnaire Result

As shown in Table 3, a big part of the teachers strongly believed in the effectiveness of peer-repair (Item 16, M= 4.06, 22.2 % agree, 44.4 % strongly agree). Besides, many teachers also favored the necessity of self-correction of the learners' erroneous speaking (Item 17, M = 3.61, 27.8 % agree, 22.2 % strongly agree). Interestingly, only a small portion of the teachers selected themselves as the main source of OCF in EFL speaking classes (Item 15, M = 3.00, 16.7 % agree, 16.7 % strongly agree).

Table 3 Sources of OCF in non-English Major Classes: Teachers' Perspectives

No.	Sources	SD*	D*	U*	A*	SA*	M	S.D.
15	The teacher should correct the errors directly.	11.1	27.8	27.8	16.7	16.7	**3.00**	1.28
16	The teacher should ask their classmates to help them correct the errors.	0.0	5.6	27.8	22.2	44.4	**4.06**	1.00

17	The teacher should let learners correct the errors by themselves.	5.6	0.0	44.4	27.8	22.2	**3.61**	1.04

(*): SD = Strongly disagree; D = Disagree; U = Uncertain; A = Agree; SA = Strongly agree

From the data analysis of Table 4, it is obvious that a big proportion of the learners expected their teachers to correct their erroneous utterances (Item 15, M = 3.85, 20.6 % agree, 39.2 % strongly agree). In contrast, not many learners wanted to correct the errors by themselves only (Item 17, M = 2.97, 30.4 % agree, 8.8 % strongly agree). Most remarkably, approximately three-quarters of the student respondents (14.7 % agree, 59.8 % strongly agree) highly appreciated peers as the most effective source of OCF (Item 16, M= 4.22). In addition, the three statements examined for OCF sources had standard deviation values of 1.12, 1.12, and 1.21, respectively (Table 4).

Table 4 Sources of OCF in Non-English Major Classes: Students' Perspectives

No.	Sources	SD*	D*	U*	A*	SA*	M	S.D.
15	the teacher should correct the errors directly.	2.9	7.8	29.4	20.6	39.2	**3.85**	1.12
16	the teacher should ask my classmates to help me correct the errors.	2.9	6.9	15.7	14.7	59.8	**4.22**	1.12
17	the teacher should let me correct the errors by myself.	13.7	23.5	23.5	30.4	8.8	**2.97**	1.21

(*): SD = Strongly disagree; D = Disagree; U = Uncertain; A = Agree; SA = Strongly agree

3.2.2 Interview Result

The teachers would prefer peer-correction and self-correction rather than teacher-correction. Indeed, while peer-correction was opted by four teachers (i.e., T2, T3, T4, and T5), followed by self-correction approved by three teachers (i.e., T1, T2, and T4), only one teacher of T3 considered the necessity of teacher-correction in some cases. To begin with peer-correction, three interviewed teachers reckoned that this way could make the learners more enthusiastic and active in the speaking activities and lessons; simultaneously, peer activities made the class atmosphere more comfortable and cooperative, building good rapport among the learners throughout the speaking classes, as unraveled by T3 and T5. Apart from that, T2 supposed that peer correction became more useful due to class time limit. With regard to self-correction, T2 and T4 strongly believed that it was actually effective to stimulate learner autonomy in speaking learning; and, T1 added that self-correction helped the learners notice their erroneous utterances better. Especially, T3 was also inclined to teacher-correction as she thought that the teacher was the best source of explaining complex and serious errors as well as saving class time efficiently in certain classroom scenarios.

