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Perceptions of Scaffolded and Unscaffolded Corrective Feedback in the Portuguese EFL Context

ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the beliefs English as a Foreign Language (EFL) 9th grade learners (n=166) and teachers (n=5) hold about scaffolded and unscaffolded corrective feedback (CF). Participants completed a Likert-scale questionnaire that dealt with the necessity, frequency and timing of error correction, types of errors and their correction, effectiveness of CF strategies and who was responsible for the CF. Results indicate that both learners and teachers value CF, though learners prefer immediate correction while teachers favor feedback after the learner's turn. Both groups prioritize correcting communication-hindering and grammar- or vocabulary-related errors. Learners perceive explicit corrections and recasts as the most effective strategies, whereas teachers favor recasts and prompts. Learners regard the teacher as the main source of CF, followed by self-correction, while teachers opt for promoting self-correction, but also provide CF themselves and resort to peer feedback. These findings are discussed in light of the distinction between scaffolded and unscaffolded CF, highlighting areas of convergence and divergence between learners' and teachers' beliefs and their implications for promoting learner development within the Zone of Proximal Development.

Keywords: *English as a Foreign Language (EFL), corrective feedback (CF), beliefs, 3rd cycle learners.*

Introduction

In the framework of the Sociocultural Theory (Lantolf, 2000; 2006; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007), the value of corrective feedback (CF) lies in the opportunities it provides for scaffolding, since it is through this collaborative process that feedback can foster learners' interlanguage growth and ability (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994). The social and dialogic nature of interaction (Nassaji & Swain, 2000) are central to this theory, as language learning is regarded as a process that takes place within a social environment (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Therefore, CF is not understood solely as strategies to correct learners' errors, but as "dialogic endeavor" (Nassaji, 2021: 87) in which teacher and learner interact and the former tries to assist the latter in achieving what he or she would struggle to achieve without help. CF is, thus, according to the Sociocultural Theory, a process which is entrenched and affected by the social context in which the learning takes place, which means that to truly understand how CF works and

how it can help learners, several other aspects such as the teacher, other learners and the educational context must be taken into account.

According to the Sociocultural Theory, it is this interaction between the learner and the teacher as someone who has superior skills in the L2 that enables the learner to use his or her linguistic knowledge to improve his or her skills in the L2. However, this interaction must take place within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), a crucial notion in the theory, which Vygotsky (1978) defines as the distance between what learners can do on their own and what they require assistance with.

This is where scaffolding comes into play, as a type of assistance that is appropriate to the learner in the sense that it is negotiated within the learner's ZPD. The notion has been interpreted in different ways, for example by Donato (1994: 40), as the process in which "a knowledgeable participant creates, by means of speech, supportive conditions in which the novice can participate in, and extend current skills and knowledge to higher levels of competence".

In this context, the dynamics of the interaction in CF may create opportunities to promote the learner's autonomy and progressive mastery of the TL. Effective CF is, in the scope of the Sociocultural Theory, scaffolded CF, meaning that teachers should consider learners' developmental readiness. It should be progressive and contingent in nature (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994): progressive, meaning that it starts with a less direct form of assistance and becomes more direct if need be; and contingent, because it should give the learner the chance to adopt an active role. This is achieved by encouraging self-correction and bearing in mind that as they further develop their skills, learners will need less scaffolding to use particular aspects of the TL in a correct way.

CF, defined as "responses to learner utterances containing an error" (Ellis, 2006, p. 28), is an everyday practice for language teachers. In each lesson, learners produce erroneous spoken output and teachers have to make an instant decision about whether to correct the error, when to do so, which errors to prioritize, how to correct them and who should correct. Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research has shown strong support for the effectiveness of CF (Lyster et al., 2013; Pawlak, 2014), and teacher guides have extensively addressed the issue of error correction, although there is still a degree of caution regarding its implementation. Teachers themselves often fear they may be correcting too much or in a less subtle way, or breaking the communicative flow. This is, therefore, an area of interest for both language teachers and L2 acquisition researchers, and studies on the topic may contribute to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

By observing teacher-student interaction in French immersion classrooms, Lyster & Ranta (1997) identified six CF types that have been largely used by researchers to refer to the ways in which feedback can be provided:

(i) *explicit correction,* when the teacher overtly supplies the correct form, making clear that an error has occurred:

St: Last weekend I go to the cinema with my friends.

T: You should say "I went to the cinema with my friends."

(ii) *recast,* when the teacher reformulates the learner's utterance, correcting the error:

St: Last weekend I go to the cinema with my friends.

T: Oh, you went to the cinema with your friends.

(iii) *clarification request,* i.e., an indication by the teacher that the learner needs to repeat or reformulate his or her utterance:

St: Last weekend I go to the cinema with my friends.

T: Pardon? Can you repeat?

(iv) *metalinguistic feedback,* when the teacher comments on the student's utterance, relying on grammatical terminology so as to make him or her aware of the error and thus promoting self-correction:

St: Last weekend I go to the cinema with my friends.

T: What happens to the verb if you're talking about the past?

(v) *elicitation,* when the teacher directly asks the learner to self-correct, either by asking a question, by leading the student to complete their own sentence or by asking for a reformulation:

St: Last weekend I go to the cinema with my friends.

T: Last weekend, I…

(vi) *repetition,* when the teacher repeats the erroneous utterance, often emphasizing the error by adjusting intonation:

St: Last weekend I go to the cinema with my friends.

T: I go?

The six CF types were later classified into two categories: reformulations and prompts (Ranta & Lyster, 2007). The former category includes recasts and explicit corrections since they provide learners with target reformulations of their erroneous utterance; the latter includes clarification requests, metalinguistic clues, elicitations and repetitions. Therefore, the *reformulations* category consists in unscaffolded CF, since these strategies directly provide the correct form instead of prompting the learner to produce it. On the other hand, the *prompts* category entails scaffolded CF, since the different moves guide the learner to notice the error, offer cues, or require the learner to modify their output so as to attempt self-correction.

