

Secondary School English Language Teachers' Frequently Used Corrective Feedback Preferences¹

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study is to find out secondary school English language teachers' frequently used corrective feedback preferences, how often and why they use these certain corrective feedback styles in their classes. Qualitative research methods are employed and case study design is used in the research. 10 teachers and the classes they lecture are selected in the province of Tokat, Turkey and interviews, observations and written documents are conducted to collect data. The interviews' data are analyzed by using MAXQDA program. Frequencies of oral and written feedback are calculated in observations and written documents. Findings show that the students mostly make pronunciation errors and teachers correct the students' errors themselves. However, they think that peer correction and students' own corrections are more effective than correction by teacher. Observations show that teachers most frequently use recast and translation methods while correcting oral errors. As a strategy for providing written correction, they mostly use direct corrective feedback and make reformulation. This research shows that corrective feedback types and frequencies change according to teachers and also to the level of students.

Keywords: corrective feedback; preference; secondary school; English language learning; EFL teacher

I. INTRODUCTION

Corrective feedback has a great importance in learning and teaching process. Like in many other disciplines, in language learning, learners need to know the accuracy or inaccuracy of their utterances. In language education, corrective feedback described as 'teacher and peer responses to learners erroneous second language production' (Li, 2014, p. 196). The significance of providing corrective feedback to the learners in second language acquisition cannot be denied because if the learners are not informed about accuracy or inaccuracy of their utterances, they can repeat the same error over and over again and inaccurate learning may occur. Other than this, the errors made in first steps in language learning may affect the next steps in a negative way so language learning becomes more difficult. Detection of the error and planning how to correct it have an impact on student academic achievement and teacher applications (Tomczyk, 2013). Corrective feedback also affects students' motivation. Giving feedback in the right time and place will increase the effort, motivation and participation of the students (Hattie and Timperley, 2007).

In some respects, error analysis and correction may be difficult in language education. First of all, concentrating more on the students' error can make things worse because when teacher focuses more on students' error, it can be difficult to monitor their development and learning. Secondly, teacher gives feedback only the students' utterances. Language involves listening and reading skills required to get and understand as much as the skills like speaking and writing required production. Teacher should evaluate his/her students by considering these four skills. Other than these, teachers may not reach the students who do not produce anything for the fear that s/he makes error. Teachers should have strategies to involve the shy students into the lessons as much as courageous ones. Lastly, teacher may have difficulty in error correction when s/he considers the language fragmentary rather than entirely (Brown, 2007). These difficulties about the error analysis and correction can be seen in all classes and teacher attitudes affect error correction to a large extent.

Corrective feedback preferences vary depending on teachers' teaching style, strategy and method usage and attitudes towards their students. It is seen that giving corrective feedback in the right time and place is highly important for and related to the teachers. Therefore, teachers' corrective feedback usage frequency, preferences and reasons are important in terms of foreign language teaching and students' academic achievement in language learning.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many research projects can be seen in the literature about corrective feedback. These studies are mostly related to the way the feedback is perceived, its acceptance by the recipient and the willingness of the recipient to respond to the feedback (Ilgen, Fisher and Taylor, 1979). Basically, oral and written corrective

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feedback types are generally investigated in language learning. One of the studies is conducted by Panova and Lyster (2002) to examine students' oral errors and teachers' response to them. For this study, language classes are observed for 10 hours and coded according to Lyster and Ranta's (1997) model of corrective discourse. It is revealed that most of the time; teachers give little opportunity to students to correct themselves. The other study is conducted by Roothoofi (2014) to compare the teachers' beliefs about oral feedback and observation of ten adult EFL teachers. The results show that teachers are not aware of the amount and type of feedback they provide. Although teachers think that feedback has a crucial importance, most of them provoke negative affective responses to students. The study suggests that the teachers should be informed and experimental studies should be conducted in this area. Other than these, it is seen that there are many studies in the area of oral corrective feedback in language learning (Lochtman, 2002; Pishghadam, Hashemi, veKermanshahi, 2011). There are many research that have investigated the written corrective feedbacks as well as oral ones. There is a contradiction about whether written corrective feedback is beneficial to the students or not. While some researchers mention the benefits of written corrective feedback, some others claim that this type of feedback is unnecessary, inefficient even harmful (Bitchener, Young and Cameron, 2005; Van Beuningen, De Jong and Kuiken, 2008). For example, Van Beuningen, De Jong and Kuiken (2008) search the effects of direct and indirect written corrective feedback on students. They find that both direct and indirect corrective feedback types have short impact on students; however, direct feedbacks can have long term effect, too. Bitchener, Young and Cameron (2005) indicate that feedbacks' effects are highly related to the type of feedback and subject. It is seen that there are many research about corrective feedback in English Language Teaching. In this study, it is aimed to find out secondary school English language teachers' frequently used corrective feedback preferences, how often and why they use these certain corrective feedback styles in their classes. For this reason, research question is defined as 'What kind of oral and written corrective feedback types are used among secondary school English language teaching teachers? And what are the reasons behind it?'

