



## **Oral Corrective Feedback: Kurdish EFL Students' Preferences and Attitudes**

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### **Abstract**

The present study aimed to assess the learners' attitudes and preferences concerning the provision of Oral Corrective Feedback (OCF) for effective learning of a second language. The study utilized a sample of 51 Kurdish EFL undergraduates as respondents. For this purpose, the data were collected using an attitudinal questionnaire. Therefore, since the collected data were numeric, they were subjected to quantitative analysis. Then for a clearer understanding of the participants' responses, the collected data were analyzed in percentage using SPSS. The findings figured out that most participants showed positive attitudes towards OCF and regarded it as an effective tool for better learning. It is also discovered that many of them prefer the teacher to provide the correction rather than self or peer correction. In terms of the timing, it is indicated that a significant number of participants chose to be corrected after they are being finished with the speech. Regarding the types of OCF, the study established that the participants were in preference of explicit correction rather than implicit strategies, which is surprising.

Keywords: Oral Corrective Feedback, Kurdish EFL Learners' Attitudes, Errors and Mistakes

### **Introduction**

According to Ünsal (2020), fluency is not the only single marker of effective teaching and learning in the context of a second/foreign language. In addition to fluency, accuracy has become an indispensable tool for creating meaningful interaction in such classes, especially where oral techniques are involved for communications. Besides fluency and accuracy, the process of learning a second or foreign language is a complex one involving several other factors. Hence, many efforts have been made to make this process easier and faster for the learners. One of the factors is that most, if not all, learners of a new language commit errors, and this is inevitable.

Ellis (1994) defines error as “a deviation from the norms of the target language”. In the same vein, Hendrickson (1978) considers errors as “an utterance, structure or form that is not acceptable according to an English language teacher due to its inappropriateness or absence in real discourse” (Yasen, 2016).

### **Views towards Errors and OCF**

Back in the 1950s and 1960s, errors were considered to have a negative impact on the process of second language learning, and they were seen as a sin and therefore unacceptable. Consequently, all efforts were made to find ways to avoid the commission of errors. However, in the 1960s, with the emergence of the communicative approach and, afterwards, error analysis, this view was revised. Errors were now considered necessary steps towards learning and mastery of the language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Learners of a new language make several oral errors as they try to speak, and there are ways that teachers can use to respond to such challenges. These ways are referred to under an umbrella term as Oral Corrective Feedback (OCF). According to Russell and Spada (2006), OCF is any feedback type used by teachers when responding to the oral mistakes made by learners of the particular language’s response to the utterances made by learners. There are many ORC taxonomies; nevertheless, Lyster and Ranta’s (1997) classification remains the most recognized. Lyster and Ranta classify these challenges as explicit CF, metalinguistic, repetition, elicitation, recasts and classification requests. The six categorizations can further be classified into two groups, namely explicit and implicit. Explicit categorization includes explicit CF, metalinguistic and elicitation.

On the other hand, the implicit category encompasses the use of OCF; thus, it is recasts, repetition and classification request. The employment of OCF in the teaching and learning a second or a foreign language is a sure avenue to accuracy improvement in oral communications and elimination of learners’ errors. Ünsal (2020) explains that cognitive and behavioural language learning theories emphasize the importance of feedback in learning a second. Equally, communicative and structural language teaching techniques regard feedback as a viable tool for the provision of linguistic accuracy and the enhancement of learner motivation.

In interaction in a classroom context, form negotiation is subjected to trigger by the instructor’s corrective move. It implies that a formal error must be existent to offer a learner the opportunity to correct their mistake (Faqeih, 2015). In the study of corrective feedback, the negotiation of form is linked with foreign language learning opportunities. It allows learners to identify the gap between the target language and their linguistic expressions (Tasdemir, Arslan, & Khajavi, 2018). It further enables the learners to derive more accurate utterances. Universal Grammar, as argued out by Chomsky, suggests theories which state that language acquisition is wholly motivated through positive feedback; thus, feedback that is meant to correct a mistake is, by all means, a positive

response. According to the cognitive interaction theory, feedback that should be correcting a learner of a new language helps enhance language acquisition since it promotes learner derivation of target-like form-implying mappings as they strive to communicate in the target language (Tasdemir et. al., 2018).