Literature Review

Research has shown strong support for the effectiveness of CF in foreign language learning (Lyster et al., 2013; Pawlak, 2014) and it has established itself as a key component in form-focused instruction. According to several metanalyses (e.g. Li, 2010; Lyster et al., 2013), classroom-based studies consistently confirm that providing oral CF is significantly more effective than providing no CF. Additionally, learners receiving CF in the form of prompts (clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, repetition) or explicit correction tend to show more gains on some measures when compared to learners receiving recasts.

However, the results are varied. As the body of research has accumulated, it has become evident that CF and its effect on acquisition is mediated by different factors, such as the nature of the target feature, the instructional context and individual factors. For example, the effectiveness of CF may depend upon learners' receptivity to the CF (Sheen, 2007), and mismatches between learners' and teachers' beliefs may play a role in the process. Beliefs about CF refer to the opinions and attitudes learners and teachers hold about how useful CF can be and how it can be implemented in the classroom, and have been recognized as a relevant factor in the learning process in terms of learner motivation and learner achievement (e.g. Dörnyei, 2005; Tanaka, 2004). Several studies have concluded that learners wish to be corrected more often than teachers deem necessary (e.g. Ancker, 2000; Schulz, 2001). For example, in relation to the question of whether teachers should correct every error learners make, 76% of ESL students answered "yes", as opposed to only 25% of teachers in Ancker's (2000) study, which investigated teachers and students' perceptions in 15 countries during a period of 4 years. The study involved EFL learners of different age groups. The most frequent reason for wishing to be corrected constantly given by learners was the importance of speaking English accurately, whereas teachers feared the negative impact of CF on students' motivation.

Therefore, teachers opt not to correct all mistakes (e.g. Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005), instead using delayed correction (e.g. Tomczyk, 2013) or implicit CF-strategies such as recasts (e.g. Bell, 2005). For example, Park (2010), who investigated the beliefs of 160 low-intermediate to advanced ESL learners and 18 ESL teachers about oral CF, reported that 52% (M=3.43) of students agreed with immediate correction even if it interrupted their speech, whereas only 11% (M=2.33) of teachers gave the same answer. The student participants in Lee (2013), who investigated advanced-level ESL learners' (n=60) beliefs, also stated they would like the most frequent errors in their oral production to be corrected all the time (M=4.42).

In her study, which involved 457 post-secondary FL teachers, Bell (2005) found that 80% of the participants considered that "the effective foreign language teacher uses recasts as a preferred

method of corrective feedback" (p.263), and Lee (2013) found a mean score of 4.43 out of 5 of learners who preferred the teacher to tell them what the error was and provide the correct form immediately. Scores for explicit correction and recast were considerably higher than those for prompts, which seems to indicate that the learners that took part in the study wanted to be provided with the correct form, either implicitly or explicitly. Similarly, 64% of learners in Park's study (2010) rated explicit correction as "effective" or "very effective" and it was the favourite strategy in the correction of all types of error (grammatical, phonological and lexical) among 258 EFL learners in the study conducted by Fadilah et al., (2017). Roothooft & Breeze (2016) investigated the opinions of 395 learners (282 secondary school students and 113 adult students) and 46 teachers (half employed at secondary schools, half working at private language academies). The researchers found that students rated explicit correction more positively than their teachers, as more than 70% of students found it "effective" or "very effective", whereas only about 20% of teachers shared their opinion.

Regarding the question of who should be responsible for the provision of CF, Park (2010) found that 91% of learners and 94% of teachers agree or strongly agree that the teacher should correct students' errors. Self-correction also seemed to be valued by the participants in this study (71% of learners and 89% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed), although opinions were divided regarding peer-correction (46% of learners and 44% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed). Although there is scant attention in the literature concerning teachers' beliefs about who should do the correcting, the student teacher participants (n=55) in Agudo's study (2014) did not show strong support for peer correction, with only 33% stating that it was more effective than teacher correction and 37% stating that it caused less anxiety than teacher correction. The teachers in this study believed in the value of self-correction – 78% agreed that learners should be prompted to self-correct.

The present study investigates EFL learners and teachers' beliefs about oral CF. There are various reasons why this research is important. Firstly, the success of CF may be mediated by preferences and expectations about its frequency, timing, the corrective strategy used, and who does the correcting, as well as the specific errors being addressed. Secondly, examining the beliefs of both learners and teachers enables us to identify disparities that may significantly affect students' motivation to learn the language. Finally, understanding these beliefs provides essential insights into whether students and teachers' perceptions align with research outcomes regarding the effectiveness of CF. With these considerations in mind, the current study addressed the following research question:

Are there any differences between teachers' and students' perceptions of CF practices as far as frequency, timing, type of error, corrective strategy and who provides correction are concerned?

Methodology

Research Context and Participants

Seven classes of 9th Grade students (n=166) and their teachers (n=5) took part in the study, which took place in a state school in the Setúbal district. Eighty-four male students (51%) and eighty-two female students (49%) participated in the study. The average age of the students was fourteen years old and, for the majority (96%), their L1 was Portuguese. Most of the students (76%) reported that they had been learning English for more than 6 years or between 4 and 6 years (24%), which suggests that they started English lessons in primary school. Besides English, all the participants reported learning French as an FL. 5% were also learning Spanish and 5% another FL. Lessons followed the curricular guidelines provided by the Portuguese Ministry of Education (Direção Geral da Educação, 2018). Students had 135 minutes of English lessons per week, divided between one 90-minute lesson and one 45-minute lesson. As a whole, the classes could be said to represent an intermediate level of proficiency in English, or B1, according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2020), although they also comprised of quite a few students who could be placed either above or below this proficiency level.