III. METHOD

1.1. Research Design

In this research, qualitative research methods are employed and case study design is used because current study requires working within the framework of real life situations. In this study, the case is the teachers' most frequently used corrective feedback types in their classes.

1.2. Participants

One of the purposive sampling methods named as typical sampling method is used as a sampling method in this research for the reason that the teachers and their classes have similar features with their colleagues and the research can be generalized. 10 teachers and their classes are selected in the province of Tokat, Turkey. The classes are selected from 5th, 6th and 7th graders. 8th graders are not selected because of the fact that they prepare for TEOG exam (Transition from Basic Training to Secondary Education) and they can be annoyed with these observations.

1.3. Data Collection and Analysis

First of all, interviews are arranged for getting the opinions of these ten teachers about what kind of errors should be corrected, how and who should perform error correction in the classroom (teacher, students by themselves or peer correction), error corrections that they perform in their classes, how often they perform error corrections and the reasons behind it. Interview data are collected through semi-structured form consisting of 14 questions. Then, observations are conducted in the classes where the interviewees lecture to determine in what way and how often the teachers correct their students' oral errors. Observations are 2 hours per teacher, 20 hours in total. Lastly, students are asked to keep diaries in English and the teachers are asked to correct the errors the students make. 70 papers are examined in total. Later, document analyses are conducted on these papers to see what kind of students' written errors are corrected and how.

Content analysis is made by using MAXQDA program in order to classify the data obtained from interviews. First, the data obtained from the interviews are transcribed, then the concepts used in the content are identified, units of analysis are determined, coding categories are constructed and lastly content analysis is performed. Data obtained from the observations classified according to Doughty's (1994) error correction strategy list and the data obtained from documents are classified according to Ellis' (2009) typology of written corrective feedback types.

IV. FINDINGS

1.4. Most Frequently Performed and Corrected Language Errors

Teachers indicate that the students most frequently made pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and semantic errors respectively and they say that most of the time they correct the errors which are related with pronunciation.

"I think the students make meaning and pronunciation errors. However, most of the time, they make pronunciation errors (T5, 8-9)"

"Students make pronunciation errors most of the time, then they do grammatical errors. This is because of differences between Turkish and English pronunciation and grammar rules." (T2, 8-10).

1.5. The Time of Corrective Feedback

Teachers state that they correct the errors more frequently according to the level of students and the subjects. If the subjects can be seen in the exams like TEOG, they use corrective feedback more. Other than these, they make more correction while doing exercises.

"Generally, I give feedback according to the level of students. If the student learns new things, I can tolerate his/her errors. But if the level of student is high, I correct his/her errors immediately." (T1,12).

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1.7. Immediate, Delayed or Ignored Corrections

Teachers indicate that they correct the errors about pronunciation immediately because if they do not correct it, it can be permanent. Furthermore, if the subject is new for students, prerequisite and educationally important or the error made by more than one student, the teachers stop the lesson and correct the errors the students made. For teachers, some errors can be delayed. These types of errors are most of the time related to grammar. Teachers think that the students can correct their grammar errors in time. Other than this, if the teacher thinks that the students know the true version and made a mistake or slip of tongue at that time, they can delay the correction. Lastly, the teachers indicate that if the error does not affect the meaning of the sentence, they may not correct these types of errors immediately. The third version is ignoring the error the students made and the teachers say that they can ignore the vocabulary items that the students do not encounter with so often and the things they can learn later with their friends.