Table 5 Teachers' Perspectives about OCF in Non-English Major Classes

OCF	Key Findings	Number: Participants
Contribution	Important	5: T1, T2, T3, T4, T5
	Increasing accuracy in learners' speaking	3: T1, T3, T4
	Helping learners speak more confidently	3: T2, T3, T5
	Making speaking lessons more interactive	1: T4
Source	Peers	4: T2, T3, T4, T5
	Learners: More enthusiastic and active (give-take feedback)	3: T2, T4, T5
	Class: More comfortable and cooperative, good rapport	2: T3, T5
	Good source of correcting errors in some cases (time limit)	1: T2
	Student themselves	3: T1, T2, T4
	Stimulating learner autonomy	2: T2, T4
	Noticing errors better	1: T1
	Teacher	1: T3
	Explaining complex and serious errors	1: T3
	Saving class time in some scenarios	1: T3

Most of the student interviewees (7/10 students) favored feedback from the teacher, and some of them (3/10 students) preferred feedback from their classmates. To the former, four learners (i.e., S1, S4, S7, and S9) asserted that the teacher was the best source of feedback as he or she possessed a good expertise and knowledge of language, and four students (i.e., S3, S4, S6, and S8) explained that if the teacher was responsible to correct complex oral mistakes, the class time and the students' effort would be rescued effectively and timely. To the latter, three students (i.e., S2, S5, and S10) uttered that peer feedback activities made the class atmosphere more comfortable and interactive, and two of whom (i.e., S5 and S10) considered peer feedback was effective in some classroom cases provided that the peers were good and reliable students.
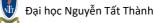
Table 6 Learners' Perspectives about OCF in Non-English Major Classes

OCF	Key Findings	Number: Participants
Contribution	Important	8: S1, S3, S4, S5, S6, S8, S9, S10
	Know why utterances were wrong	4: S1, S4, S6, S9
	Making utterances more accurate and understandable	4: S3, S5, S8, S10
	Overcorrection: Lack of confidence	2: S2, S7
Source	Teacher	7: S1, S3, S4, S6, S7, S8, S9
	Best source: The expertise and knowledge of teachers	4: S1, S4, S7, S9
	Efficiency of time and effort: Fixing complex errors	4: S3, S4, S6, S8
	Peers	3: S2, S5, S10
	More comfortable and interactive	3: S2, S5, S10
	Good and reliable learners: Effective in some cases	2: S5, S10

3.3 Discussion

Both the questionnaire and interview findings indicated that the majority of the teachers believed in the necessity of giving OCF to the pre-intermediate learners in non-English major classes. More specifically, OCF was considered to be appropriately implemented to help the learners in their error fossilization while speaking so that learners can speak more accurately. As a result, these learners became more confident and were willing to speak out their ideas in English. Especially, a benefit of OCF was to make the classes more interactive among members.

A large number of the students recognized the contribution of giving and receiving OCF in non-English major classes, as proven by both the questionnaire and interview results. This finding aligns with previous studies [9, 13]. More specifically, a certain proportion of the questionnaire respondents perceived OCF as a good way to decrease the possibility of repeating the severe oral errors over time and about 80 % of interviewees admitted that they could know the reason of their errors which were commented and corrected. Nevertheless, some surveyed students expressed that their willingness to express something in English was likely to diminish, and according to 20 % of the interviewees shared the same vein in case overcorrection often happened. However, students might experience some negative affections such as low self-confidence if the teachers corrected too much. That could weaken their readiness to speak out anything in English. Therefore, inferring from the learners' overall perception, the teachers should consider carefully how much as well as how they should provide OCF to their students. As a corollary, the learners' quality of oral production and positive psychology are significantly improved.

As far as the source of OCF was concerned, it seemed that the teachers strongly believed in the effectiveness of peer-repair and self-correction of the students' erroneous speaking classes. By contrast, they did not highly appreciate the necessity of using teacher-correction in their speaking instruction. The qualitative findings of the interviews also displayed the same tendency, clarifying the most favor of peer correction, followed by self-correction, and the least favor of teacher correction. By reason, due to time limit, peer correction was most preferred because it could make the students more enthusiastic and active in their speaking learning, along with the class atmosphere becoming more comfortable and cooperative with good rapport built. Self-correction which allowed the learners opportunities to correct their own errors might foster their learner autonomy as well as effective

