INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATION AND PHILOLOGY

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DOI: https://doi.org//10.69648/WUHG9691

International Journal of Education and Philology (IJEP), 2024; 5(2): 41-49

ijep.ibupress.com

Online ISSN: 2671-3543

Application : 03.12.2024

Revision : 10.12.2024

Acceptance : 24.12.2024

Publication : 30.12.2024

Skenderi, L., & Ejupi, S. (2024). Oral Corrective Feedback in the EFL classroom. International Journal of Education and Philology, 5(2), 41-49. https://doi.org//10.69648/WUHG9691

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BALKAN JOURNALS

# Oral Corrective Feedback in the EFL Classroom

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**Abstract**

This paper aims to see college students' perceptions of oral corrective feedback in their EFL class. The number of respondents is 95 students from different study programs at the University of Tetova who attend EFL classes. The 10 Likert-scale questions tend to navigate through their preferences on the CF types, along with their correlation with students' proficiency levels. Additionally, we aim to see what they perceive in terms of the most positively impacted aspect of language by oral corrective feedback, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar or sentence structure. Furthermore, the paper's objective is to compare all these data with the emotional response of students after being orally corrected in their EFL class.

*Keywords:* oral, corrective, feedback, perceptions, proficiency level

## Introduction

Corrective feedback has been in the interest of researchers for many decades now. Krashen (1982) and Truscott (1999) introduced the initial foundation of corrective feedback, analyzing both aspects, as well as its advantages and disadvantages. Its important role in the process of teaching and learning English has made corrective feedback remain in the spotlight of researchers. Some studies have shown that there is indeed a positive impact on learners' language acquisition outcomes (Lyster, Saito, & Sato, 2013). Different studies have been conducted on the opinions on CF of both teachers and students, and surprisingly sometimes there has been a strong mismatch between the beliefs of these two parties (Roothooft, H., & Breeze, R., 2016) This communication between the teachers and the students can have important outcomes in the learning process because the students' expectations and memories can prevent them from interactive participation in the activities planned by the teacher (Bloom, 2007; Peacock, 2001). In addition to the study of students' and teachers' beliefs on CF (Borg, 2003), there is a part that has been less researched, and that is students' emotional response to oral CF, even though several studies, such as Harmer (2006) and Truscott (1999), argue that corrections can cause negative emotions and anger. This is the reason why this study aims at covering the psychological effect of CF on college students in their EFL classes. In some studies, we can see that students sometimes show surprising perceptions of oral corrective feedback in terms of emotions that they feel when they are corrected after speaking. However, this is limited and not only by previous knowledge of the English language, the class size, and of course how the professor corrects them.

## Literature Review

Corrective feedback has been the subject of research in several studies in the last three decades (Li, S., & Vuono, A., 2019). Two milestone articles were published in the 90s, one on written corrective feedback by Truscott (1996) and another on oral corrective feedback by Lyster and Ranta (1997). These two were prominent in bringing a lot of information and analysis on the strategies used by teachers in correcting students in their spoken or written performance. This type of feedback shows the presence of errors in students' speaking and justifies the need for their correction, providing them with important information to improve their second/foreign language use in the future. When corrective feedback is not provided in the class, students are unaware of the mistakes they make and may misunderstand the meaning of the words they use, which can lead to misunderstandings (Lyster et al., 2013). Therefore,

applying corrective feedback helps students improve their foreign language skills. Annie (2011) points out that corrective feedback for speaking activities most often focuses on pronunciation and vocabulary. This feedback is given in response to students' mistakes and may correct pronunciation, grammar, or the language structure they use. Voerman et al. (2012) and Hussein and Ali (2014) also claim that oral corrective feedback helps students with language proficiency and makes them aware of their mistakes. Furthermore, Asnawi et al. (2017) see corrective feedback in spoken production as very helpful in the reduction and avoidance of the repetition of errors by learners. It is also clear that studies have shown a mismatch between teachers' and students' opinions. Studies often show that students want to be corrected (Ha, X. V., & Murray, J. C., 2023; Sakiroglu, H. Ü., 2020), but teachers struggle to do that, fearing they may damage their performance and impede communication, which may lead to further diminishing of students' confidence (Jean & Simard's, 2011). However, as we stated earlier, in the process of giving and receiving corrective feedback, emotional responses are happening inside the students' psychological person. A study conducted in Misurata, Libya (Elsaghayer, 2014) shows that secondary students who took part in that survey felt reluctant to speak in their English class because of the fear of making mistakes. They also felt insulted, and sometimes CF made them question their own linguistic capabilities. Another feeling that students feel while being corrected by their teacher is feeling unhappy because they don't understand the teacher's corrections (Asnawi et al., 2017). Nevertheless, studies also have found that sometimes students feel uncomfortable when they are interrupted (Bulusan et al., 2019) and anxious (Mufidah, 2018).

## Methods

The paper's objective is to approach the perceptions of university students related to corrective feedback in their spoken production. There are two research questions that we tend to answer in this paper, as follows:

- What are students' perceptions towards oral corrective feedback in their EFL class?
- Does English proficiency level play a role in the psychological state of students who receive oral corrective feedback?