Corrective feedback also improves instruction since it identifies the errors made by the learner through which the learner gradually make relevant corrections over a long period (Genç, 2014). The learner gets to hone their second language skills through continued practice and regular feedback. These two tools hasten the second language learning process while significantly improving the learner's pronunciation (Ünsal, 2020). Indeed, the second language learning process entails the description of spelling and pronunciation errors as a learner might be good in pronunciation but have difficulty in spelling. It will enhance the learner's interaction using this language. Hence, instructors need to understand well the importance of feedback meant to correct a mistake committed by the learner. It would go a long way in improving the learners' mastery and speaking of the language (Genç, 2014). Taking the points mentioned above into consideration, the usefulness of OCF is undeniable. Nevertheless, what is the point of negotiation and debate among language educators and researchers are many questions raised by Hendrickson (1978): (1) is there a need for correction? If yes, (2) What errors should be corrected? (3) When (timing) should the appropriate time for the correction occur? Who (agent) should do the correction? and (5) which type of OCF is the best one to use?

Teachers and students' preferences and attitudes regarding the above questions have been the most studied and have had more significant impacts on the teaching and learning of second languages. Therefore, since each context has its unique specification concerning these attitudes, the present study is intended to delineate the viewpoints of teachers and students of the Kurdish EFL on the importance of corrective feedback through identification preferences and attitudes to determine the most effective approach to oral corrective feedback. Following understanding learner preferences and attitudes, the teacher can identify the learner-related variables in play. For instance, the teacher should determine whether the correction is pedagogically relevant. Arguably, the anxiety and emotional responses of the learner have the potential to trigger a deleterious effect on the reception and possible benefit of oral corrective feedback (Ellis, 2008). For this reason, understanding of learner preferences is critical as it influences learning tendencies and behaviours as well as informing the teacher about the learner perspectives, which enhances the quality of teaching practices adopted concerning feedbacks that are meant to correct and improve the teaching and learning of a foreign or a second language.

### **Problem Statement**

Teaching a foreign or a second language aims to achieve a higher language competence level through optimal language exposure and minimal learner errors. It has

necessitated the development of novel strategies. Such a strategy entails the provision of oral corrective feedback informal speech. However, there has been controversy surrounding the approaches to oral corrective feedback, the target errors, agent and timing, which may influence the attitudes and preferences of learners. Moreover, the preferences and attitudes of learners in respect to corrective measures and feedback in language learning are essential components of learning. There have been various achievement fluency and accuracy levels achieved among second language learners. It has been attributed to different corrective feedback approaches between native English speakers and learners of English as a second language. Thus, the current research seeks to find out these preferences and attitudes.

### **Research Rationale**

There is a need to research the impact of explicit and implicit oral corrective feedback on the learner attitude to foreign or second language learning. A teacher who clearly understands the learners' attitudes and preferences to oral corrective feedback can turn around their teaching to help improve learner awareness and linguistic accuracy (Faqeih, 2015). Past research indicates that explicit study groups often outperform the implicit groups, while explicit oral corrective feedback is bound to result in higher efficiency (Ellis, 2008). Teachers have shown the tendency to rely on metalinguistic elicitations and feedback as they initiate an oral corrective move. This kind of corrective feedback often triggers negotiations, and it is consistent with contexts for analytical teaching of foreign language. Recasts are a more common corrective feedback form whose basis is on classroom observations, and they are associated with higher learner repair rates (Ellis, 2008). The outcome of this study is essential in informing the derivation of the link between language acquisition, language use in interaction, and language instruction as indicated by meaning-based learning, which heavily relies on how effective the corrective feedback would be for the development of language skills. While oral corrective is not intended to be evaluative, its target is to identify the learner errors and trigger learner self-correction. In addition, a clear understanding of oral corrective feedback by identifying learner attitudes and preferences enhances the learner's speaking skills—effective oral corrective feedback results in possible teacher-learner interaction, which is essential in language learning. Further, oral corrective feedback plays a constructive and facilitative role in language learning.