The five participating teachers were experienced EFL professionals who had taught English for eleven to thirty years, mainly in a state school context. All the teacher participants also taught another FL: three German, and two French.

Design and Procedure

Two questionnaires were designed to explore learners' and teachers' beliefs in relation to CF – one with twenty-five closed questions for learners (Appendix A) and another with thirty-two closed questions for teachers (Appendix B). Both employed a Likert-scale and included an open-ended field called "Observations". In the first section, the questionnaire items were organized into five categories: necessity and frequency of error correction (i.e., should oral mistakes always, sometimes or never be corrected?); timing of error correction (i.e., as soon as the error occurs even if it interrupts the student's speaking, after the student finishes speaking, after the activity, at the end of class, in a lesson devoted to addressing the most frequent errors); types of errors (i.e., errors that interfere with communication, errors that do not interfere with communication, frequent errors, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation errors) and their correction; effectiveness of CF strategies (no correction, explicit correction, recast, prompts) and who corrects (the teacher, classmates, students themselves). In the first and second categories – necessity and frequency of error correction, and timing of error correction – students and teachers were asked to rate each item on a 6-point scale, from "strongly disagree" to

"strongly agree". As for the third, types of errors, a 5-point scale was used, from "never" to "always". The effectiveness of CF strategies, the fourth category, was rated by participants on a 4-point scale, from "very ineffective" to "very effective". The teachers' questionnaire included an additional category in which they were asked to rate on a 5-point scale, from "never" to "always", how often they use each strategy in their teaching practice. Finally, in the last category, which investigated opinions on who should be responsible for the provision of CF, participants' degree of agreement was rated on a 6-point scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Examples were given to guide learners' and teacher's answers. The second section of the questionnaire collected participants' demographic information: gender, native language, length of English learning/ teaching and other languages mastered/ studied.

The questionnaire was informally piloted with a group of 9th-grade students and administered to students and teachers face-to-face. They were informed that the survey was anonymous and their participation voluntary. The participants were asked to read the general instructions, which gave some insight about the general aim of the study, and filled in the questionnaire in approximately twenty minutes.

Results and Discussion

Necessity and frequency of error correction

In the first category of the questionnaire, learners and teachers were asked to rate three statements to answer the question **"**Should oral errors be corrected?". As shown in Figure 1, on a 5-point scale, the learners' mean rating for the statement **"**I like my English teacher to always correct my errors" was 4.20. No students strongly agreed and only one student agreed with the statement **"**I think the English teacher should never correct my errors" (M=1.42).

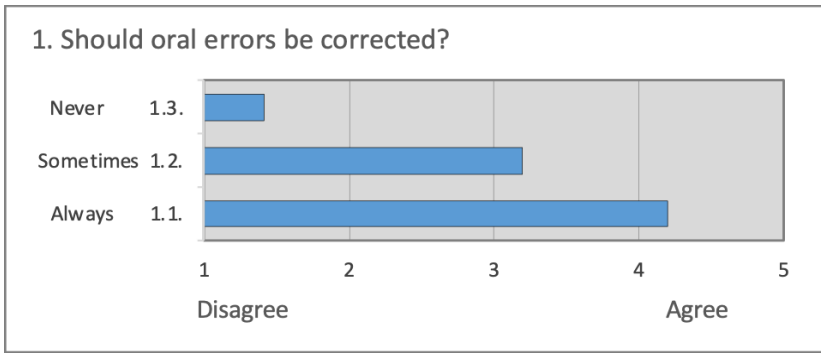

Figure 1. Students' mean responses on the necessity and frequency of error correction (N=166)

Their teachers also recognized the importance of oral CF, despite being somewhat more cautious regarding how often it should be provided. As shown in Figure 2, the mean score for the statement "Students' errors should always be corrected" was 3.20. For the other two statements included in this category, "Students' errors should sometimes be corrected" and "Students' errors should never be corrected", a mean of 3.60 and 1.40 was found, respectively.

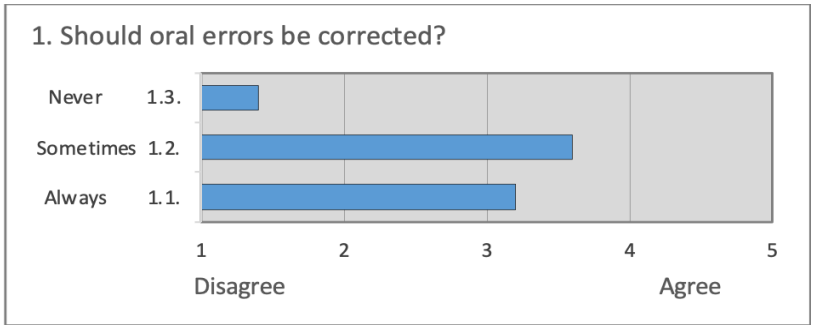

Figure 2. Teachers' mean responses on the necessity and frequency of error correction (N=5)

As far as the necessity and frequency of CF is concerned, the results suggest that the learners that participated in this study strongly believe in the importance of CF and express a wish to have their oral errors systematically corrected by their teachers. These results are in line with previous studies that showed that language learners acknowledge the usefulness of CF and expect to be corrected (e.g. Ancker, 2000; Brown, 2009; Park, 2010; Schulz, 2001).

Results suggest that the necessity for error correction is perceived more strongly by students than by their teachers, although both seem to agree on the usefulness of CF. Several comments left by students in an open question at the end of the questionnaire called "Observações" (*Observations*) confirm that there was a general wish among students to be corrected as often as possible:

Errors should always be corrected.

Teachers should always correct errors so that students don't make them again and to facilitate language learning.

I want to be corrected in order to improve and learn more.

I love English and would like the teacher to correct me as much as possible so that I can speak English fluently.