The first research method is a student survey that contains 10 Likert-scale questions. The survey included 95 students enrolled in different programs at the University of Tetova. They are chosen through a random snowball technique and submitted their answers via an online Google forms link. The data were analyzed

quantitatively, shown in pie charts, and then discussed qualitatively comparing with other similar studies. There is also a chi-square table summarizing the values of the emotions that students feel when they receive feedback.

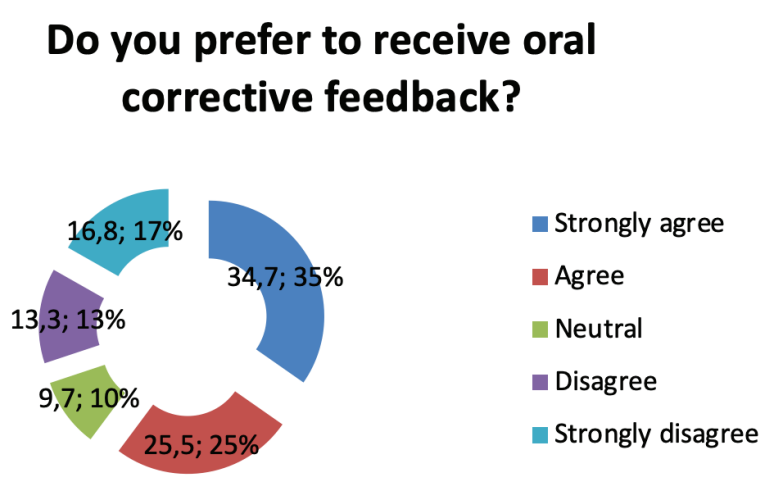
## Results and Discussions

The first question in the survey was related to their level of English, which is also part of our path to answering one of the research questions. Most of them were beginners, followed by 23.25% intermediate and only 17.8% advanced students of the English language. Another important issue is related to the frequency of receiving corrective feedback. The results show that 21% answered that they often receive CF, another 15% said they sometimes receive CF, whereas 2% said rarely, leaving never with no answers at all. So, this shows that every student has at least received oral corrective feedback once in their class.

When receiving corrective feedback the teacher needs to analyze whether he gives the corrective feedback in a proper way, in terms of their capacity and confidence to apply corrections after receiving corrective feedback. In the question "How confident are you in understanding and applying corrections after receiving explicit feedback?", it turned out that 28.9% are not confident when they receive CF, and 15.8% are only slightly confident.

**Figure 1**

Preferences on Receiving Corrective Feedback

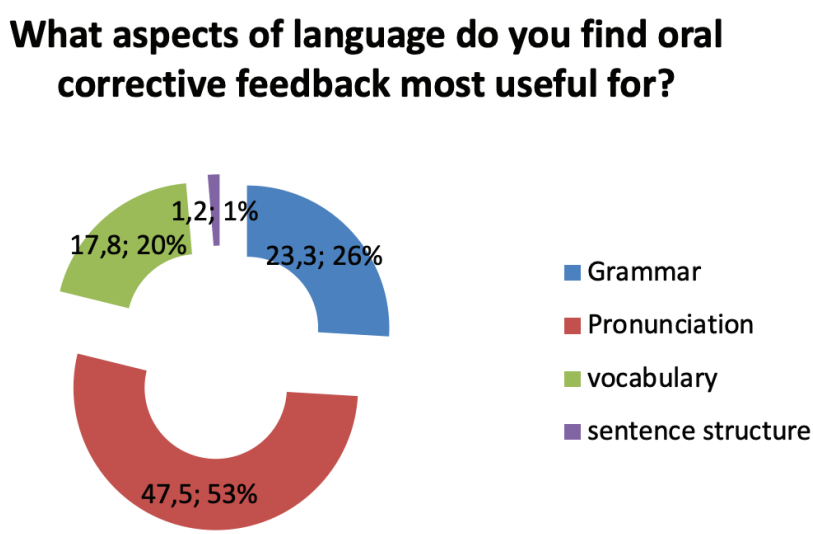


We have a higher percentage of students who indeed are confident in applying corrections because 23.4% fall in the group who chose confidence as an answer, and almost the same percent of students, 23.5%, admitted they are very confident in understanding and applying corrections. These results are in line with other similar studies' results, where students,, in general,, don't understand the corrections because of the psychological pressure at that moment (Hartono D. et al., 2022).

The following figure (2) shows that the majority of students chose pronunciation as the most impacted aspect of language by CF, followed by 23.3 % who chose grammar, 17.8% who chose vocabulary, and only 1.2% for sentence structure.