### **Research Questions**

This study attempted to address the following research questions:

1. What are the Kurdish EFL students' preferences and attitudes toward oral corrective

feedback?

2. What do they feel when they are provided with oral corrective feedback?
3. What time and types of OCF do Kurdish EFL learners prefer the most?
4. What agent in error correction do Kurdish EFL learners prefer the most?

### **Literature Review**

A review of recent literature has emphasized the attitudes and perceptions of learners and teachers on oral corrective feedback. These attitudes and perceptions are regarded as having a potentially significant effect on applying oral corrective feedback approaches during instruction in a language classroom. Literature suggests that the attitudes and perceptions of learners towards oral corrective feedback can influence the level of achievement and learning outcomes just as the teaching approach and teacher attitude (Lizbeth et al., 2019).

Scholars interested in learning a second foreign language are increasingly getting concerned about learner attitudes owing to the assumption that attitudes determine learner classroom behaviour and subsequent learning. Research conducted on oral corrective feedback posits divergent learner and teacher attitudes towards oral corrective feedback. These attitudes influence the strategy adopted and its effectiveness (Alamri & Fawzi, 2016). In essence, instructors were found to show a preference for implicit strategies, while learners are more inclined toward explicit strategies. Often, the teacher's attitude is determined by their concern over the learner's feelings, motivation, self-esteem, and self-confidence (Alamri & Fawzi, 2016). It is so as teachers are informed by the presumption that oral corrective feedback has a deleterious impact on their learners. In addition, the teacher's attitude toward the oral errors made by learners is shaped by the place of employment, teaching experience, and formal training of the teacher.

### **The Error Treatment Model**

This model was proposed by Lyster and Ranta (1997). The model entails an in-depth analysis of different but viable learner uptake types, strategy classification, and error types. In some analyses, scholars using this error identification and classification model tend to introduce additional components, including OCF effectiveness, OCF provider (instructor or learner), and OCF timing (Lyster & Ranta, 1997).

### **Understanding Learner Preferences toward Oral Corrective Feedback**

Learners' preference is a multi-layered topic. As held by Alamri and Fawzi (2016), instructors must consider the type of oral corrective feedback to offer as much as it is important to regard the provision of such feedback and the timing of the feedback if

learners are to benefit and correct their errors. Alamri and Fawzi (2016) further assert that these factors combine to determine the learner's attitude and perception of the feedback to enhance the learners' capacity to identify and correct errors made. Another potential aspect of consideration entails whether the lecturer should thoroughly correct every error made by the student, or the lecturer ought to emphasize critical errors alone (Ananda et al., 2017). Suppose the lecturer feels the urge to offer oral corrective feedback on an error. In that case, they must also question whether the feedback ought to be provided individually within the classroom setting or privately between the learner and instructor. Such aspects of oral corrective feedback may look insignificant. Still, they have the potential to trigger potential learner attitudes, which may either promote or hinder the language learning and acquisition process (Ananda et al., 2017).

Suppose a teacher allows for some errors while giving oral corrective feedback for others. In that case, a feeling of comfort develops among learners, and they are more willing to participate in a speech during instruction as opposed to when the teacher offers correction for every mistake committed (Fateme, 2017). There is the scholarly suggestion that most students prefer to have their mistakes corrected, even though the suitability of corrective feedback is dependent on, to some extent, the grammatical complexity of the error made. Ananda et al. (2017) argued that oral corrective feedback may negatively affect the learner's emotional experience when offered in the classroom context. Such negative emotional experiences may impede language learning and acquisition. However, as Lizbeth et al. (2019) hint, a counterargument holds that most learners prefer immediate oral corrective feedback in class as the error is made.