In my opinion errors should always be corrected, because if no one corrects them and we don't realize we made a mistake, we will keep doing it and that's not good.

As shown in the examples above, taken from the students' questionnaires, three students use the word "always", another the phrase "as much as possible" and another student clearly stated her

wish to be corrected. Three students referred to the importance they believe oral correction has in their learning or in achieving fluency and another student considered that CF plays a role in preventing the occurrence of future errors.

Loewen et al., (2009), for example, found that FL learners relied on learning grammar rules and, when compared to second language (SL) learners, had fewer opportunities to use the target language (TL) outside the classroom context, which might promote a favorable attitude toward grammar and CF. The students participating in our study were not immersed in the TL and the opportunities to use English in authentic communication were limited, which might contribute to their wish to receive constant correction.

The participating teachers also showed positive beliefs towards CF, despite being more cautious regarding the frequency of its provision:

> Corrective feedback is important, but we must take into account the balance between the need to correct oral errors and the encouragement to practice oral fluency.
>
> The teacher must take into account the group in question. Constantly correcting students individually in front of the class in beginners' classes may discourage students from participating. In the intermediate level classes, from my experience, the students seem to be more comfortable with corrections and these can be an important contribution to the improvement of oral production.

These comments show that, while teachers also regard CF as a useful tool, they are aware that its positive impact is mediated by several factors. The participating teachers highlight the importance of correcting while also maintaining a classroom environment that motivates students to participate orally. Another relevant factor mentioned in the comments section is that CF provision is necessarily different according to the students' proficiency level. The comments written by the participating teachers are illustrative of the several decisions a teacher has to make as far as the correction of students' mistakes is concerned.

Timing of error correction

The second category is related to the timing of error correction and it includes 5 statements to be rated by the participants. The learners' and teachers' mean responses regarding the timing of CF are shown in Figure 3 and 4, respectively. "As soon as the student stops speaking" has the highest mean among students, 3.71, followed by "As soon as they occur", with 3.31. "At the end of the lesson" received the lowest mean score from students (M=1.80). Their teachers believe that the most fitting time for the provision of CF was either "As soon as the student stops speaking", with a mean of 3.40, or "At the

end of the activity", also with a mean of 3.40. In contrast to their students, teachers did not favor the option of correcting the errors "As soon as they occur" (M=2.20). The option of correcting "In a specific lesson" is the least popular among the teachers in this study (M=2.00).

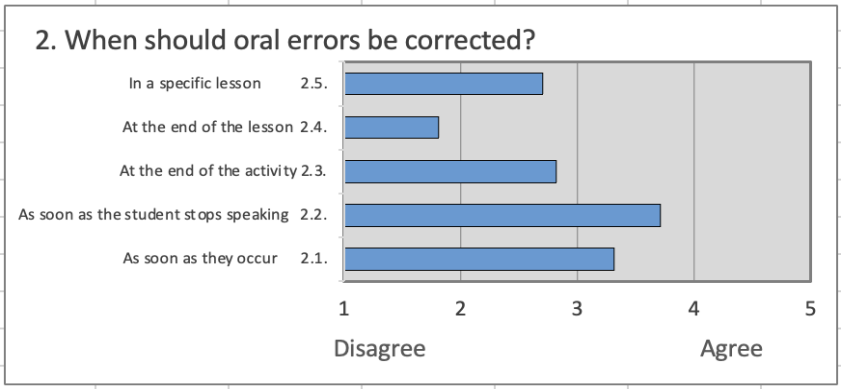

Figure 3. Students' mean responses on the timing of error correction (N= 166)

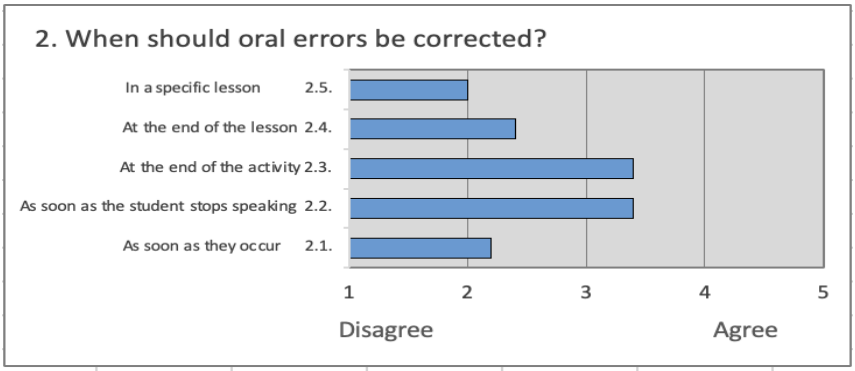

Figure 4. Teachers' mean responses on the timing of error correction (N=5)

Regarding the timing of CF, the students that participated in this study regarded immediate correction as a positive practice, believing that their errors should be corrected either at the end of their turn or even as soon as the error was made. The same pattern was found by Davis (2003), Park (2010) and Tasdemir & Arslan (2018), for example. These perceptions can also be found in some statements that the students noted in the questionnaire:

> I think that spoken errors should be immediately corrected so that in the next exercise we don't make the same mistakes.
>
> In short, I think that when students make oral errors the teacher should correct them when the student finishes speaking so as not to disturb and interrupt the student, but correcting the student so that he or she can try to correct them next time.

The teachers in this study approach the question of CF timing with care, being less certain of the option of correcting errors as soon as they occur. Being more aware of the diverse aspects that are involved in classroom interaction, in particular of the role affective factors play, teachers may fear that

constant correction of every error may inhibit learners or hinder communication. Several teacher guides advise teachers to deal with immediate and constant correction with caution (e.g. Edge, 1989; Harmer, 2007; Hedge, 2000; Scrivener, 2005), for the same reasons, particularly if the context is a communicative activity, as opposed to an activity which aims at developing accuracy. The advice on the topic given in teacher guides may be one of the factors that help shape teachers' CF responses (Ellis, 2017). Furthermore, teachers' beliefs about CF may have their origin in their experiences as trainee teachers, during in-service training or in the classroom context (Borg, 2011).

