

# CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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## **Abstract**

Over the last few decades, corrective feedback has been a major area of interest within the language acquisition field. In particular, its role has been subject of controversy due to its questionable effectiveness. To date, several studies have focused on second language contexts, but less has been done in foreign language contexts. Thus, this paper focuses on the latter by reviewing the literature on corrective feedback in English as a Foreign Language contexts. The review covers the process of corrective feedback in the classroom setting, including decisions regarding the errors to target and the feedback provider(s). Moreover, it contains both oral and written corrective feedback types and the preferences teachers and students have of them. Finally, this paper addresses the importance of student uptake and its consequent impact on students. In addition to providing a general overview, this paper suggests that both oral and written corrective feedback have a positive impact on students, more specifically, on two aspects of the classroom setting: speaking skills and writing accuracy. Lastly, further research lines and pedagogical implications are proposed.

**Keywords:** corrective feedback, English as a foreign language, literature review, classroom setting

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## 1. Introduction

Central to the entire discipline of foreign language acquisition, the study of corrective feedback (CF) has received considerable critical attention in recent decades. This term refers to “teacher and peer responses to learners’ erroneous second language (L2) production” (Li, 2014, p. 196). More specifically, Ellis (2009, pp. 3-4) stated that:

Corrective feedback constitutes one type of negative feedback. It takes the form of a response to a learner utterance containing a linguistic error. The response is an other-initiated repair and can consist of (1) an indication that an error has been committed, (2) provision of the correct target language form, (3) metalinguistic information about the nature of the error, or any combination of these.

This teaching strategy is considered necessary in supporting and consolidating foreign language learning as it matches the learner’s utterance with its corresponding version in the target language and draws her attention to structures that still have not been mastered (Tesnim, 2019). Therefore, the growing interest in CF resides mainly in its theoretical and pedagogical significance, which consolidate foreign language learning.

Even though corrective feedback is a term that has been widely used in recent years, the diverse definitions are similar in that they include teachers’ and learners’ participation and a classroom as a setting where CF takes place. Even so, the role and importance of CF are amid growing debate as perspectives vary.

The use of corrective feedback or its absence in the language classroom is in the midst of this controversy. According to Mendez and Cruz (2012), some of the problems seem to be (a) the inconsistency, ambiguity, and ineffectiveness of teachers’ correction, (b) random and unsystematic feedback on errors by teachers, (c) acceptance of errors for fear of interrupting communication, and (d) a wide range of learner error types addressed as corrective feedback.

Corrective feedback has been discussed mainly in second language acquisition contexts. Nevertheless, fewer studies focus on foreign language settings. For this reason, the current literature review aims at shedding further light on this issue by presenting the choices the teacher needs to make when providing the student with CF in

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts as well as the impact these may have on students.

The overall structure of this literature review has eight main sections, including this introduction. Section 2 looks at error analysis, and more specifically, the errors that should be targeted within corrective feedback. Section 3 presents the different feedback providers, both in oral and in written CF. Section 4 presents the various oral and written CF types available. Section 5 contains the CF preferences of teachers and students. Sections 6 and 7 address the importance of students' responses to corrective feedback and the consequent impact it can have on them. Finally, the conclusion provides a summary and a final interpretation of the topic.

## **2. Error Analysis: What Errors to Target**

Errors have always been seen as something avoidable and so the question of what errors to target seems a highly important aspect of foreign language learning. In an attempt to answer it, Corder (1967) suggests that a distinction should be made between *errors* and *mistakes* and he states that teachers should correct *errors* but not *mistakes*. Corder explains that *errors* occur due to a lack of knowledge, thus, they are systematic. On the other hand, *mistakes* are of no significance to the process of language learning as they occur when a learner fails to perform to her competence (i.e. they are non-systematic). However, he qualifies that “the problem of determining what is a learner's mistake and what a learner's error is one of some difficulty and involves a much more sophisticated study” (p.167).

Moreover, apart from distinguishing errors from mistakes, Yoshida (2008) further classifies errors into four categories:

1. Morphosyntactic errors occur when learners incorrectly use items such as word order, tense, conjugation, and participles.
2. Phonological errors indicate mispronunciation of words.
3. Lexical errors involve the inappropriate use of vocabulary or a code-switch to their first language due to a lack of lexical knowledge.
4. Semantic and pragmatic errors occur when the teacher does not understand the learner's utterance, even if there are no grammatical, lexical or phonological errors.

Burt (as cited in Tesnim, 2019) suggests distinguishing global errors from local errors. She claims that teachers should privilege providing CF on global errors over local errors as the former affect the overall sentence organization (e.g. wrong word order, missing or wrongly placed sentence connectors and syntactic overgeneralizations) whereas the latter affect single elements in the sentence (e.g. errors in morphology or grammatical functions). Therefore, global errors cause communication problems and should be corrected, but not local errors, in which the teacher's correction may only disrupt the course of communication.

Finally, Ferris (as cited in Bitchener et al., 2005) introduces the distinction between treatable and untreatable errors. According to her, treatable errors are those which occur in a rule-governed way (e.g. verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, article usage, plural and possessive noun endings, and sentence fragments). Learners can consult grammar books or sets of rules to correct these errors. Ferris states that untreatable errors (e.g. word choice errors and unidiomatic sentence structure) are idiosyncratic and so cannot be found in books. Instead, learners need to resort to their acquired knowledge of the language to resolve the error.

As we observe, diverse distinctions and classifications exist regarding the types of errors to correct. Nevertheless, neither in theory nor in practice is there agreement regarding the decision of what errors to correct. When dealing with errors, the CF provider needs to carefully identify and target the error types she finds appropriate to correct.

As noted by Ellis (2009), the implementation of these proposals in practice is not a straightforward affair, as these distinctions are not as clear-cut as would be expected at a glance. Moreover, he comments that the gravity of an error is to a great extent a personal matter given that there is no accepted theory of grammatical complexity that could help instructors decide whether a rule is simple or not. Thus, the decision of what errors to target seems to be a complex task that the instructor needs to complete before giving feedback.

