



Oral corrective practices of selected Filipino high school teachers amid limited face-to-face learning

Karen Lapniten Bosaing

Abstract

Through a qualitative case study, the present study explored the corrective feedback practices employed by teachers during the conduct of classes during face-to-face learning in the Philippines. The frequency of giving oral corrective feedback as well as the type of spoken errors corrected by teachers was considered. The results revealed that teachers correct grammatical, phonological, and lexical errors of learners but the frequency of oral CF depends on the learners' level of proficiency and the teacher's belief in language teaching. When correcting errors, teachers use different strategies. The overall result indicates that some teachers focus on both meaning and structure when providing oral CF while other teachers focus on meaning or structure only.

Keywords: oral corrective feedback, speech production, case study

1. Introduction

Corrective feedback (CF) refers to the responses of teachers and peers to the erroneous second language (L2) production of learners (Li, 2014). The feedback, which can be done orally or in written form, is a response to a range of errors which includes pragmatic, linguistic, discourse, content, and organization errors (Nassaji & Kartchava, 2017). Oral CF is provided during speech production while written CF is provided after the completion of a written task. Also, oral CF focuses purely on language-related errors while written CF may target both language and content of writing (Li & Vuono, 2019).

Across institutional contexts, there is a variation in the frequency of oral CF as well as the variables that mediate its effectiveness (Lyster, Saito, & Sato, 2013). The errors corrected by teachers also vary as revealed in Brown's (2016) meta-analysis on the type and linguistic foci of oral CF in the L2 classroom. Accordingly, grammatical errors receive the greatest load of CF followed by lexical errors and phonological errors.

Studies on oral CF practices during the conduct of limited face-to-face learning in the Philippines are scarce. Two published papers (Camansi, 2010; Vallente, 2020) provided a glimpse of the oral CF practices of teachers in the country but the scope is limited to the university level and during the pre-Covid-19 pandemic situation. Thus, this study focusing on high school teachers' oral CF practices is carried out to provide a different perspective on the application of oral CF in the classroom, especially during the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Objectives

The questions answered in the study are:

1. What spoken errors do teachers provide feedback on and how frequently do they give feedback to learners' errors?
2. How do teachers provide oral corrective feedback on these errors?

3. Concepts, theories, and related research

Oral CF is effective in promoting interlanguage restructuring precisely because it is immediate (Doughty, 2001, as cited in Brown, 2016). In the L2 classrooms, teachers have a different focus as well as different strategies when correcting the errors of learners. Méndez and Cruz (2012) interviewed five language instructors in a university in Mexico to identify their perceptions of oral CF and how they implement corrective feedback in their classrooms. They found out that CF is directed toward morphosyntactic errors followed by errors in pronunciation, lexicon, and pragmatics. In terms of the strategies used in providing oral CF, teachers frequently use clarification requests, confirmation checks, and gestures. Overall, the teachers perceive the provision of oral CF positively because “they consider it necessary in language learning.” However, they need to know more about its effects and role in interlanguage development since the teachers look at CF only as a technique to improve accuracy in pronunciation and morphosyntax.

Bao (2019) also interviewed and observed the classes of eight university teachers in China. Results show that recasts were used by the teachers most frequently while prompts were least used when dealing with learner errors. In terms of the foci in error correction, the teachers corrected phonological errors more often than grammatical and lexical errors. Multiple errors which account for more than one type of error in a learner's utterance were scarcely corrected. The study revealed that the teachers have common beliefs when it comes to the provision of corrective feedback in the classroom and their beliefs influenced their frequency of providing CF. The study also highlighted the significant impact of the teachers' culture-shaped beliefs on their CF practices. The findings suggested that “a transition in teachers' beliefs is critical for a fundamental change in Chinese language pedagogy in general and in CF practices in particular.”

Using a semi-structured interview and classroom observations, Karimi and Asadnia (2015) investigated the oral CF strategies employed by Iranian teachers who are teaching at the elementary and intermediate levels. The findings revealed that teachers frequently employ explicit correction and elicitation when correcting errors at both levels. In particular, the use of recasts was higher at the intermediate level while the use of metalinguistic clues characterized by explanation and presentation of a set of examples was more frequent at the elementary level. The study also revealed that the teachers concentrate on morphosyntactic errors more than the phonological and lexical errors of learners.

