



A Study on Teachers' Oral Corrective Feedback Based on Computer Data Analysis

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Abstract. Corrective feedback has gained comprehensive attention since 1970s; however, few studies have been conducted to report the current situation in senior high school's English classes in China. This thesis focused on the current situation of corrective feedback and using computer data analysis to distinguish the difference between teachers' and students' belief towards corrective feedback.

It employed a qualitative method and collected data from interviewing and observation. By using computer data analysis technology, this thesis can draw a clearly conclusion: 1) students would make a variety of errors during the lesson; however, teachers give different errors diverse concentration; 2) grammar errors and reading comprehensible errors were the most frequently corrected errors; 3) teachers and students both liked reformulation most, but with different reasons. Teachers felt reformulation can help them reduce correction time, while students felt reformulation help them to know directly what to correct; 4) beliefs about corrective feedback from teachers' and students' were not the same; learners were more willing to receive corrective feedback about their oral errors, while teachers wanted to spend more time on testing errors; 5) different learners had different expectations towards feedback. For the on level and over level students, they hoped teachers can elaborate more interactive activities and they hoped their oral errors can be corrected; for those under level students, they hoped teachers could stick on the testing points.

Keywords: corrective feedback · computer data analysis · qualitative method

1 Introduction

Empirical researches on corrective feedback have been divided into two phases: in the early 1970s, researchers focused on descriptive researches first in order to give corrective feedback a much clearer classification; after 1990s, most exploratory and experimental researches concentrated on the effectiveness of corrective feedback and the major research questions are concerned with which type of corrective feedback affected learners most in different settings. In the empirical research of corrective feedback, the researches' results of Lyster & Ranta (1997) and Lyster (1998) are quite influential [1]. They observed an immersion classroom in a bilingual education school in Canada and analyzed how four teachers implemented corrective feedback. In that research, frequency

of different corrective feedback, distribution of different errors, relationship between types of errors and corrective feedback were clearly demonstrated [2].

Loads of researches have proved the effectiveness of oral corrective feedback (Long, Inagaki & Ortega, 1998; Mackey & Philp, 1998; Han, 2002; Iwashita, 2003; Leeman, 2003; Ishida, 2004; McDonough & Mackey, 2006). However, under the setting of China, few studies have been issued in senior high school on corrective feedback. Even with the ignorance of knowing its current situation, less to mention the best way to correct errors for senior high students. Considering of different teaching goals and teaching methods used in the Chinese senior high English classes in the mainland and the way for learners to acquire English, the researcher decided to explore this concept from the straightforward question that what is the current situation of corrective feedback [3].

2 Literature Review

The concept of corrective feedback stemmed from the linguistic field. In this field, corrective feedback was called negative data or negative evidence, which can date back to 1970. At first, Brown and Hanlon focused on the feedback which made by infant's parents whose first language was English and tried to figure out how parents corrected their baby's utterance mistakes [4].

They assumed that there was some external selection pressure impelling baby's talk in line with the adults'. Based on this assumption, they divided the segments of the speech produced by three children into two dimensions--namely grammatical and ungrammatical parts to account the approval and disapproval of utterance made by adults [5]. As it was supposed by the researchers, they hoped to see the number of grammatical utterance owing a higher adult approval rate. Luckily, the result of the study and the hypothesis made beforehand were shown to be the same. However, the ungrammatical utterance was at the approximate rate as well. Due to the unexpected result, the researchers gave the further explanations that parents focused more on the true value of child's reposition, not the syntactic form [6].

3 Research Method

This study investigated how the corrective feedback happened during the lesson and what teachers' and students' belief was towards it. An observation of five different teachers' lessons based on the observation sheet was required for knowing the current situation of corrective feedback. The observation lasted for over three months, including 150 teaching hours. Face to face and semi-structured interviews were conducted after observing their present English learning classes. Interviews were conducted to get further clarification on the belief of students towards corrective feedback with twenty randomly-chosen respondents to answer the interview questions. Besides, all the five chosen teachers attended the following interview as well in order that a clearer belief of teachers towards corrective feedback can be acknowledged.

3.1 Research Question

This present research is a tentatively observational study in second language learning, targeting on reporting the current situation of corrective feedback being used in ESL classrooms and finding out the beliefs of teachers and students towards corrective feedback.

- (1) What is the current situation of the use of oral corrective feedback?
- (2) What kinds of errors will students make during the English lessons?
- (3) Is there an inconstancy between teachers' and students' belief about oral corrective feedback?
- (4) To what extent can students accept the oral corrective feedback?