### **3. Corrective Feedback Providers in the Classroom Setting**

The choice of corrector seems to be another controversial issue regarding CF. Mendez and Cruz (2012) specify three different correction providers taking into account the participants in the corrective feedback interaction: self-correction, peer correction, and teacher correction.

Self-correction occurs when the learner becomes aware of the error that she has committed and provides the correct form to repair it. This type of correction is face-saving and enables the learner to participate actively in the corrective event (Mendez & Cruz, 2012). Nowadays, self-correction plays an important role as it fosters autonomous learning. Nevertheless, Ellis (2009) recognizes several problems. He states that students typically prefer the teacher to correct them. Moreover, he declares that learners can only correct themselves when they possess the necessary linguistic knowledge. In Corder's (1967) terms, they will be able to correct their mistakes—not their errors. This means that an additional correction, typically teacher correction, will be needed for learners to identify forms that are not yet part of their interlanguage (Ellis, 2009).

Peer correction indicates that one learner corrects another. In peer correction both learners are involved in a face-to-face interaction, which enables them to cooperate in language learning and become less teacher-dependent (Mendez & Cruz, 2012). Moreover, this correction does not make errors public, protecting the learner's self-esteem and increasing her self-confidence. As noted by Mendez and Cruz (2012), peer correction is considered to be useful for teachers as it allows them to obtain information about learners' current abilities. According to Ganji (2009), this method can be informative because it comes from an equal who shares the same experience.

The third option is teacher correction. This occurs when the feedback provider is the teacher, who has the knowledge and ability to identify and solve the problems that may arise. Furthermore, the teacher has the tools to make the learner understand the error. Nevertheless, Walz (as cited in Ganji, 2009) noted that if learners are given the correct answers, a long-term memory pattern may not be established. Even so, this method is used normally in the classroom setting and the next section turns to it.

## 4. Types of Corrective Feedback

Broadly speaking, the strategies employed in CF are divided into two main groups based on the form: oral corrective feedback and written CF. As advanced in the previous section, since the feedback provider tends to be the teacher this section presents the teacher CF strategies.

### 4.1. Oral Corrective Feedback

Oral corrective feedback (OCF) is a type of CF that occurs when the teacher makes corrections to repair ill forms of linguistic units used in speaking (Mufidah, 2018).

#### 4.1.1. OCF Strategies

OCF comprises recasts, repetitions, clarification requests, explicit corrections, metalinguistic explanations, elicitations, and paralinguistic signals. These strategies are classified into (a) implicit vs. explicit and (b) input-providing vs. output-prompting. These distinctions are provided in the following table (Ellis, 2009):

**Table 1**

*A Taxonomy of CF Strategies*

	<i>Implicit</i>	<i>Explicit</i>
Input-providing	Recasts	Explicit correction
Output-prompting	Repetition	Metalinguistic explanation
	Clarification requests	Elicitation
		Paralinguistic signals

The classification into implicit and explicit CF strategies is the most commonly used division. “With explicit, there is an overt linguistic signal in the correction; with implicit the correction is prompted or elicited without an overt linguistic signal” (Mendez & Cruz, 2012, p. 66). Regarding the division into input-providing and output-prompting, Li (2014) states that the former provides the correct form without encouraging a

response from the learner whereas the latter withholds the correct form and is more likely to be followed by learner uptake.

#### **4.1.1.1. Recasts**

As noted by Sheen (2011), a recast is a reformulation of the students' erroneous utterance that aims at correcting all or part of it and that is enclosed in the continuing discourse. This strategy can be realized in various ways (Ellis, 2009). First of all, recasts may or may not include prosodic emphasis on the problematic form. Moreover, they may be performed with rising intonation (i.e. as a confirmation check) or with falling intonation (i.e. as a statement). They can also be partial or complete, the former meaning that they reformulate only the erroneous segment in the learner's utterance and the latter referring to reformulating all of it. Finally, they may involve correcting just one or more than one feature. Mendez and Cruz (2012) add that recasts can be didactic or conversational. A didactic recast is a partial or whole reformulation that draws the learner's attention to the error made and whose purpose is merely pedagogical, whereas the conversation recast occurs in a communication breakdown where the corrector reformulates to verify that the information is comprehended.

Therefore, depending on the form of realization, recasts can be implicit, as in the case of full recasts performed in isolation, as a confirmation check, and without any prosodic emphasis; or they can be more explicit, as in the case of partial recasts performed in conjunction with another strategy, such as repetition, and as a statement with prosodic emphasis (Ellis, 2009). The following dialogues from Mendez and Cruz (2012, p. 65) illustrate this strategy:

Student: I have 20 years old

T: I am

(Partial didactic recast)

Student: I can lend your pen?

Teacher: What?

Student: Can I lend your pen?

Teacher: You mean, Can I borrow your pen?

(Conversation recast)

#### **4.1.1.2. Explicit Correction**

In explicit correction, the feedback provider makes the learner aware of the error, identifies it, and provides the appropriate correction (Ellis, 2009). Sheen (2011) notes that this treatment is usually accompanied by phrases such as “It’s not X but Y”, “We say X not Y” and “You should say X”. Mendez and Cruz (2012, p. 65) provide the following example:

Student: She go to school every day.

Teacher: It’s not “she go”, but “she goes”

#### **4.1.1.3. Repetition**

According to Mendez and Cruz (2012), in this strategy the wrong utterance is partially or entirely repeated to elicit the correct form. They note repetition generally includes some intonation change to emphasize the error. For instance (Mendez & Cruz, 2012, p. 66):

Student: I eated a sandwich

Teacher: I EATED a sandwich?

#### **4.1.1.4. Clarification Request**

According to Mufidah (2018), it occurs when the learner’s utterance contains an error and a clarification is requested. He states that a phrase such as “Pardon” or “I don’t understand” following the student utterance indirectly signals a misunderstanding or an ill-formation. Thus, the teacher indicates some kind of error to the speaker and that a repetition or reformulation is needed (Mufidah, 2018). Mendez and Cruz (2012, p. 66) provide an example:

Student: How many years do you have?