**Figure 2**

Aspect of Language Acquisition Mostly Impacted by Corrective Feedback



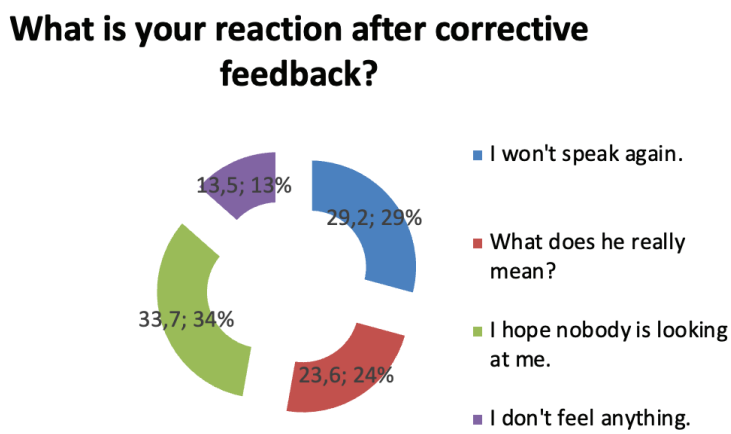

These results align with other studies, where students choose pronunciation as the aspect of language that mostly benefits from corrective feedback (Ha, X. V., & Murray, J. C., 2023, p.152).

Earlier in the paper it was mentioned the "damage" that oral CF does on students, and the following question is related to this issue. We gave students 4 options to choose what they think after being corrected (see Figure 3), and it showed that *"I hope nobody is looking at me"* was the top chosen option by 33.7%, followed by *"I won't speak again"* chosen by 29.2%. The rest, 23.6%, showed us they don't

really understand what the teacher means because they chose "What does he really mean?" and surprisingly, 13.5% don't feel anything when they are corrected.

**Figure 3**

Students' Reaction After Being Corrected




Other studies have shown different results. For example, most of the respondents in Libyan research (Elsaghayer, 2014, p.78) find it reasonable when their teacher corrects them, whereas only 15 % worry about how their peers see them, compared to our results, where students were mostly worried not to be noticed by their peers after being corrected. Similarly, in a study in Spain by Agudo, M., & de Dios, J. (2013, p.271), 50.50 % said that after receiving corrective feedback, they try to think about what kind of mistake they made, as opposed to half of them who feel like they don't want to speak ever again after being corrected.

Having in mind that the paper aims to see students; perceptions on CF, we also gave them an example of each type of CF, and asked them to choose the most preferred type. From what they answered it turns out that students prefer Recast (22.6% agree and 45.2 strongly agree), and explicit feedback (43.6 agree and 10.2 strongly agree). The least liked were elicitation (49.2 disagree and 35.5 strongly disagree) and repetition (33.7% disagree and 50.4 strongly disagree).

What we see in other studies, recasts are usually preferred by teachers, because they are quick and easy, but sometimes they are not good enough to show students the need for correction (Xuan Van Ha., et al., 2021). Other studies also show a high preference of students for the recasts (Xuan Van Ha & Jill Murray, 2023).

Nevertheless, there are also studies who have shown the ineffectiveness of recasts (Zhao, 2015).

In the last part of the survey, students were asked about the feeling they have after receiving corrective feedback. Embarrassment and frustration were leading, whereas neutral feeling and happiness were very low.

**Table 1.**

Histogram of students' psychological reaction to Oral Corrective Feedback

| Elementary | | $x^2$ | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Intermediate | Advanced | |
| Psychological domain | Frustrated | 36.73 | 12.30 | 10.52 |
| | Neutral | 2.82 | 10.41 | 5.90 |
| | Embarrassed | 49.42 | 15.98 | 7.68 |
| | Happy | 0.55 | 2.55 | 3.56 |

In addition to the other data that are shown in the table above, it is necessary to mention that the *p-value* for the chi-square test of independence in this case is approximately 0.00015. This tells us that there is a statistically significant relation between the proficiency level of the students and the psychological emotion that they feel after being corrected. This table gives us the answer to the second research question, *"Does English proficiency level play a role in the psychological state of students who receive oral corrective feedback?"* The higher the language proficiency, the easier they accept to be corrected. Percentages of embarrassment after being corrected are lower among high-proficiency students than in low-proficiency ones, who seem to get a harder feeling when being corrected.

## Conclusions

This paper sheds light on a few important aspects related to oral corrective feedback among college students in their EFL classes. They showed a range of attitudes correlated to the usefulness and effectiveness of oral corrective feedback, emphasizing its important role in pronunciation and vocabulary. Furthermore, the paper wades into the emotional responses of students after receiving oral corrective feedback in their EFL classes, listing embarrassment and frustration as the most common feelings among beginners and lower among intermediate and advanced English speakers. The results, which showed resilience and confidence by advanced

speakers, give us an open door for applying different types of CF based on the proficiency levels of students in the classroom. This study, in line with other similar studies, showed those students' preferences for recasts and explicit feedback may help teachers in providing a positive atmosphere in the process of giving oral corrective feedback.

## Limitations of the Study and Further Recommendations

The study is limited in terms of not enough research on contextual factors, such as class size, the number of years students have been taught English, and teaching methods. In addition, the lack of longitudinal data is also a limitation because they would give insights into students' perception of CF over time.

Further recommendations from this study would be for teachers to try to tailor feedback based on students' proficiency levels, and encourage reflection of corrective feedback, which could help students increase their confidence and acceptance of being corrected.

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