3.2 Sample and Sampling Procedure

During the phase of classroom observation, the samples were four hundred secondary students and five English teachers in a high school in Tianjin. During the observation phase, all the students were engaged. The teachers' age varied from thirty-five to forty, which meant that they have got at least ten years teaching experience. All teacher samples were females, for there is no male teacher teaching English in this school. The samples of this interview consisted of ten secondary school students in the Chinese mainland. Among them there were ten girls and ten boys, all aged between fourteen to sixteen years inclusive. The subjects were mostly from Tianjin and they have lived in Tianjin for more than ten years. Five experienced teachers were asked to attend the interview and gave their opinions on corrective feedback.

4 Chapter Four Results

4.1 The Present Condition of Corrective Feedback

By analyzing the corpus collected from classrooms of five different senior high school teachers. The use of different types of corrective feedback in the ESL classroom was presented in the Table 1.

According to Table 1, from the perspective of error types, it can be concluded that grammar errors and comprehensible errors took up the most proportion of teacher's corrective feedback. However, phonological errors, lexical errors and pragmatic errors received less corrective feedback. From the perspective of different types of corrective feedback, explicate corrections and metalinguistic explanations were the most prevailing methods to treat learner's grammatical errors and reading comprehensible errors. Conversely, conversational recast and elicitation were not so welcomed in senior high school's English lessons, but teachers still used these two kinds of corrective feedback to give corrections. However, no attention was given to repetition, conversational recast and clarification request. The classification used in this thesis can also be divided into a more easy-reading form which will be presented below.

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that all the detailed types of corrective feedback can be trimmed into two parts: reformulation and prompts. Teachers were more likely to use

Table 1. Numbers of Received Feedback Errors Classified by Feedback Types and Error Types [Owner-draw]

CF Types	Error Types				
	Grammatical Error	Phonological Error	Lexical Error	Pragmatic Error	Comprehensible Error
Conversational Recast	0	0	0	0	0
Repetition	0	0	0	0	0
Clarification Request	0	0	0	0	0
Didactic recast	106	23	8	0	55
Explicit Correction	0	0	0	0	78
Metalinguistic Explanation	117	0	4	3	71
Metalinguistic Clue	16	0	0	0	22
Elicitation	0	0	0	0	35

Table 2. Numbers of Corrective Feedback Types and Error Types [Owner-draw]

CF Types	Error Types				
	Grammatical Error	Phonological Error	Lexical Error	Pragmatic Error	Comprehensible Error
Reformulation	223	23	12	3	149
Prompts	16	0	0	0	112

this method to correct learner errors, which meant that recast and explicit correction were more commonly used in senior high school. Meanwhile, teachers also used prompts, but only used it in a small proportion. However, in the comprehensible errors, reformulation and prompts were used in a relatively equal way. In an overall view, prompts were often used in reading comprehensible errors.

4.2 Learner Errors

According to previous studies, it was found that learners always make errors in five ways: grammatical errors, lexical errors, phonological errors, L1 errors or pragmatic errors. The most prevailing phenomenon in the observation was that teachers gave reading comprehension errors a large amount of corrective feedback, for the reading exercises would appear in the final exam four times. As a result, this became the most common

Table 3. Numbers and percentage of errors by error types [Owner-draw]

Error Types	Error Numbers	Error Percentage
Phonological Error	23	4.28%
Lexical Error	12	2.23%
Grammatical Error	239	44.4%
Pragmatic Error	3	0.56%
Reading comprehension Error	261	48.5%
Total Number	538	100%

Table 4. Numbers of errors that received no corrective feedback [Owner-draw]

Error types	Error Numbers	Error Percentage
Phonological Errors	68	23.6%
Lexical Errors	25	8.68%
Grammatical Errors	32	11.1%
Pragmatic Errors	76	26.4%
L1 Errors	87	30.2%
Total Number	288	100%

skill practiced after class and corrected during the lesson, which was also a Chinese characteristic in learning English.

Different error types were given in the Table 3.

From Table 3, it can be acknowledged that grammar errors and reading comprehension errors were the most frequently mentioned errors, which added up to more than ninety percent of all the errors. However, it was not the truth that learners were too proficient to make their language no mistake. Table 3 has shown the condition of other errors which gained the corrective feedback during class. Thus, Table 4 will show that the statistics of the feedback which did not gain the correction.

In Table 4, it has been clear presented that there were 288 errors ignored by teachers, most of which were L1 errors and pragmatic errors.

The reason why there were still plenty of errors left tact without treatments was because teachers' belief towards corrective feedback. When students were answering questions in the class, their languages did not gain enough concentration.

4.3 Teachers' and Students' Belief

Teachers' and students' belief will be reported individually in the following paragraph. Firstly, it will focus on students' belief towards corrective feedback. Afterwards, it will come to the teachers' belief towards corrective feedback. The report will be divided into five parts, including willingness to corrective feedback, errors should be corrected,

preference towards corrective feedback, time to give corrective feedback and acceptance of corrective feedback.

4.3.1 Students' Belief

The results of the data analysis showed that the belief of high school students about oral corrective feedback in English class were dynamic and complex, expressed a positive trend as a whole. Learners' beliefs about oral corrective feedback were constrained by learner, interpersonal, and environmental factors. The following sections will show the results of this study in terms of the five core questions about verbal error correction feedback mentioned above.