Teacher: Sorry?

#### **4.1.1.5. Metalinguistic Explanation**

As noted by Mufidah (2018), in this strategy a metalinguistic comment on the form is provided by the teacher. It also consists of a brief metalinguistic explanation in the form

of a comment, a question, or information that aims at eliciting a self-correction from the student. For instance (Mufidah, 2018, p. 220):

Student: She like reading a book.

Teacher: Third-person singular. Remember? Add 's'...

Student: She likes reading book.

#### **4.1.1.6. Elicitation**

It occurs when the instructor repeats the expression or some parts of it but not the incorrect part, where she uses rising intonation to signal it (Lubis et al., 2017). Yoshida (2008) states that this strategy can consist of (a) the teacher pausing strategically in the middle of an utterance to elicit the learner's completion, (b) the teacher using a partial repetition of the learner's erroneous utterance or (c) the teacher eliciting the learner's reformulation by asking questions. An example from Mendez and Cruz (2012, p. 66) illustrating this:

Student: When did you went to the market?

Teacher: When did you...?

#### **4.1.1.7. Paralinguistic Signal**

The corrector indicates to the learner that she has made an error by means of gestures or facial expressions (Ellis, 2009). Yao (as cited in Mendez & Cruz, 2012) notes that these may include a frown, a head-shaking, or a finger signaling "no". For instance (Mendez & Cruz, 2012, p. 66):

Student: She doesn't can swim

Teacher: Mmm. (Teacher shakes her head = no)

#### **4.1.2. Timing**

Regarding the timing of OCF, teachers face the dilemma of deciding whether feedback should be provided immediately after the error or later on. According to Li (2014) the former is called online CF whereas the latter represents offline CF, and both can focus either on a particular linguistic target or on a variety of linguistic features. As noted by Mendez and Cruz (2012), the main distinction that teachers implement tends to

be the one between fluency and accuracy. That is, the activity implies negotiation of meaning or it involves negotiation of form. Thus, teachers who practice a focus on meaning instruction and encourage fluency prefer delaying corrective feedback (i.e. offline CF) whereas instructors who follow a focus on form and want to encourage accuracy opt for both immediate (i.e. online CF) and delayed CF (Mendez & Cruz, 2012).

Long (as cited in Li, 2014) notes that online corrective feedback provide learners with opportunities for a brief timeout from the ongoing interaction. He states that it serves as an ideal form-focusing device in task-based language learning as it implies an immediate juxtaposition between wrong and correct forms. Besides, Li (2014) asserts that offline CF enables the instructor to annotate the main errors and then go through them with the class. More specifically, Willis and Willis (as cited in Li, 2014) have a preference for delayed CF since learners will not be predisposed to focus on a particular linguistic structure as form-focused instruction is contextualized. They add that “when linguistic forms are addressed in a pre-task phase, learners’ consequent obsession with form can undermine the primary focus on meaning” (p. 197).

Besides, it seems essential to consider the frequency of OCF in the classroom. As Mendez and Cruz (2012) state, an excess of correction can lead to a negative effect on the learner’s attitude and performance, while a lack of feedback can be perceived by students as a hindrance to efficient and effective language learning. Therefore, finding the right balance is far from being a simple task.

## **4.2. Written Corrective Feedback**

Written corrective feedback (WCF) is a type of CF that corresponds to how the reader indicates to the language student that some usage in the writing does not conform to the norms of the target language (Mufidah, 2018).

### **4.2.1. WCF Strategies**

WCF comprises direct CF, indirect, metalinguistic CF, unfocused CF, focused, electronic feedback, and reformulations. According to Ellis (2008), indirect CF can consist of (a) indicating and locating the error or (b) indicating only. Similarly,

metalinguistic feedback may imply (a) the use of error code or (b) brief grammatical descriptions. The classification adapted from Ellis (2008) is presented in Table 2:

**Table 2**

*Types of Teacher WCF*

1. Direct CF	
2. Indirect CF	a. Indicating + locating the error
	b. Indicating only
3. Metalinguistic CF	a. Use of error code
	b. Brief grammatical descriptions
4. The focus of the feedback	a. Focused CF
	b. Unfocused CF
5. Electronic feedback	
6. Reformulation	

**4.2.1.1. Direct CF**

Here the instructor provides the learner with the correct form (Ellis, 2008). Ferris (as cited in Ellis, 2008) notes that this correction can consist of crossing out an unnecessary word, phrase, or morpheme; inserting a missing word or morpheme; or writing the correct form above or near the erroneous form. The following example from Ellis (2008, p. 99) illustrates this strategy:

a	a	the
A dog stole <del>Λ</del> bone from <del>Λ</del> butcher. He escaped with having <del>Λ</del> bone. When the dog was		
over	a	a
going <del>through</del> <del>Λ</del> bridge over <del>the</del> river he <del>found</del> dog in the river.		

One of the major advantages of this strategy is that it provides learners with explicit guidance about how to correct their errors. This seems convenient provided that learners do not know what the correct form is and therefore, are not capable of self-correcting the error (Ellis, 2008). Accordingly, Ferris and Roberts (as cited in Farjadnasab & Khodashenas, 2017) suggest that this strategy is more effective than indirect CF with students of low levels of writing proficiency. Conversely, Ellis (2008) notes that even though it might help learners to produce the correct form when they revise their writing, it may not contribute to long-term learning as it requires minimal processing on the part of the learner.

#### 4.2.1.2. Indirect CF

According to Ellis, (2008) indirect CF consists of indicating to learners that they have made an error without correcting it. He states that depending on whether the intention is to show the precise location of the error or not, the forms can vary: teachers can underline the error or use cursors to show omissions in the student's text, corresponding to option 2.a in Table 2; or teachers can place a cross in the margin next to the line containing the error, corresponding to option 2.b. The following example from Ellis illustrates it (2008, p. 100):

A dog stole X bone from X butcher. He escaped with XhavingX X bone. When the dog was going XthroughX X bridge over XtheX river he found X dog in the river.
X = missing word
X __X = wrong word

Regarding this strategy, Ellis (2008) notes that indirect feedback (i.e. where the exact location of the error is not shown) might be more effective than direct feedback (i.e. where the location of the error is shown) since learners would have to engage in deeper processing.