In Vietnam, Ha and Murray (2020) investigated the oral CF beliefs and practices of primary English as a Foreign Language teachers. The data collected from classroom observations and semi-structured interviews showed that pronunciation errors received the highest correction followed by grammar and



vocabulary errors. The teachers most frequently used recasts as a form of oral CF and these recasts used were partial, didactic, and explicit. Interestingly, the didactic and explicit recasts used by the teachers do not differ significantly from explicit correction. This raises an important issue that future researchers can investigate.

Another classroom-based explanatory sequential design study was carried out by Yüksel, Soruç, and McKinley (2021) to determine the oral CF beliefs and practices of 20 university teachers in an intensive English language program in Turkey. The data revealed that in correcting the mistakes of their learners, the teachers made choices from a repertoire of oral CF types or techniques that ranged from implicit recasts to explicit correction. Among these techniques, the teachers used recasts and elicitations most frequently. Regarding the focus of the oral CF, the teachers provided more corrections to vocabulary errors than pronunciation and grammar errors. The teachers believed that their actions are correct and appropriate to their context and they stated that they would not change their choice if they had a chance. The study concluded that the teachers give greater value to topic continuation and fluency in speaking over-correction or accuracy.

The reviewed works of literature provided a glimpse of oral CF beliefs and practices in the L2 classroom. However, it only accounted for the experiences of university and elementary teachers. The investigation of oral CF practices at the high school level may provide a different perspective on the application of oral CF in the classroom, especially in the Philippine context since there is a scarcity of studies on oral CF in the country.

4. Method of operation

The study employed a qualitative case study approach to seeking the insights and perspectives of the case study subjects or participants (Duff, 2014). The participants are one male and two female English teachers from the Cordilleran region. Their average age is 32 and they have been teaching in public high schools for more than five years. The teachers were randomly selected, and their participation is voluntary. To safeguard the identity of the teachers, the pseudonyms Draco, Andromeda, and Carina were given.

The data were gathered from semi-structured interviews, which were conducted through phone and Facebook Messenger calls. During the interviews, the teachers were asked what spoken errors of learners they correct and how they provide oral corrective feedback on these errors. The answers were transcribed and sent back to the participants for review and confirmation. Afterward, the data were subjected to Nowell et al.'s (2017) six phases of analysis: familiarizing yourself with your data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

5. Results of the study

Question 1: What spoken errors of learners do you provide feedback on?

The spoken errors corrected by the teachers are grammatical, lexical, and phonological errors.

Table 1 Frequency of provision of oral CF to spoken errors of learners

Teacher	Frequency of oral CF provision		
	Grammar	Lexis	Pronunciation
Andromeda	Always	Always	Seldom
Carina	Always	Sometimes	Sometimes
Draco	Always	Always	Always

Question 2: How do you provide oral corrective feedback to learners' errors?

The teachers use different strategies when providing oral CF to learners' errors. Some prefer elicitation and clarification requests while others use repetition and clarification.

6. Discussion of results

The spoken errors corrected by the teachers are grammatical, lexical, and phonological errors. Based on the interview, the grammatical errors usually checked by teachers are incorrect subject-verb agreement and wrong verb tense and form while lexical errors include incorrect word use and incorrect word form. As for the phonological errors, teachers usually correct the mispronunciation of vowel and consonant sounds that are not found in the sound system of the Filipino language. Draco said:

My students have difficulty pronouncing words with the /æ/ sound as in squat or bat. They would say it as /skwat/... Also the voiced and unvoiced /th/. We don't have this sound in the Filipino language so some students will say /muh-der/ or /mot-bo/.

The frequency of provision of oral CF varies from one teacher to another as summarized in Table 1. The table shows that teachers always correct grammatical errors. In the interview, all of them reasoned out that grammatical errors interrupt the flow of communication, so they need to correct them. Andromeda and Draco echoed this line of reasoning on why they always correct lexical errors. On the other hand, Carina stated that she only corrects lexical errors if the error changes the meaning of the sentence uttered. The first sentence below is an example of an utterance that Carina does not correct while the second sentence is an utterance that she corrects.

Sentence 1: The teacher is beauty.