"For example if the student has a talk, I do not break in his/her speech. I wait till the end. If s/he reads a paragraph, I prefer to listen all of it. I do not interrupt the student. However, I correct him/her later than the speech or reading." (T3, 14)

Immediate, delayed and ignored type of corrections are shown in Table I:

Table I. Immediate, delayed and ignored type of error corrections

| Immediate correction | Delayed correction | Ignored correction |
|--|--|---|
| Pronunciation errors | Grammatical errors | The vocabulary items that the students do not encounter with more |
| The subjects that are important for next steps | Slip of tongues | The things they can learn later with their friends |
| At the risk of becoming permanent | The teacher thinks that the students know the true version but made a mistake at that time | |
| Error made by more than one student | If the error do not affect the meaning of sentence | |
| Newly learnt subjects | | |

1.8. Error Correction Methods

Most of the teachers believe that they should first tolerate the error and then if the students insist on making the same errors over and over again, they should correct it. They say that most of the time they correct the errors by repeating the error the students make, giving clues to students, offer an alternative to wrong version and providing students to find answers by arousing their curiosity. They think that most useful error correction methods are peer and self-correction. Peer correction is useful because the competitive nature of students and when peer correction is made, the students behave more carefully to not to be criticized. Self-correction is useful according to teacher because finding the answer by thinking and searching made it more permanent and students can feel more self-confident when they find the correct answers by themselves.

"I give options to the students. One of these is the wrong answer s/he says; the other is the corrected one. Then I ask which of these is the correct version."(T1, 40)

"I want them to correct their own errors by themselves or I use peer correction because most useful correction types are self-correction and then peer correction." (T4, 24)

1.9. Oral Correction Types

With the observation, teachers' oral corrective feedback types are tried to be revealed. It is seen that although the teachers say that self and peer corrections are useful for students, they most of the time correct the students' errors on their own. Teachers' oral corrective feedback types classified according to Doughty's (1994) error correction strategy list. This list is shown in below:

Table II. Doughty's (1994) error correction strategy list

| Code | Gloss | Definition | Example |
|---------|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Tclar | Teacher Clarification Request | A question or a statement with rising intonation that asks for further clarification of the learner utterance | S: Can you buy on (one) for me? T: Cıkıcıkık S: Onefor me. |
| Trep | Teacher Repetition | Exact repetition of the learner utterance | S: Ask for permission.. T: PErmission? S: Pörmission |
| Trec | Teacher Recast | Response to an utterance that in corporates content words of the utterance, but also changes the utterance in some way (e. g. Phonological, syntactic, lexical) but without adding any information | S: (candle) kandıl T: kendıl |
| Texp | Teacher Expansion | Response to a learner utterance that provides additional information not contained in the learner utterance | S: Youmustyourhomework. T: You must DO yourhomework |
| Ttrans | Teacher Translation | Immediate translation of learner utterance into Turkish | T: What can I do? Ne demekti? S: Ne yapabilirsin. T: Hayır, ne yapabilirim. |
| Teng | Teacher English | Teacher responded in English | |
| Untrans | Untranscribable | Utterances that were garble do run clear | |

Source:Doughty, C. (1994).Fine-tuning of feedback by competent speakers to language learners. James E. Alatis (Ed.) In Georgetown university round table on languages and linguistics: educational linguistics, cross cultural communication, and global interdependence (p. 96-108) Washington: Georgetown University Press. (Definitions are taken from this source)

Observation results are as in below:

Table III. Oral correction types of teachers

| | T1 | T2 | T3 | T4 | T5 | T6 | T7 | T8 | T9 | T10 | TOTAL |
|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-------|
| Tclar | 12 | 8 | 15 | 9 | 16 | 6 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 11 | 94 |
| Trep | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 23 |
| Trec | 19 | 32 | 13 | 17 | 25 | 12 | 10 | 16 | 23 | 38 | 205 |
| Texp | 4 | 3 | 1 | 8 | 10 | 7 | 5 | 11 | 6 | 9 | 64 |
| Ttrans | 17 | 12 | 16 | 3 | 9 | 11 | 10 | 5 | 1 | 16 | 100 |
| Teng | 0 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 21 |
| Untrans | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 10 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 27 |
| TOTAL | 60 | 62 | 51 | 41 | 71 | 47 | 36 | 46 | 43 | 77 | 534 |

As seen in table 2, the observation results show that the teachers make teacher recast and teacher translation most of the time in their classes.