### 4.2.1.3. Metalinguistic CF

Metalinguistic CF implies providing the learner with some sort of explicit comment about the source of the error she has made (Ellis, 2008). As Ellis explains, this comment can take two forms. The first one (option 3.a in Table 2) is the most common and involves the use of error codes, which consist of abbreviated labels that are placed in the text itself or the margin for the diverse sorts of errors. According to Ellis, if in the text, the learner needs to deduce the correction needed from the clue provided, whereas if in the margin, the learner needs to first locate the error and then deduce the correction. Respective examples are provided below (Ellis, 2008, p. 101):

art.	art.	WW art.
A dog stole bone from butcher. He escaped with having bone. When the dog was		
prep.	art.	art.
going through bridge over the river he found dog in the river.		

Art. x 3; WW	A dog stole bone from butcher. He escaped with having bone.
Prep.; art.	When the dog was going through bridge over the river he
Art.	found dog in the river.

The second form of metalinguistic CF (option 3.b in Table 2) implies providing the learners with brief grammatical descriptions of their errors. The example below taken from Ellis (2008, p. 102) illustrates this form. Here, the teacher numbers the various errors in the text and then writes a grammatical description for each numbered error at the bottom of the text (Ellis, 2008). According to Ellis (2008), this form is less common since “it calls for the teacher to possess sufficient metalinguistic knowledge to be able to write clear and accurate explanations for a variety of errors” (p. 101).

(1)	(2)	(3)
A dog stole bone from butcher. He escaped with having bone. When the dog was		
(4)	(5)	(6)
going through bridge over the river he found dog in the river.		
<i>(1), (2), (5), and (6)—you need ‘a’ before the noun when a person or thing is mentioned for the first time.</i>		
<i>(3)—you need ‘the’ before the noun when the person or thing has been mentioned previously.</i>		
<i>(4)—you need ‘over’ when you go across the surface of something; you use ‘through’ when you go inside something (e.g. ‘go through the forest’).</i>		

#### **4.2.1.4. Focused CF**

Depending on the focus, the feedback might be focused, which occurs when the focus of the feedback is on specific error types (Ellis, 2008). As previously mentioned, this focus can be applied to all the strategies. As noted by Ellis et al. (2008), focused CF is more intensive as it draws learners’ attention to specific errors while other errors are ignored.

The effectiveness of this strategy is among its advantages. Ellis (2008) notes that this strategy may prove particularly effective as it enables the student to examine numerous corrections of a single error, and thus, obtain the rich evidence needed to both understand the nature of the error and to acquire the correct form. He claims that given that learning depends on attention to form, it is assumed that “the more intensive the attention, the more likely the correction is to lead to learning” (p. 102).

#### **4.2.1.5. Unfocused CF**

CF can also be unfocused, meaning that the teacher corrects all of the student’s errors (Ellis, 2008). This can be applied to all the rest of the strategies. According to Ellis et al. (2008), unfocused CF is considered to be extensive, as it treats multiple errors.

This strategy addresses a variety of errors, so it may prove superior in the long run despite not being as effective as focused CF in assisting learners to acquire specific features (Ellis, 2008). Regarding the disadvantages of this strategy, Ellis (2008)

comments that in unfocused CF it will be more difficult for the learner to process corrections as she is required to attend to a wide variety of errors. Thence, the learner is unlikely to be able to meditate much on each error committed.

#### **4.2.1.6. Electronic Feedback**

Electronic feedback occurs when the instructor indicates to the learner the error committed and provides her with a hyperlink to the file where examples of correct usage are given (Ellis, 2008). As Ellis (2008) states, instructors can provide learners with assistance in their writing through extensive corpora of written English, which might be either carefully constructed or available via search engines such as Google.

This strategy eliminates the need for the teacher to determine what constitutes a correct form. According to Ellis (2008), a usage-based approach seems to be more reliable given that teachers' intuitions regarding grammatical correctness are not always reliable. Moreover, he claims that this strategy encourages student independence as it enables the learner to locate the corrections that are most suitable for their textual intentions.

#### **4.2.1.7. Reformulation**

The last strategy to be explained is reformulation. "This consists of a native speaker's reworking of the students' entire text to make the language seem as native-like as possible while keeping the content of the original intact" (Ellis, 2008, p. 98). This strategy, according to Ellis (2008), provides learners with a resource to correct their errors and enables them to have the responsibility to decide whether and how to correct.

The idea of using reformulation as a technique of providing feedback grows out of the procedure of reconstruction, where the teacher needs to construct a native-like version of the part of the text containing the error. Ellis (2008) continues explaining how then the writer revises and decides which of the reconstructions to accept, thus involving direct correction and revision and enabling the learner to identify the specific alterations that have been made. An example of this strategy from Ellis (2008, p. 104) is provided below:

Original version:	As he was jogging, his tammy was shaken.
Reformulation:	As he was jogging, his tummy was shaking. tummy shaking
Error correction:	As he was jogging his <del>tummy</del> was <del>shaked</del> .

**4.2.2. Timing**

With regard to the timing of WCF, it seems relevant to mention that correction is always delayed so as to allow teachers to collect students’ written works and respond to them (Ellis, 2009).

**5. Corrective Feedback Preferences**

The previous section has explored the different options when providing oral and written CF in the classroom setting. Among all the strategies covered, teachers and students have some preferences. Thus, the following sections deal with them.

**5.1. Teachers’ Preferences**

As mentioned above, teachers have some preferences concerning CF strategies and their timing that may vary depending on whether the feedback to be provided is oral or written.