In line with the recommendations found in teacher guides, the teachers that participated in the study prefer correcting at the end of the student's turn or at the end of the activity. This may be a way of encouraging oral participation in the classroom, making the learner feel at ease to express his or her own ideas freely, without feeling judged. This particular aspect was addressed by two of the participating teachers in the "Observations" section of the questionnaire:

> It seems important to me to be careful not to interrupt the student in the middle of a sentence, so that the correction does not become counterproductive. However, we should also not wait too long before correcting, otherwise the student will no longer be able to associate the correct form with the error.
>
> Usually, I prefer to wait until the student has finished speaking, so that he or she does not forget what he or she is going to say and feels that there is enough space to practice speaking.

Types of errors

The statements in the third category asked learners and teachers about the frequency with which different types of errors should be corrected. As shown in Figure 5, all error types received quite high mean scores among students, especially grammar (M=4.58) and vocabulary (M=4.58) mistakes, followed by errors that interfere with communication (M=4.37). The lowest mean score among students was found in the responses to question 3.2. "Errors that do not interfere with communication", but students still believed that CF should be provided for these mistakes (M=3.36).

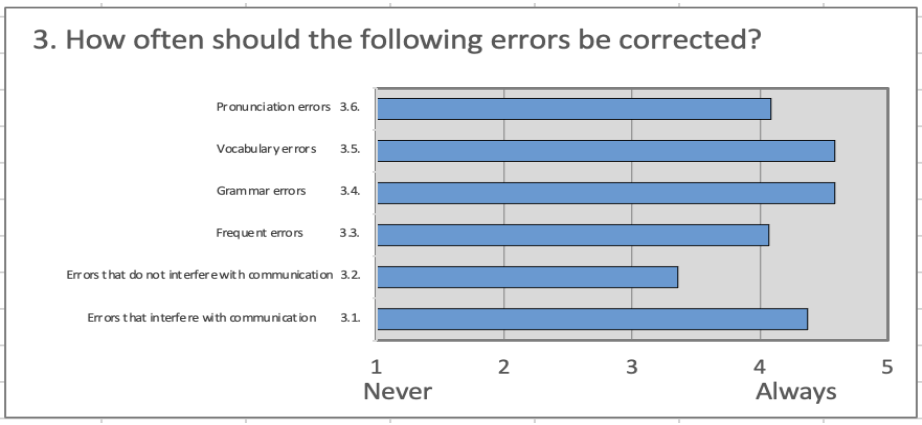

Figure 5. Students' mean responses on the correction of different types of errors (N=166)

The mean scores for the teachers' answers regarding how often different types of errors should be corrected are shown in Figure 6. In the teachers' opinion, errors that interfere with communication should always be corrected (M=5), and high means were also found for grammar (M=4.20) and vocabulary (M=4.20) errors. Similar to students, teachers consider that errors that do not interfere with communication should be given less priority in the frequency of oral CF, but that correction should, nevertheless, be provided to a considerable extent (M=3.40).

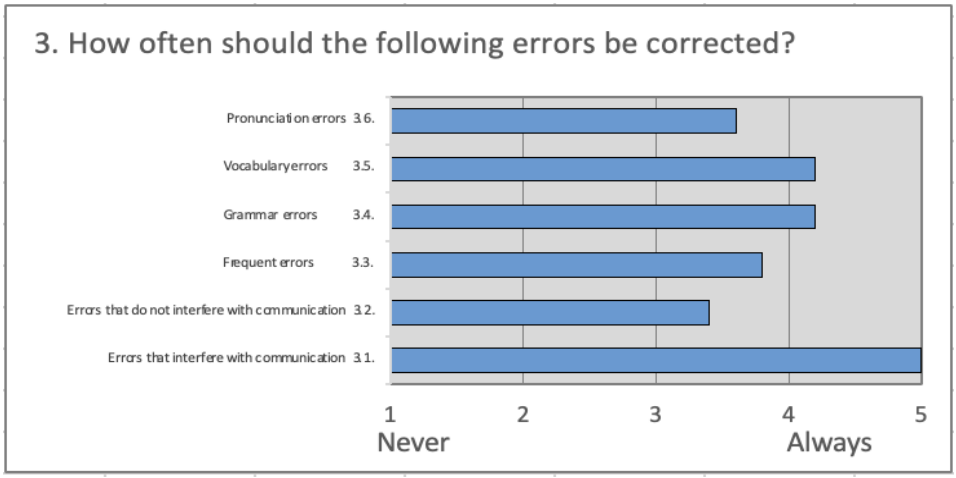

Figure 6. Teachers' mean responses on the correction of different types of errors (N=5)

When asked about correction of different types of errors, students and teachers agreed that errors that interfere with communication should always be corrected. Although information regarding the desired correction by students and teachers of different types of errors is scarce in the literature, the same pattern was found by Park (2010).

All grammar and vocabulary errors should also be corrected at all times, in the students' opinion. However, teachers believe that those errors that hinder communication should be given priority. These results reveal that although teachers do not treat all the errors that occur, they consistently provide CF on errors that cause misunderstanding. As discussed in section 3.1., teachers must strike a balance between offering CF and promoting oral production and interaction while also managing time constraints in classes. Jean & Simard (2011) also found that, when looking at types of errors, errors which impede communication were also thought to be more important than grammar errors by the participating teachers.

The results, particularly those of the students, corroborate the stated wish to be corrected all the time. One of the comments left by the students in the questionnaire clearly expresses this opinion:

> In conclusion, I think it is essential for the teacher to correct our mistakes regardless of the type of mistake.