For this reason, it is recommended that a teacher is charged with the responsibility of deciding how, where, and when to provide oral corrective feedback. According to Ananda et al. (2017), the teacher should review their priorities to meet the immediate teaching and learning activity (Ananda et al., 2017). When the teacher priorities coincide with the learning activity, the learners' emotional experiences are positively influenced.

### **The Impact of Oral Corrective Feedback**

Gómez et al. (2019) note that oral corrective feedback may positively or negatively influence language learning. The positive impact of such feedback is associated with the correct provision of corrective feedback by the teacher. In contrast, the incorrect provision of corrective feedback is bound to trigger a negative impact. It implies that even though oral corrective feedback is invaluable in learning a foreign or second language, the lecturer still needs to use the best feedback type that suits the learning process. Oral corrective feedback can enhance the learner's motivation to learn and acquire English as a second language (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Providing suitable types of OCF assists learners in learning the second language better and facilitating the process (see, Ancker, 2000; Burt, 1975; DeKeyser, 1993, 2001; Hendrickson, 1978; Hedge, 2000; Keshavarz, 2015;

Lightbown and Spada, 1999; Long, 1977; McDonough, 2005; Schmit, 1990; Swain, 1985; Ulker, 2017; Altun & Sabah, 2020). Lightbown and Spada (1999) stated that CF is beneficial in the process of second language learning. In the same way, Swani's (1985) study suggested that "treatment of learners' errors is helpful, whether the feedback is explicit or implicit. Similarly, Long (1990) believes that CF facilitates second language learning. Furthermore, according to Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1996), "feedback which is provided through verbal interaction can facilitate L2 learning by connecting form and meaning" (Selami & Ustaci, 2013, p. 245). However, the teacher must pay attention to frequency as excessive oral corrective feedback may hinder learner motivation. Thus, the instructor must be cognizant of learners' preferences toward oral corrective feedback to achieve the desired set objectives (Lyster & Ranta, 1997).

### **Research Method**

To address the study's aim, the study required a quantitative research method in which data were collected quantitatively using a questionnaire. Such methodology assists in finding out the preferences in a clear numeric scheme so that results can be presented more clearly.

### **The Participants and Setting**

This study employed a total of 64 participants. The participants constituted students enrolled for an undergraduate program for language learning to determine the Kurdish EFL students' preferences and attitudes toward OCF. Sample selection utilized random criteria. After report reception from the participants, the researcher opted to discard 13 responses based on their incompleteness and irrelevance. Thus, the eventual tally of responses used in the research was 51.

### **Data Collection and Analysis Process**

The researcher designed a self-report type of questionnaire, which comprised of several items each. The items are intended to address the respondents' feelings and attitudes and elicit their opinions regarding corrective feedback, the corrective feedback types and timing of their preference, and the individual (agent) to provide the corrective feedback. Then, the collected data were analyzed using SPSS to depict them in percentage.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Kurdish EFL Students' Preferences and Attitudes toward Oral Corrective Feedback**

Owing to the assessment of responses from the queries, the first research question

analysis emphasized whether the learner would prefer to be provided with corrective feedback in the context of EFL speaking classes. From the responses, it was noted that a total of 45 respondents (88.2%) prefer correction while speaking; 2 respondents (3.9%) are comfortable receiving correction when their speech is intelligible, while 6 of them (7.9%) do not prefer correction at all. It is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Correction preference

Do you prefer to be corrected?	Percentage	Frequency
Yes, I love to be corrected	88.2%	45
Only when my speech cannot be understood	3.9%	2
No, I don't want to be corrected	7.9%	6
Total	100%	51

### Feelings of Students When Provided Oral Corrective Feedback

Analysis of the second research question sought to determine how or what the learner feels in the event of speech correction. 21 students (37.2%) revealed that they felt happy and joy when provided with corrective feedback. 13 students (25.5%) said corrective feedback triggered slight bad feelings. In comparison, 8 students (15.7%) said that even though they felt awful upon correction, they agreed that they needed to be corrected. Lastly, a total of 11 students (21.6%) did not respond to this question, as justified in Table 2.