**5.1.1. Teachers’ Preferences of OCF**

Regarding OCF preferences, Mendez and Cruz (2012) conducted a descriptive study at a Mexican university that offered EFL courses. For this study, five language instructors, aged 25 to 60, were interviewed and a questionnaire was distributed among 15 teachers, both methods intending to obtain data about teachers’ preferences and attitudes toward OCF. They found that clarification request was the strategy most used by teachers. More specifically, 86.6% of the teachers used it always and most frequently, even though the remaining part (13.4%) reported using it periodically. Moreover, paralinguistic signals and recasts were preferred by 80% of the teachers, with the remaining 20% using it occasionally. Finally, 67.7% of teachers opted for using repetitions always and frequently as an OCF strategy, whereas 20% rarely used it.

Considering timing, more than half of the instructors (60%) preferred to provide the whole class with feedback at the end of the class whereas the rest (40%) agreed that CF should be provided immediately after the learners' error.

In the same line, Yousefi (2016) conducted a study to investigate the frequency of OCF types. The participants were teachers from the Buali-Sina University in Iran. While students delivered an oral presentation the teacher was supposed to provide the students with OCF. The results showed that, from about 25 feedbacks provided in half an hour, 8 (32%) were clarification requests, 7 (28%) corresponded to metalinguistic feedback, 6 (24%) were recasts, 2 (8%) elicitation and, finally, 2 (8%) were repetitions.

Lubis et al. (2017) also used open- and close-ended questionnaires and interviews in their study in order to recognize teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards CF. Data was gathered from the answers of 19 teachers who were teaching at schools from different levels. The results revealed that out of 19, 10 teachers gave feedback in the middle of the oral task whereas 9 instructors preferred providing it at the end of the performance. Considering the group of teachers that favored online CF, 3 instructors preferred clarification requests, 4 leaned towards explicit corrections, 2 made use of elicitation, and 1 preferred paralinguistic signals. On the other hand, out of 9 teachers who opted for offline CF, 4 waited until the end of the performance with notes, 3 waited but without notes, 1 chose to wait without taking notes but giving a reward at the end, and 1 collected the students' errors and provided feedback when the lesson was finished.

Thus, these studies suggest that the strategy most preferred by teachers to provide OCF is using clarification requests. Moreover, a great number of instructors opt for recasts as a method to correct. Other strategies such as elicitation, paralinguistic signals or repetition are also common. Regarding timing, there is no agreement among instructors. While some of them lean towards online CF in order to make the learner notice the error, others favor offline CF so that the student is not interrupted.

### **5.1.2. Teachers' Preferences of WCF**

While several studies focus on teachers' preferences in relation to OCF, fewer analyze their tendency in relation to WCF. Among these latter is Lubis et al. (2017), who explored instructors' perceptions and attitudes by means of questionnaires and

interviews. The participants were 19 teachers from a state university in Indonesia. The results showed that out of 19 instructors, 8 opted for providing direct CF and 8 preferred indirect CF. Moreover, 2 leaned towards focused CF and verbal explanation (i.e. providing general feedback in class on common errors) and 1 preferred indirect CF and verbal explanation (i.e. putting a sign on the incorrect parts and providing oral feedback as well).

Similarly, Black and Nanni (2016) conducted a study in a Thai EFL context where they employed questionnaires so as to understand teachers' preferences regarding WCF strategies. The participants were 21 native English teachers. The results demonstrated that instructors favored indirect CF with metalinguistic comments (average value of 4.22 out of 5). This option was followed by indirect CF (3.47 average value) and direct CF with metalinguistic comment (3.42 average value). Teachers did not opt so much for direct CF, which received an average value of 2.68 out of 5.

Accordingly, the WCF strategies preferred by teachers are direct and indirect feedback. Between these, teachers favor indirect CF, especially with metalinguistic comments. Other strategies such as metalinguistic CF are also mentioned, generally in combination with other methods.

## **5.2. Students' Preferences**

As already stated, students have as well preferences concerning the type and the timing of CF, and these may not necessarily correspond to those of their instructors.

### **5.2.1. Students' Preferences of OCF**

In order to analyze students' preferences regarding OCF, Alamri and Fawzi (2016) conducted a study at Yanbu University College in Saudi Arabia. The participants were 84 female students of EFL aged around 22. They were randomly selected so as to have students from diverse levels. A questionnaire was used to gather data. The results indicated that students favored recasts (77%) and explicit correction (70%) as OCF methods. Moreover, they also opted for repetition and clarification requests (65% and 63%, respectively). Other strategies such as metalinguistic explanation (61%) and elicitation (58%) proved not to be so desirable. Regarding timing, there seems to be no agreement as some students preferred online CF whereas others opted for offline CF.

Following this line, Ananda et al. (2017) investigated students' preferences by means of interviews and a questionnaire. 76 EFL students from the Lambung Mangkurat University in Indonesia participated in the study. Based on the percentages, the results revealed that learners preferred repetition (65%) over other strategies. Elicitation and clarification requests were likewise chosen (56% and 52%, respectively) by slightly more than a half of the students. Not so popular were explicit correction (46%) and metalinguistic feedback (43%), chosen by less than half of the learners. When considering time, results showed that students preferred receiving OCF in class or immediately after their error instead of receiving it after the class.

Similarly, Rashti and Tous (2016) conducted a study in Iran for the same purpose. 100 Iranian EFL learners from the University of Guilan participated in it, 50 elementary and 50 upper intermediate learners. The research method chosen was a questionnaire. Results demonstrated that for the elementary participants, the types of OCF preferred were elicitation (4.06 out of 5) and explicit feedback (4.08). In contrast, they expressed their lowest rating for recasts (2.88 out of 5). In addition, upper intermediate level students leaned towards repetition (4.10 average value) and elicitation (4.02). They did not opt so much for recasts (2.98 out of 5). Concerning frequency, both elementary (3.64 average value) and intermediate learners (3.92) preferred offline CF.

Hence, there is no agreement regarding the type of feedback preferred by learners. Nevertheless, the types of OCF more popular among them seem to be recasts, repetition, elicitation and explicit feedback. Moreover, there is likewise a lack of agreement in regards to the frequency of OCF. While some learners prefer online CF others opt for offline CF.