1.10. Written Correction Types

In order to explore written corrective feedback types of teachers, students are asked to keep diaries in English and teachers are asked to correct their errors in written papers. Teachers' written corrective feedback types are classified according to Ellis' (2009) typology of written corrective feedback types. This list is shown in table IV:

Table IV. Ellis' (2009) typology of written corrective feedback types

| Corrective feedback types | Definition | Frequency |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------|
| Direct CF | The teacher provides the student with the correct form. | 136 |
| Indirect CF | The teacher indicates that an error exists but does not provide the correction | 13 |
| a. Indicating+ locating the error | a. This takes the form of underlining and use of cursors to show omissions in the student's text | 7 |
| b. Indication only | b. This takes the form of an indication in the margin that an error or errors have taken place in a line of text. | 6 |
| Metalinguistic CF | The teacher provides some kind of metalinguistic clue as to the nature of the error | 11 |
| a. Use of error code | | |

| | | |
|---|---|-----|
| b. Brief grammatical description | a. Teacher writes codes in the margin (e.g. ww= wrong word; art =article). | 0 |
| | b. Teacher numbers errors in text and writes a grammatical description for each numbered error at the bottom of the text. | 11 |
| The focus of the feedback a. Focused CF b. Unfocused CF | This concerns whether the teacher attempts to correct all (or most) of the students' errors or selects one or two specific types of errors to correct. | |
| | a. Focused CF is intensive | |
| | b. Unfocused CF is extensive | |
| Electronic feedback | The teacher indicates an error and provides a hyperlink to a concordance file that provides examples of correct usage | 1 |
| Reformulation | For feedback to work for either redrafting or language learning, learners need to attend to the corrections. Various alternatives exist for achieving this. | 12 |
| TOTAL | | 173 |

Source:Ellis, R. (2009).A typology of written corrective feedback types. *ELT Journal*,63(2), 97-107. (Definitions are taken from this source)

It is seen that most of the time teachers give direct corrective feedback to their students' written utterances.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Current study is designed to get the opinions of teachers about what kind of corrective feedback they use in their classes, how often and why they correct the errors. Furthermore, with observations and document analysis, the corrective feedback styles of teachers are tried to be discovered. Most of the time teachers correct the errors which are related to pronunciation and grammar and they indicate that students make errors about pronunciation most of the time. When literature is reviewed, it is seen that researches about corrective feedback are generally related to oral corrective feedback (Li, 2014; Lochtmann, 2002; LoewenveNabei, 2007; Roothoof, 2014; Tomczyk, 2013; Zhang and Rahimi, 2014). This shows that in language teaching, oral errors and oral corrective feedback has an important place. Teachers also mention that error correction time varies according to the level of students. Giving feedback based on the student's level is of great importance in terms of neuro-psychology, too. A study shows that determination of learners' ability to use short term memory and giving feedback according to it affects learning outcomes (Vogel-Walcutt, Abich and Carper, 2013).

Teachers correct immediately pronunciation errors, errors related to the subjects that are new for students, critical or the errors made by more than one student. They can delay the errors if it is grammatical or if the teacher thinks that the students know the true version and made a mistake or slip of tongue at that time. Furthermore, if the error does not affect the meaning of the sentence, they can delay it. They can ignore the vocabulary items that the students do not encounter with so often and the things they can learn later with their friends. The time and place of error correction is important because corrective feedback affects the students' motivation and self-confidence (Dörnyei, 1994; McCarty, 1986). Li (2014) states that some errors should be developmental and internalized by students so teachers should only assist some of the errors of students. Teachers think that students' self-correction and peer correction are useful for them. Likewise, Tomczyk (2013) states that first of all, teachers should allow students to correct their own mistakes, then if students cannot correct their errors, they should use peer correction and lastly they should make correction on their own. Furthermore, a research conducted by Pishghadam, Hashemi and Kermanshahi (2011) points out that learners prefer self-correction and peer correction when they notice a mistake on their own. However, in this research, observation results show that they generally correct the students' error themselves. Most of the time, they use recast and translation methods in oral correction. Similar studies show the resembling results (Panova and Lyster, 2002; Roothoof, 2014). However, it can be said that these corrective feedback types can prevent students from finding the answer on their own. It is seen that teachers use direct correction in written types. In their study related to written corrective feedback Bitchener, Young and Cameron (2005) indicate that direct written corrective feedback can be more effective when it is combined with oral corrective feedback. It is thought that this research can provide teachers some clues about corrective feedback styles and have positive effects on teachers and also students. Conducting similar studies with different sample groups and different levels can be useful for teachers on this topic. This study can provide some contributions to future similar studies.

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