noticing of errors. Although teacher correction was not favorably considered by the teachers, one interviewee also advocated that the presence of the teacher in this task was quite necessary to explain complex errors. Towards students' perspectives, findings from both the questionnaire and interview showed that the majority of the learners tended to rely on the contribution of their teachers to error rectification. This belief was similar to that of the learners in a previous research [14]. As revealed by the interview results, 70 % of the interviewed students believed that their teachers with good expertised and wide knowledge were capable of correcting complex errors. As a consequence of this, class time and students' effort were efficiently economized. By contrast, both the questionnaire respondents and interview participants disregarded their own role in oral correction as they were afraid of lacking capacity and displaying a common tendency of passive learning involvement. Especially, the large number of the students preferred peer feedback as it could make the class atmosphere more comfortable and interactive among the learners. Besides, the existence of some good fellow learners in the speaking classes was deemed to be more effective in certain classroom scenarios; for example, time limit or big class size. Clearly, both the teachers and students' perspectives for peer correction was found congruent. However, there was a scrupulous disparity between the teachers' perspectives about and the students' perspectives for self-correction and teacher correction. The teachers favored the former, but the learners chose the latter. Based on the interview results, the teachers considered that self-correction could stimulate their students' autonomous learning as well as help them notice the errors more effectively. In contrast, the learners liked teacher correction, noting that the teachers could facilitate them repairing complex errors. Generally speaking, depending on the specific scenarios (e.g., class time, traits of speaking activities and lessons), the teachers should decide who is the best source of OCF.

4 Conclusion

In general, there were both similarities and dissimilarities between the two observed categories. Coincidentally, both the teachers and the learners highly appreciated the importance of providing and receiving OCF in non-English major classes. In addition, differences between the teachers' perceptions and the learners' preferences for OCF strategies were eventually sought.

In common, the majority of the teachers believed in the necessity of giving OCF to the pre-intermediate learners in non-English major classes, preventing error fossilization while speaking, and making classes more interactive. Many students recognized the importance of giving and receiving OCF in non-English major classes, which is to help minimize the possibility of repeating the severe oral errors over time if appropriate. Regarding source of OCF, the teachers strongly believed in the value of peer-repair and self-correction of the learners' erroneous speaking classes. Meanwhile, most of the learners tended to favor the leading role of teachers and peers but disregarded their own role in oral comments and correction.

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Quan điểm của giảng viên và sinh viên về phương pháp phản hồi sửa lỗi tại lớp tiếng Anh không chuyên ở Trường Đại học Nguyễn Tất Thành

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Tóm tắt Phương pháp phản hồi sửa lỗi đóng vai trò quan trọng trong lớp học tiếng Anh như là một ngoại ngữ, góp phần vào sự phát triển kĩ năng nói của người học ngoại ngữ. Tuy nhiên, các nghiên cứu để tìm hiểu về quan điểm của giảng viên và sinh viên về phương pháp phản hồi sửa lỗi vẫn còn khá ít trong bối cảnh Việt Nam nói chung và tại các lớp tiếng Anh không chuyên thuộc Trường Đại học Nguyễn Tất Thành nói riêng. Nghiên cứu này nhằm tìm ra mối quan hệ giữa quan điểm của giảng viên và sinh viên về sự đóng góp của phương pháp phản hồi sửa lỗi cũng như người sẽ thực hiện phương pháp phản hồi sửa lỗi. Nghiên cứu này dựa vào dữ liệu định lượng và định tính được thu thập từ bảng khảo sát và phỏng vấn. Dữ liệu bao gồm bảng khảo sát của 102 sinh viên và 18 giảng viên và phỏng vấn 10 sinh viên và 5 giảng viên, những người đã tham gia khảo sát trước đó. Kết quả cho thấy là cả giảng viên và sinh viên đều thấy được sự quan trọng của việc sửa lỗi sai tại lớp học. Tuy nhiên, đối với người thực hiện phương pháp, trong khi giảng viên thích sinh viên sửa lỗi cho nhau cũng như đề cao vai trò của việc tự sửa lỗi sai thì sinh viên lại thiếu niềm tin trong việc tự sửa lỗi và muốn giảng viên sửa lỗi cho sinh viên.

Từ khóa Phương pháp phản hồi sửa lỗi, quan điểm của giảng viên, quan điểm của sinh viên, lớp tiếng Anh không chuyên