### **5.2.2. Students' Preferences of WCF**

As in the case of teachers' preferences, few studies select students' preferences of WCF as their object of study. Still, Black and Nanni (2016) conducted a study in Thailand for this purpose. The participants were 262 intermediate Thai students aged between 17 and 20 from Mahidol University. The instrument used for this study was a questionnaire. The results suggested that learners favored direct CF with metalinguistic comment (4.43 out of 5) over other strategies. They also opted for direct CF (3.87 average value) and indirect CF with metalinguistic comment (3.22 average value).

Indirect feedback with study suggestion and indirect CF were not popular among Thai learners (2.55 and 2.41, respectively).

So as to investigate students' priorities regarding WCF, Aridah et al. (2017) conducted a study with 54 EFL students, with ages ranging between 18 and 22 years, from the Mulawarman University in Indonesia. The instrument used to collect data was a questionnaire. The results denoted that between direct and indirect CF students opted for direct feedback (33.17 and 20.59 out of 40, respectively). In addition, regarding the focus of the feedback, learners preferred unfocused feedback (27.76) over focused CF (18.48) (Aridah et al., 2017).

Therefore, these results suggest that students favor direct feedback and direct CF with metalinguistic comment over indirect CF. This would indicate that students prefer to have their errors corrected instead of thinking about the source of the error. Moreover, concerning the focus, they opt for unfocused feedback, where all the errors are corrected.

All these results imply that teachers' preferences do not correspond to those of students. While the OCF strategy preferred by teachers seems to be using clarification requests, students opt for other methods such as recasts, repetition or elicitation. When considering timing, there is no agreement between teachers and students. In addition, teachers' and students' views differ as well regarding WCF, as instructors favor indirect CF whereas learners lean towards direct CF. Accordingly, it appears relevant for teachers to be acquainted with their students' preferences before selecting the type of oral and written CF they will provide learners with.

## **6. Students' Response to Feedback: Uptake**

The effectiveness of the diverse types of CF explained is determined by students' response; that is, by whether there is an uptake and if so, by whether it results in repair or not. Uptake is defined by Lyster and Ranta (1997) as "a student's utterance that immediately follows the teacher's feedback and that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher's intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student's initial utterance" (p. 49). The sequence begins with the student's erroneous utterance and this may be followed by teacher's CF or not (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). If not, there is topic

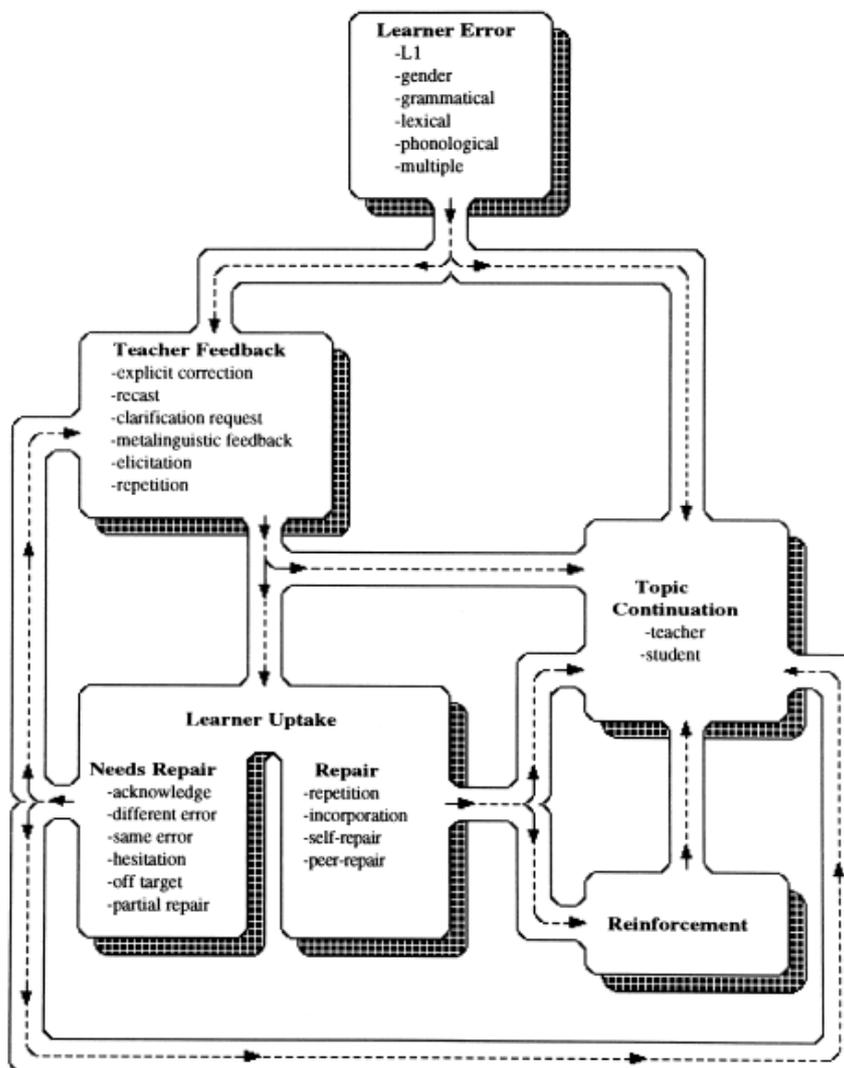
continuation. If CF is provided this can be followed by uptake or not. If there is uptake, it will be oral or written depending on the type of feedback provided by the teacher. The following sections will analyze students' uptake in the oral and written dimensions as part of the CF process.