This contrasts, for example, with the results found by Jean & Simard (2011), as half of the participating learners in their study estimated that oral errors should be corrected only when they interfere with communication.

Another comment written by one of the students in the present study reinforces the perceived importance of error correction. The learner makes reference to two types of errors he or she considers particularly worthy of correction, and presents an argument in favor of immediate correction, which, as discussed above, is generally approved by the students:

> Any type of error should be corrected immediately, otherwise it doesn't have as much effect and the student forgets about it. Grammatical and pronunciation errors, which are the most common, are the errors that should be given the most attention.

Interestingly, in his own words, this student refers to the importance of not delaying a correction, fearing such CF may lack effectiveness. This relates to the concept of "window of opportunity" (Doughty, 2001), according to which immediate CF prompts leaners to carry out a cognitive comparison between their output and the TL form, which may promote the development of linguistic competence.

Effectiveness of CF strategies

The fourth category in the questionnaire aimed at investigating learners' and teachers' beliefs on the effectiveness of different CF strategies. An example of a classroom interaction between a student and a teacher was used (cf. Appendix A and B) to illustrate the different reactions that the teacher can have to a student's oral error: (4.1.) no CF; (4.2.) explicit correction; (4.3.) recast; (4.4.) clarification request; (4.5.) metalinguistic feedback; (4.6.) elicitation; or (4.7.) repetition.

Figure 7 illustrates the mean responses of students as far as the CF types are concerned. Explicit correction (M=4.33) had the highest mean score among students, followed by recasts (M=3.86). Regarding prompts, clarification requests had a mean of 3.46, metalinguistic feedback 3.17, elicitation 3.11 and repetition 2.83. No CF provision had the lowest mean score among learners (M=1.39).

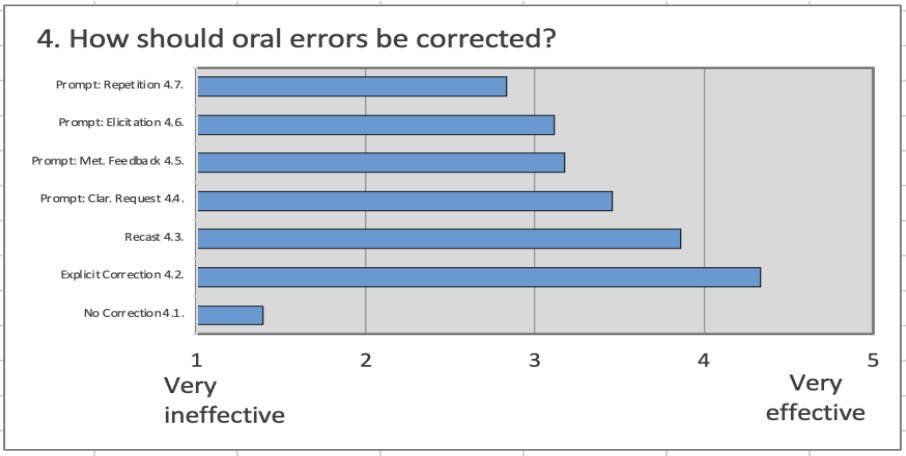

Figure 7. Students' mean responses on the effectiveness of different CF strategies (N=166)

As far as the teachers were concerned, recast and prompts in the form of metalinguistic feedback had the highest mean score, 3.60, followed by prompts in the form of elicitation (M=3.40). No correction also had the lowest mean score among teachers (M=1.40), but it was followed by explicit correction (M=2.40), which shows a contrast between the teachers' and the students' beliefs. Figure 8 shows the mean responses of the teachers regarding effectiveness of the CF strategies.

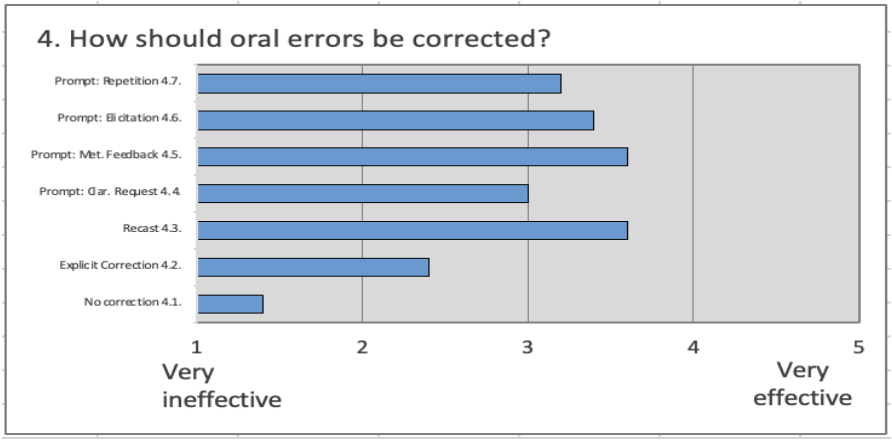

Figure 8. Teachers' mean responses on the effectiveness of different CF strategies (N=5)

When asked how often they used each CF strategy in their lessons, as illustrated in Figure 9, the teachers answered that they relied preferably on the prompt strategies of metalinguistic feedback (M=3.60) and elicitation (M=3.60) and on the recast (M=3.40). Not providing a correction was the option the teachers stated they used least often in the classroom (M=2.00), followed by explicit correction (M=2.40).

Figure 9. Teachers' mean responses on the frequency of provision of the different CF strategies (N=5)

Regarding the perceived effectiveness of the different CF strategies, not surprisingly, students and teachers agree that no correction is the least effective action. As for CF strategies, opinions diverge. For example, explicit correction is the students' favorite strategy, but it is at the same time the one least favored by the teachers. This is a strategy which makes it clear that an error has occurred and provides the correct form. Although there has been little research on students' favorite CF types, other studies also found that explicit correction is perceived as very effective by learners, though unscaffolded (e.g. Lee, 2013; Park, 2010; Roothooft & Breeze, 2016).