Table 2: Feelings regarding corrections

What do you feel when you are corrected?	Percentage	Frequency
I feel happy	37.2%	21
I feel a little bit bad	25.5%	13
I feel really bad, but correction is necessary	15.7%	8
No response	21.6%	11
Total	100%	51

### Preferred Time and Types of OCF for Kurdish EFL Learners

The research question sought to assess learners' preferences concerning their preference for when to be corrected. 20 participants (39.2%) were comfortable to be corrected at the end of their speech; 4 participants (7.9%) preferred corrective feedback at the end of the class session; 7 participants (13.7%) wanted correction when they are in the

process of communicating; 4 participants (7.9%) did not prefer correction occurring one to one in front of the class; 4 participants (7.9%) held that they should not be corrected at all; 7 participants (13.7%) were comfortable if the teacher corrected them at whatever time they felt suitable; while another 5 participants (9.8%) did not provide any response.

Similarly, the research question also asked participants how they would like the instructor to provide the corrective feedback. 12 students (23.5%) wanted to be corrected friendly and kindly. 3 others (5.9%) wished that teachers reconstructed their mistaken sentences, while another 12 (23.5%) wanted that correction should be done explicitly for pronunciation errors. 8 other participants (15.7%) said that errors should somehow be corrected, while 16 participants (31.4%) offered no answer. All this analysis is detailed in Table 3.

Table 3: Correction time and strategy

When do you want to be corrected?	Percentage	Frequency
End of speech	39.2%	20
End of class	7.9%	4
During speech	13.7%	7
Never one-to-one in front of the class	7.9%	4
No correction at any time	7.9%	4
Anytime at the teacher's convenience	13.7%	7
No response	9.8%	5
Total	100%	51
How do you want to be corrected?	Percentage	Frequency
Friendly and kindly	23.5%	12
By teachers only	5.9%	3
Emphasis on pronunciation errors only	23.5%	12
Somehow errors need correction	15.7%	8
No response	31.4%	16
Total	100%	51

### Preferred Agent for Kurdish EFL Learners

The research question asks respondents who would prefer to offer the corrective feedback between teachers and peer students? Here, a total of 40 respondents (78.4%) indicated that only teachers should errors. 5 respondents (9.8%) were comfortable if either the teacher or peer corrects their errors, while another 5 held that no one should correct them. 1 respondent (2.0%) did not respond to this question, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Agent in providing OCF

Who would you approve to correct you?	Percentage	Frequency
Teachers only	78.4%	40
Either peer or teacher	9.8%	5
Self-correction	9.8%	5
No response	2.0%	1
Total	100%	51

### Discussion

The findings uncovered that EFL students view OCF as necessary. More specifically, the findings revealed that none of the participants disagreed with the provision of OCF. This result supports those of (Zhang, Zhang, & Ma, 2010; Abukhadrah, 2012; Tomczyk, 2013; Fuad & Ulker, 2020; Ali, 2021), in which they indicated that students favoured OCF and find it an essential means for learning.

Correcting students' oral errors is a sensitive task, especially when considering an appropriate time and agent. Regarding the earlier one, results of the current study unveiled that most of the respondents are of the idea to be corrected after they have finished their task as an interruption may negatively influence their fluency and cause humiliation. In this line, Hedge (2000) suggested that CF is better to be delayed to the end of workouts in fluency activities. Keshavarz (2015) indicated that "while students are participating in a class activity like a conversation or reading task, they should not be interrupted for their grammatical, lexical and pronunciation errors unless the error is so intensive that it can hamper communication and distort intelligibility". All in all, there is almost a general agreement that in accuracy-oriented activities, immediate CF should be provided, and in fluency activities, CF should be delayed to the end of the activity. Yet, Keshavarz (2015) suggested: "even when the objective of the lesson is accuracy building, second language teachers should avoid excessive correction as it may have serious negative psychological consequences such as embarrassment, frustration and lack of linguistic security on the part of the learner".