## 6.1. OCF Uptake

According to Lyster and Ranta's (1997) model, student OCF uptake can be either (a) uptake resulting in repair of the error on which the teacher's feedback focused, or (b) uptake resulting in an utterance that still needs repair. This sequence is illustrated in Figure 1 (Lyster & Ranta, 1997):

**Figure 1**

*Error Treatment Sequence*



When considering uptake resulting in repair, Lyster and Ranta (1997) propose four types:

1. Repetition: the student's repetition of the correct form provided by the teacher.
2. Incorporation: the student's repetition of the correct form provided by the teacher, which is then incorporated into the student's longer utterance.
3. Self-repair: the self-correction produced by the student in response to the teacher's CF not including the correct form.
4. Peer-repair: the correction provided by another student in response to the teacher's CF not including the correct form.

As reflected in Figure 1, learner uptake can lead to topic continuation or reinforcement. On the one hand, topic continuation can be initiated by either the same or another student, or by the teacher. In the first case, the teacher's intention is ignored whereas in the second one, the teacher does not provide opportunity for uptake. On the other hand, reinforcement refers to the moment in which teachers reinforce the correct form before proceeding to topic continuation by making short statements of approval or by repeating the student's corrected utterance (Lyster & Ranta, 1997).

Regarding uptake resulting in an utterance still needing repair, Lyster and Ranta (1997) present six types:

1. Acknowledgement: normally a "yes" from the student in response to the teacher's feedback, implying that the student would like to say that. It may also refer to a "no" on the part of the student.
2. Same error: the student's uptake that includes a repetition of her original error.
3. Different error: the student's uptake that neither corrects the error nor repeats the original error; instead, she makes a different error.
4. Off target: the student's uptake that eludes the teacher focus without producing further errors.
5. Hesitation: hesitation from the student in response to the teacher's CF.
6. Partial repair: the student's uptake that includes a correction of only part of the original error.

This sequence leads to either more CF on the part of the teacher or topic continuation initiated by the student herself or another student, or by the teacher (Lyster & Ranta,

1997). Still, the main idea remains the same: to make the learner notice and appropriately correct the error.

## **6.2. WCF Uptake**

For WCF to work, learners need to respond to feedback. Therefore, Ellis (2008) provides various alternatives for achieving this: (a) A revision from the learner is required, or (b) No revision from the learner is required. In this second option students may be asked to study corrections or just to give back the corrected text.

Generally, the first option is chosen in order for learners to notice the errors. For this reason, an approach followed by Ferris (as cited in Ellis, 2008) has been to classify and describe the types of revisions made by the students:

1. Error corrected: the correction of the error by teacher's marking
2. Incorrect change: an incorrect change was made
3. No change: an apparent lack of response to the correction
4. Deleted text: the student's deletion of marked text rather than attempting correction
5. Correct substitution: an invented correction not suggested by the teacher's marking
6. Incorrect substitution: an incorrect change not suggested by the teacher's marking
7. Teacher-induced error: an incomplete or misleading teacher marking caused by student error
8. Averted erroneous teacher marking: the student corrected an error despite an incomplete or erroneous teacher marking

Therefore, according to Ellis (2009), it is decisive that students revise their corrected text as this revision can be viewed as part of CF given that students may or may not be given the opportunity to revise their corrected writing.

In conclusion, for both oral and written CF to be effective, it is essential that the student responds to the feedback provided and successfully repairs the errors made following the alternatives provided above. If this sequence is followed, then CF will have an impact on the student, which constitutes the main objective of CF. The following section takes this up in detail.

## **7. Impact of CF on Students**

As previously stated CF may have an impact as long as the student attends to it and correctly processes it. Should this be the case, the resulting impact on the learner could be either positive or negative. For this reason, the efficacy of CF has been subject to a great deal of controversy both in ESL and EFL. Yet, for matters of space, this section will focus on the impact of CF on two common aspects of the classroom setting: language skills and writing accuracy.

### **7.1. Impact of OCF on Speaking Skills**

Speaking skills play a significant role in the oral dimension as they enable learners to communicate appropriately with their environment. Developing these skills is among the objectives of foreign language learning. Accordingly, various researchers have based their studies on the impact of OCF on learners' speaking skills.

Tesnim (2019) conducted a study in the University of Sfax in Tunisia to discover if EFL teachers' OCF positively affected the development of speaking skills. The participants were 3 Tunisian teachers and 20 first year university EFL students aged 20. Both teachers and learners were chosen randomly and included males and females with different levels of high language proficiency. His study had an experimental design that included a pre-test and a post-test. Oral presentations given by students about the topic of 'working as a part-time job while studying' were used. During the first presentation, students were provided with immediate explicit OCF. The objective was to determine the influence of OCF and their linguistic development at the level of grammar, vocabulary, fluency and pronunciation.

Regarding grammar, students showed generally a poor grammatical competence in the pre-test, despite being students with a greater grammatical command. Still, most of the students' scores increased notably from the pre-test to the post-test. Not so notable were the results concerning vocabulary. Overall, students' level of vocabulary was maintained from pre-test to post-test, with a few exceptions where the level rose. Similarly, there was little change in the mean number of errors between the two tests, where the rate of errors of the pre-test slightly surpassed the one of the post-test. A different picture emerged when taking into account fluency and pronunciation. In both

cases, scores remained largely unchanged from pre-test to post-test. Thus, OCF was helpful to improve students' grammatical competence but not to improve other oral aspects such as vocabulary, fluency or pronunciation.

Similarly, Dehgani et al. (2017) conducted a study to investigate whether OCF was effective in beginner and low intermediate EFL students' speaking achievement. The participants were 370 junior high school male students aged from 13 to 16 years old, separated into beginner and low-intermediate levels. These two groups were further subdivided into a control group and an experimental group. A standard speaking test from the students' English book was used to evaluate students' speaking skills. The data collected via this test was recorded as the participants' pretest score. Then, for six weeks, teachers provided the experimental group students with oral corrective feedback while the control group had their usual English classes. After this period, the same speaking test was used to measure the impact of OCF.

In the results, on the one hand, the score for the control beginner group slightly decreased from pre-test to post-test, whereas the mean speaking score for the experimental beginner group increased. On the other hand, the mean speaking score for the low-intermediate control group remained unchanged, while the score for the low-intermediate experimental group increased notably from pre-test to post-test. As the means of control groups decreased or were maintained and the scores of both experimental groups increased notably, OCF strategies were effective in improving students' speaking skills.