(beauty is used instead of beautiful)

Sentence 2: The driver does not have any patient.

(patient is used instead of patience)

Table 1 also shows that Draco is the only teacher who always corrects the pronunciation errors of learners. He believes that pronunciation errors like grammatical and lexical errors disrupt the flow of communication, thus he corrects the mispronunciation of learners. He also explained that since he handles Grade 7 learners, he almost always corrects a lot of errors. On the other hand, Andromeda admits that she



is lenient in correcting pronunciation errors because she advocates intelligibility over accuracy. She explained:

I tell my students that it is okay to mispronounce some words...especially when I call them to recite. I always tell them that we are not native speakers, so we tend to mispronounce some words. As long as I have understood what the student said, I'm fine with that.

The result shows that when providing oral CF to learners' errors, Draco and Andromeda pay attention to both meaning (grammar and lexis) and structure (pronunciation) while Carina pays more attention to meaning than structure.

In terms of the strategies used by teachers when giving oral CF, the results show that the teachers use different strategies when correcting learners' errors. Carina prefers elicitation and clarification requests because she wants to encourage her learners to self-correct their errors. She said that this is a more subtle way to correct the errors of learners than explicit correction. Carina also mentioned that she uses phrases like "Can say that again?" or "What was that?" to clarify a learner's utterance. She narrated how she employed elicitation in correcting grammatical errors:

When my students commit errors in S-V agreement, I repeat the sentence, but I pause before the error. This will prompt the learner to provide the correct verb. For example, if the student said, 'The barangay captain, together with the councilmen, attend the flag ceremony every day.' I will say, "The barangay captain, together with the councilmen...?"

Like Carina, Andromeda uses elicitation to correct the errors of learners. However, she admits that sometimes, learners fail to provide the correct form of language, so she resorts to other strategies like conversational recast and repetition. During the interview, Andromeda said:

As much as possible, I don't like to explicitly correct the errors of learners because I fear that they may be embarrassed, or they won't answer anymore... I let them think about which part of their utterance is wrong by clarifying what they said or by repeating their sentence and emphasizing the wrong word said.

From the responses of the teachers, it is clear that both Andromeda and Carina consider the feelings and emotions of their learners by leaning toward more implicit ways of correcting errors. The consideration of learners' emotions and feelings when providing oral CF is also noted by other scholars. Méndez and Cruz (2012), for example, found out that Mexican teachers prefer providing a general oral CF because they are concerned with their learners' feelings and emotions and "their fear of interrupting and inhibiting participation."

Both Andromeda and Carina strongly express their dislike for the explicit correction of errors. For Draco however, this is the form of correction that he prefers to use apart from didactic recast. Draco argued that learners can benefit from direct correction of errors. He said:

The students will know what error to correct if I directly tell them what their errors are...when they mispronounce a word, for example, I tell them how to say the word correctly.

During the interview, Draco clarified that he used to employ other oral CF strategies like elicitation, repetition, and clarification. However, he noticed that many of his learners failed to recognize their errors, so he was prompted to point out the errors of learners. He said:

I do not find the relevance of reformulating a student's utterance when he is not aware that he committed a mistake anyway. Isn't it better to point out the error rather than going around the bush?

Based on the responses of the teachers, it can be gleaned that they use different oral CF feedbacks according to what they think is more appropriate for their learners. This is similar to Yüksel et al.'s (2021) findings where the teachers provide corrections and use oral CF strategies which they think are correct and appropriate to their context.

7. Summary and suggestions

This study aimed to provide insight into the oral CF practices employed by selected Filipino high school teachers during the conduct of limited face-to-face learning brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings reveal that teachers correct grammatical, phonological, and lexical errors of learners but the frequency of oral CF depends on the learners' level of proficiency and the teacher's belief in language teaching. The study further reveals that teachers use different strategies when correcting errors. The results indicate that some teachers focus on both meaning and structure when providing oral CF while other teachers focus on meaning or structure only.

There are some limitations of this study. First is the limited number of participants thus, the findings may not be consistent with other studies on oral CF practices. However, it may provide insight into the oral CF practices of Filipino high school teachers. Another limitation is the method of data gathering which is limited to semi-structured interviews only. Future research may want to consider classroom observations and other methods of data gathering for triangulation purposes.

8. References

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