The possibility exists that the students' opinions may be influenced by the grammar-based instruction that is still prevalent in some EFL classrooms, in which achieving grammatical accuracy is one of the main goals. The participants' previous educational experiences may also play a role as a mediating factor on their beliefs about CF and grammar instruction (see Loewen et al., 2009). Additionally, the students may expect their teacher to have superior knowledge and, therefore, be a more appropriate source for CF. On the other hand, the teachers in this study do not regard explicit correction as a very effective strategy. The same pattern emerged in Cathcart & Olsen (1976), Roothooft (2018) and Roothooft & Breeze (2016). This might be related to the teachers' concern with promoting oral participation and a positive learning environment. In addition, methodologists such as Harmer (2007) and Scrivener (2005) favor CF techniques that indicate that an error has occurred over those which provide the target form without creating opportunities for self-correction. Another aspect which teacher guides give considerable relevance to is building a good rapport with students, which Harmer (2007, p. 100) states "is dependent on listening to students' views and attempts with respect, and intervening (i.e. for correction) in an appropriate and constructive way". In a section devoted to

establishing rapport, the author refers to correcting students as a "delicate event", due to the risk of being too critical and demotivating students. Despite having completed their initial training long ago, the participating teachers take part in training sessions and/ or conferences regularly and are aware of the role affective factors play in learning and of the recent advice given by methodologists. Taking this into account, they might fear that providing a correction which clearly states an error has occurred might be counterproductive when it comes to encouraging oral participation.

In contrast, recasts seem to be validated by both teachers and students. The students in this study rated recast – a type of unscaffolded CF – as their second favorite strategy. The results seem to indicate that these students wish to be told, either implicitly or explicitly, what the correct form is. Once again, previous classroom experiences may play a role in the students' opinions of this CF type. Research has identified recasts as the most widely used CF strategy in several contexts (e.g. Ellis, Basturkmen & Loewen, 2001; Lyster & Mori, 2006; Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Additionally, as Kartchava (2016) points out, the familiarity with recasts may have its origin not only in the classroom context, but also in the students' L1 acquisition experiences, considering that recasts are used by parents to clarify the meaning or address the truth-value of statements. However, research outcomes regarding the effectiveness of recasts have shown that they may be less effective than prompts because it is not always evident to learners that they are being corrected and they are not provided with an opportunity to modify their output (Lyster et al., 2013).

Prompts seem to be positively regarded by the teachers that participated in the study, in particular metalinguistic feedback. This suggests that these EFL professionals believe in the pedagogic benefits of providing learners with the opportunity to self-correct through engaging in scaffolded feedback, a result that echoed that of Agudo (2014). This practice is also in line with the recommendations given by several teacher guides in the direction of prioritizing output-prompting strategies. This also reflects a general principle adopted in these works, i.e. that "people learn more by doing things themselves rather than being told about them" (Scrivener, 2005, p. 3). Although these strategies are perceived by the students as less effective than explicit correction, they still recognize their importance, as the following comments written by the students illustrate:

> Students should try to correct their mistakes, but if necessary the teacher should help, but not say the correct answer right away.
>
> I think students have to have the willpower to correct their mistakes.

The teachers' answers to the question that investigated how often they used each CF strategy in their lessons also reveal that they tend to give students the chance to correct their own errors by signaling that an error has occurred through a prompt, preferably metalinguistic feedback or elicitation.

Besides using output-prompting feedback, the teachers also employ input-providing strategies, but show a preference for recasts instead of the explicit correction.

Delivering agent of CF

The last category asked learners and teachers about who should be in charge of providing CF. As shown in Figure 10, the teacher as the provider of CF received the highest mean score among learners (M=4.60). Learners expressed a preference for self-correction (M=3.37) when compared to peer-correction (M=2.63).

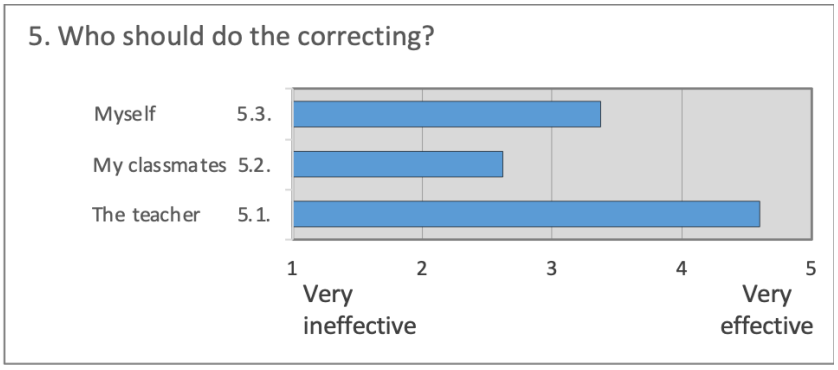

Figure 10. Students' mean responses on the provider of error correction (N=166)

Figure 11 illustrates the mean scores of teachers on who should provide CF. The teachers recognized the importance of self-correction (M=3.80) and also the role of the teacher in giving CF (M=3.60). Peer-correction also received the lowest mean among the teachers in this study (M=3.20).