Chu (2011) conducted a study for the same purpose. The subjects of this study were second-year English majors. Three classes were used, a control class and two experimental classes, the latter receiving output-prompting OCF and input providing OCF, respectively. The instruments used were a pre-test and a post-test and classroom observation. A speaking task based on a set of images was used as the pre- and post-test. In the sixteen-week period, experimental classes experienced diverse OCF techniques while the control group continued without any feedback.

Results revealed that learners in experimental classes improved significantly the accuracy of oral English in their post-test, while the control group did not improve. Nevertheless, the effects of output prompting and input providing strategies on

improving oral accuracy were different as the first experimental class was better than the second one (Chu, 2011). In other words, OCF proved to be more effective than no feedback and more specifically, output-prompting strategies (i.e. repetition, clarification requests, metalinguistic explanations, elicitations and paralinguistic signals) had a greater effect than input-providing strategies (i.e. recasts and explicit corrections).

In conclusion, OCF seems to have a positive impact on students' oral skills as the variations from control to experimental groups are notable. However, not all aspects of the oral dimension improved by means of feedback. While OCF was helpful to develop students' grammatical competence, this was not the case for vocabulary, fluency or pronunciation. Moreover, there seem to be no differences among levels since lower and higher levels achieved almost equal notable variations from pre-tests to post-tests. Finally, it was discovered that output- prompting strategies have a greater impact on students' oral accuracy than input-providing strategies.

## **7.2. Impact of WCF on Writing Accuracy**

The most contentious part of CF is the one related to WCF and, more specifically, its efficacy regarding writing accuracy. At the heart of this polemic lies Truscott (1996), who claims that "grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned" (p. 328). Nevertheless, Ferris (1999) and other researchers find this statement overly strong and rash and opt instead for listening to their students' needs. As more researchers have based their studies on this topic after the discussion, this section aims at analyzing research evidence in order to examine the effects of WCF on writing accuracy.

For instance, Maleki and Eslami (2013) conducted a study so as to investigate whether WCF was effective to improve EFL learners' writing accuracy. The participants were 90 Iranian EFL learners who took part in intermediate courses at Iran-Australia Language School in Tehran and whose average age was 22. These students were separated into three groups, two experimental and one control group. Thus, experimental group A received direct CF in red pen, experimental group B received indirect CF and control group C received no feedback. The instrument used was a writing test package that included a pre-test, an immediate post-test and a delayed post-test.

Results from the immediate post-test showed that both group A and group B outperformed group C. Regarding the delayed post-test results revealed that group B performed better than group A and group C. In other words, WCF proved to be more effective than no feedback and, more specifically, indirect CF proved to be more effective than direct CF. Therefore, these results go against Truscott's (1996) claims, supporting the position that WCF is effective and thus has a positive impact on writing accuracy.

Similarly, Farjadnasab and Khodashenas (2017) conducted a study to compare the effectiveness of direct and indirect CF and to investigate whether there was a differential effect on accuracy when students were required to revise their productions. The subjects of the study were 79 Iranian low-intermediate EFL students with a mean age of 21 years old. These students were randomly assigned to four distinct groups. Group 1 received direct CF, group 2 received indirect CF and students were required to revise their writings, group 3 received indirect CF as well but students were not required to revise and finally, group 4 was de control group and accordingly, received no feedback. The design followed included a pre-test, an immediate post-test and a delayed post-test.

Results concerning the immediate post-test demonstrate there are no noticeable differences among the four groups. Conversely, there is an obvious difference between the control group and the indirect with revision group in the delayed post-test. Thus, even though the immediate post-test did not present any variation among groups the delayed post-test showed a notable variation, suggesting that WCF is effective in the long run and that indirect CF with revision is more effective than the other strategies employed in the study.

Ellis et al. (2008) analyzed the effects of focused and unfocused WCF on writing accuracy. The participants of the study were 49 Japanese EFL learners with ages between 18 and 19 years old. The design included three groups: a group receiving focused CF, a group receiving unfocused CF and a control group receiving no feedback. The three groups completed a pre-test, an immediate post-test and a delayed post-test, where three narratives that involved reading and then rewriting animal stories were employed.

Results demonstrate that the three groups increased their writing accuracy from pre-test to immediate post-test, especially unfocused group. Nevertheless, while the focused group continued to gain accuracy from the immediate post-test to the delayed post-test, the unfocused group maintained the same level and the control group declined its accuracy (Ellis et al., 2008). Thus, both experimental groups proved to be more accurate than the control group in the long term. In addition, even though unfocused CF was more effective initially, focused CF proved to be more effective in the long run.

Hence, results from the three studies indicate that WCF seems to improve writing accuracy and thus has a positive impact on students. Regarding strategies, indirect CF, especially when revision is required, proved to be more effective than direct CF. Moreover, unfocused CF proved to be more effective initially while focused CF was more effective in the long run. Accordingly, these results appear to be inconsistent with Truscott's (1996) assertions, proving that WCF has a positive impact on writing accuracy.

## **8. Conclusion**

The main purpose of this paper was to review the CF literature in EFL contexts. More specifically, this paper has presented the various decisions the feedback provider, usually the teacher, has to make throughout the process of CF. These include deciding on the type of errors to target, the feedback provider, and the type of CF to be provided. Regarding the latter decision, the review has explored the contrasting preferences of teachers and students. Accordingly, the impact of CF on learners will depend to a great extent on these decisions. In this respect, this paper has analyzed the effects of written and oral CF on two aspects of the classroom setting: speaking skills and writing accuracy.

To conclude, the present paper is an attempt to provide a general overview of the central issues concerning CF. In addition, it demonstrates that in general, CF is effective for EFL learners, especially in order to improve learners' speaking skills and writing accuracy. Still, further research is needed regarding CF in EFL contexts. Finally, as a pedagogical implication is suggested that feedback providers should be acquainted with their students' preferences of CF strategies as these tend to be different from the ones of teachers and other feedback providers.

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