Moreover, concerning the agent in providing feedback, the findings showed that the majority of the learners prefer to be corrected by their teachers. Corder (1967) suggested that "students will benefit more when they are made aware of their errors by teachers and the correction is left for themselves". Keshavarz (2015) stated that even if low-proficiency learners are made aware of their errors, they will not be able to correct themselves. Self-correction better works with advanced learners. This technique will lead to more collaborative learning when it comes to the peer-correction. Still, also it should be taken into consideration that this will cause negative psychological and social

consequences to learners. Therefore, teachers should be conscientious while deciding on the agent.

Ultimately, regarding the types of correction, the findings disclosed that most students prefer explicit strategies to implicit ones, which is surprising. Keshavarz (2015, p. 136) stated that while deciding to give OCF, teachers should keep certain factors in mind, such as “learners’ proficiency level, age, socio-cultural background, and their preferences toward different types of OCF”. He further suggested that teachers should not use the same strategy for correcting various errors since errors in different tasks demand different correction strategies.

### **Conclusion**

A learner may have erroneous communicative linguistic scenarios either as mistakes or errors. Thus, corrective feedback becomes a crucial tool for fixing learner utterances to make them correct. Teachers of foreign languages ought to expect numerous mistakes or errors from learners and duly accept such faltering as a natural aspect of learning and acquiring a second language. That is, making mistakes in language learning is inevitable. Often, learners feel confident if the instructor ignores some errors. Over time, the errors evolve into mistakes that disappear with the continuous provision of appropriate feedback meant to correct. Therefore, it is justifiable, based on the results obtained from the research, that the overwhelming majority of respondents agreed regarding the need for corrective feedback in which they offered a positive affirmation regarding correction during communication. Such learners are of the idea that they will realize eventual target language linguistic improvement without oral correction. The data suggests that even though most learners approve correction, teachers should consider individual learners’ preferences rather than do so as a group. The teacher should, for instance, explain to learners the essence of corrective feedback ahead of the interactive lesson. Arguably, results imply the need for communication on the need for correction at the inception of the EFL class. Timing equally makes a crucial oral corrective feedback aspect. Timing, however, should remain a prerequisite for the teacher. The results also indicated that students tend to prioritize the teacher withholding corrective feedback until they finish their speech. Such timing is similar to that shown by the small number of learners who prefer to be corrected during speech. The frequency of correction preference varies from one learner to another. Thus, it can be held that teachers need to understand the error types committed by their learners. Teachers should, therefore, not correct every mistake or error. The errors of second language learners are categorized into two types: global errors and local errors. Richards and Schmidt (2010) define a global error as “an error in the use of a significant element of sentence structure, which makes a sentence or utterance difficult or impossible to understand. In contrast to global error, the local error is “an error in the use of an element

of sentence structure, but which does not cause problems of comprehension. Therefore, since global errors are more severe than local ones when providing CF, global errors should be prioritized (Keshavarz, 2015). Regarding the corrective feedback source, self-correction can be undertaken by the learner themselves, or learners may be corrected by their peers or teachers. This depends on the atmosphere of the class, students' proficiency level, age, gender and sociocultural background of the learners. This research indicates that Kurdish EFL students have varied expectations regarding the provision of oral corrective feedback (Barzani et al., 2021). Hence, the provision of oral corrective to learners is crucial for developing effective communicative language skills for EFL classes. Thus, it is the role of teachers to consider the levels of self-correction capacity, fluency, and anxiety of the learners as this will inform the teachers on how and when to correct which error or mistake. Ultimately, while providing OCF, as Keshavarz (2015) suggests suggested teachers should take these factors as 'learners' proficiency level, age and socio-cultural background" into account (p. 136). There is a need for further research into the effectiveness of the individual strategies employed for corrective feedback and the clarification for the effectiveness between the peer and teacher-initiated correction. These studies are bound to enhance the pedagogical quality of EFL learners.

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