4.3.1.1 Willingness of Receiving the Corrective Feedback

It was found that the factors affecting learners' overall belief in oral error corrections involved three main sub-categories, which were learner factors, interpersonal factors and environmental factors. Among them, learner factors included students' emotional responses to oral corrective feedback, learning motivation, English level, past learning experience, personality, learning anxiety etc. Interpersonal factors mainly included peer relationship, authority of correctors and teacher-student relationship related to oral error correction activities. Environmental factors mainly included occasions where oral error correction was carried out and high-risk examinations.

4.3.1.2 Corrected Types of Error

In terms of grammatical errors, some less significant grammatical errors had little impact on the expression of language meaning, and students did not pay much attention to them. For example, a student thought that the mistakes that would bring communication breakup should be corrected. Some small mistakes such as singular and plural numbers may be caused by tension and did not necessarily need to be corrected. However, if the error was about to be examined in the exam, I hoped the teacher can emphasize it. (Student Six).

4.3.1.3 Learner Preference About Corrective Feedback

In general, the students interviewed were more inclined to accept recast, and most of them preferred the direct error correction method. Many students found the direct method was more impressive. For example, they said, "I like teachers using 'you should use...' this pattern to give me the correct form directly. I'll remember it better."

4.3.1.5 Learner Acceptance

Students hoped that they can be treated equally by their teachers, which meant that a fair teacher would be well welcomed. One of the student said, "I hoped my teacher could correct me to let me know where I went wrong, but I did not want to have the feeling that I was the one who would be specially treated. If my teacher only told me where I was wrong in an ironic way, but treated other good grade students' error in a smiling way, which meant that their tone towards the good grades students seemed to be more warm-hearted." (Student One).

4.3.2 Teachers' Belief

The results of the data analysis showed that the belief of high school teachers about oral corrective feedback in English class was also dynamic and complex, expressed a negative trend as a whole. Teachers' beliefs about oral corrective feedback were limited by learner, teaching goals, and teaching hour factors. The final part would show the results of this study in terms of the five core questions about oral corrective feedback mentioned above.

4.3.2.1 Willingness of Giving Corrective Feedback

The senior teachers interviewed in this research generally believed that the oral mistakes in the classroom did not need to be corrected. They tended to have a high tolerance towards mistakes if students made a speech containing several mistakes. However, if students made reading comprehensible errors or grammar mistakes in the classes, teachers would give quantities of time on that, for fear that students would make the same error again in the future. When asked why teachers had this consensus, several teachers talked about the teaching hours and learner differences as well as their long-term teaching goals.

4.3.2.2 Types of Error Should Be Corrected

As for what kinds of errors should be corrected, the errors that the teacher interviewees in this study tended to tell students were reading comprehensible errors and grammatical errors in order. The reason was that teachers felt they should emphasize what the final exam would test.

4.3.2.3 Teacher's Preference Towards Corrective Feedback

Teacher preferred to give a recast feedback most, for this method was time-saving and face-saving. One of the teacher said that they need to correct errors during the class; however, they feared that students may feel hurt during this time. Hence, they always adopt a smart way to give corrections. They would not tell students you were wrong, but they would say, "Alright, let us see about this problem. What point is this question testing?" Some peer students would help to elicit the answer, after analyzing, teachers will ask the answering students again how do you think about this problem. Then answers will appear. (Teacher Three).

4.3.2.4 Preference to Correction Time

Teachers inclined to give a delayed feedback rather than an immediate one. One of the teachers said, "I can't give an immediate feedback in the class for only a few practice can be done in the classroom during the lesson. However, there were still loads of exercise needed to be done after class. Teenagers can only ask questions about where they went wrong after the exercise in the next day lesson. As a result, I can't give them immediate feedback." (Teacher One).

5 Conclusion

The present study was carried out to explain the usage of oral corrective feedback in current situation, what kind of errors gained the most frequent corrective feedback, what

corrective feedback was commonly used. At the end, it reported different beliefs about corrective feedback from teachers and students perspectives individually.

1) students would make a variety of errors during the lesson; however, teachers give different errors diverse concentration; 2) grammar errors and reading comprehensible errors were the most frequently corrected errors; 3) teachers and students both liked reformulation most, but with different reasons. Teachers felt reformulation can help them reduce correction time, while students felt reformulation help them to know directly what to correct; 4) beliefs about corrective feedback from teachers' and students' were not the same; learners were more willing to receive corrective feedback about their oral errors, while teachers wanted to spend more time on testing errors; 5) different learners had different expectations towards feedback. For the on level and over level students, they hoped teachers can elaborate more interactive activities and they hoped their oral errors can be corrected; for those under level students, they hoped teachers could stick on the testing points.

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