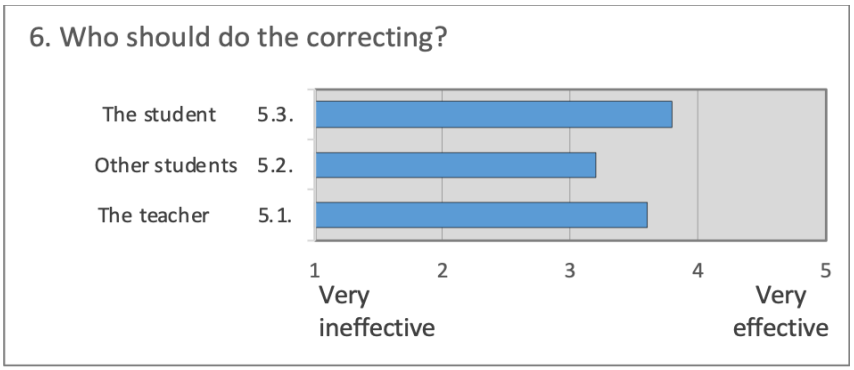

Figure 11. Teachers' mean responses on the provider of error correction (N=5)

Taking into account the learners' strong wish to be corrected, preferably soon after the error is made, it comes as no surprise that they choose the teacher as their main source of correction. In fact, when asked about the effectiveness of the different CF strategies, the students preferred explicit correction and recasts, two strategies that, although distinct in terms of explicitness, are both input-

providing. Therefore, students seem to expect their teacher to provide them with the correct form, a belief that was also identified by previous research (e.g. Brown, 2009; Park, 2010; Schulz, 2001).

Teaching practices such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) strive to motivate students to adopt an active role as far as their own learning is concerned and to regard their teacher as a facilitator, rather than as a knowledge-transmitter (Harmer, 2007). Nevertheless, the instructional setting, previous learning experiences and a restricted exposure to the TL, which comes with limited opportunities for language use, may still contribute to the learners' primary reliance on their teacher to obtain CF. In fact, the school in which the research was conducted is located in a town which, despite being relatively near the capital, does not offer many opportunities to use English in meaningful interactions outside the classroom, since it does not attract many tourists and is not home to international companies, which might invite the use of English as a means of communication. Furthermore, certain constraints such as the size of the classes and their heterogeneity in terms of proficiency level often make it hard to provide learners with abundant opportunities for oral production and interaction. In this context, it seems that students still value their English teacher as the main CF provider, illustrated by this comment left by a student:

> Usually, I think the teacher should correct us, since they have more experience with the topic.

The teachers' opinions are more divided as they attribute less importance to the teacher as a CF provider. This belief may be informed by SLA research that has provided evidence on the benefits of encouraging the learner to self-correct by prioritizing scaffolded feedback (e.g. Lyster, 2004; Lyster & Saito, 2010). Moreover, teacher guides, which almost invariably advocate a more learner-centered approach, advise teachers to create conditions for self-correction (Edge, 1989; Harmer, 2007; Hedge, 2000; Scrivener, 2005). This aspect is mentioned by one of the participating teachers in the following comment:

> I think it is helpful to try to get the student to arrive at the correct form on their own, especially in the case of vocabulary and grammatical structures that have already been covered in previous lessons or years.

Another option to engage learners in the process of providing CF is peer correction. This is, nonetheless, the least favorite CF provider for both students and teachers. The students in the present study did not consider peer feedback to be an effective CF option, which reinforces the role of the teacher as the main feedback provider, in the students' opinion. It is possible that, given their role as fellow learners, students do not consider their classmates a reliable learning source and thus fear their corrections may not be accurate. Additionally, students may feel uncomfortable when being corrected

by their peers or even when correcting them (Yoshida, 2010). The following comments give us an insight into the reasons behind the participants' choices regarding peer correction:

> If our classmates correct us, they may mislead us.
>
> The students in my class should not correct me without the teacher's permission and only if I get the question wrong, because they may not have the required knowledge.

These comments echo those of the student participants in Chu (2013), who also believed that providing feedback is the teacher's, not the learners' role. While many students may not consider their peers a reliable learning source, research has shown that peer feedback may encourage an active reflection on the learners' own performance and that of their classmates (Sato & Lyster, 2012), which is believed to positively affect language knowledge (DeKeyser, 2007; Iwashita & Dao, 2021).

Conclusions

To summarize, both students and teachers believe that students' oral errors should be corrected, with students in particular expressing a strong belief that their errors should almost always receive correct feedback. As far as the timing of CF, results suggest that students prefer immediate feedback. Their teachers also regard this practice as effective, but prefer to correct after the student has stopped speaking or at the end of the activity. Regarding the types of errors, errors that interfere with communication, grammar errors and vocabulary errors are those that teachers believe that should most often be corrected. These types of errors are also those that students feel should most often receive CF. With reference to CF types, students and teachers agree that not providing a correction is the least effective strategy to adopt. Students prefer the provision of explicit correction or recasts, both unscaffolded CF, which shows that they want their teacher to provide them with the correct form. Teachers favor recasts as a way of providing CF with minimal interference in the communication, or scaffolded strategies such as prompts in the form of metalinguistic feedback, as a means of providing the student with hints that enable him or her to find the correct form. Finally, students regard the teacher as the person principally responsible of CF, followed by self-correction, whereas teachers opt for promoting self-correction, despite also providing CF themselves or resorting to peer feedback.

In interpreting the present results, one should, however, bear in mind that the tool used to investigate the beliefs may present some limitations, since questionnaires may not fully grasp what the respondents believe about CF. Although the questionnaire was informally piloted with a small group of 9th-grade students, the wording might have been unclear to some of the participants and, therefore, some questions might have been misunderstood. Questionnaires are, nevertheless, a very common tool to investigate such topics, since they allow for a large number of participants to be surveyed in a short

period of time. Interviewing the participants individually would have been too time-consuming. To try to compensate for the lack of an individual interview, an open-ended section for comments was included so that students and teachers could express their opinions on the topic or explain why they agreed or disagreed with a particular item. Moreover, the number of teachers in this study is too small to generalize. Finally, future studies on students and teachers' beliefs about CF should also investigate other nationalities, age groups, TLs and proficiency levels.

Declaration of Interest Statement

The author declares that there are no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

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