

Case Study on Effectiveness of Oral Corrective Feedback in the Second Language Classrooms in Second Language Acquisition

Fan Li^{1*}, Zongxiang Feng² and Yuqiu Hou³

^{1,2,3}The School of Foreign Studies, Northwestern Polytechnical University, Xi'an, China

Corresponding author

Fan Li

E-mail: lf13259568204@163.com

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Abstract:

Corrective Feedback(CF) has been considered as a central aspect of second language acquisition and is widely seen as crucial for encouraging and consolidating learning. The role of CF plays in language development has been confirmed by various second language learning theories and empirical studies. The study, based on the analysis of an interview with a graduate student majoring in English, illustrates the effectiveness of oral corrective feedback, teachers' ways of correcting errors and certain responses from students respectively. It aims to inspire Chinese teachers to re-recognize oral error correction in class, so as to promote the development of students' second language acquisition more reasonably. It is found that teachers prefer to correct students' phonemic errors, introduction errors, and word errors; students hold positive attitude to oral corrective feedback. They prefer explicit rather than implicit feedback. At the same time, students want to be corrected after their speaking.

Key words: Corrective Feedback; Second Language Acquisition; Interview; Oral Error Correction.

Introduction

In the process of English learning, students will inevitably make various mistakes when using the target language. In recent years, oral error corrective feedback has been the focus of academic research. It not only provides opportunities for interaction between teachers and students, but also encourages language learners to reflect on their own words and correct their output. English teachers need to know how to deal with students' spoken errors during the teaching process, which is very important in teaching, but one of the most discouraging experiences of teachers is correcting errors, especially those that recur in their students' production (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005). Oral corrective feedback is a typical feature of most English classes, and researchers have tended to focus on the cognitive and theoretical aspects of oral corrective feedback in recent years. In the domestic research on error corrective feedback, most of them focus on the effect of error corrective feedback, only a small part of them pay attention to the students' attitude towards oral error corrective feedback, and the previous research also neglected to explore what kind of error corrective college students like. Based on this situation, the present study was an attempt to discover the most effective way for teachers to carry out corrective feedback and the best way for student to respond to teachers' corrections respectively.

Literature Review

Since the 1970s, corrective feedback has been a very important research topic in the field of second language acquisition. Many scholars have studied the definition, classification and function of corrective feedback from various perspectives. As early as 1977, Chaudron, a Canadian scholar, raised a series of questions about corrective feedback, including whether teachers should correct errors, which errors should be corrected, when correcting errors is the most effective, and so on. After more than 30 years of extensive research and exploration, some of these problems have been

initially solved, and some have not yet been answered. Long (1996)'s interactive hypothesis holds that interaction is conducive to L2 development, and corrective feedback is considered to be the key to this effect. From the perspective of psychological process, the effectiveness of interactive feedback lies in its increased cognitive process. Swain and Lapkin (1995) pointed out that interactive feedback can make learners pay attention to the problems in their output and promote them to analyze the problems. The process of retrieving the target language triggered by interactive feedback can enhance the attention and long-term memory of the target language compared with the process of teachers directly instilling the target language into the students. Another meta-analysis focuses on the role of corrective feedback, pointing out that corrective feedback is an important factor in interactive research. It can promote the acquisition of target grammatical forms in both short-term and long-term measurements (Yang Yingli, 2012). Researchers hold different opinions on the classification of feedback. The classification method reflects the different starting points and theoretical frameworks of the researchers for feedback research. Lyster and Ranta(1997), based on their observation and research in the context of French immersion teaching in Canada, divide corrective feedback into the following ways in detail: Explicit correction, recasts, clarification request, metalingual cues, elicitation and repetition. Ellis, Loewen and Erlam(2009) divide feedback into explicit feedback and implicit feedback according to the linguistic characteristics of feedback. It is believed that explicit feedback can more clearly point out the existence of language errors to learners than implicit feedback, and is more easily noticed by learners, so its effectiveness is more obvious.

In China, the academic focus of classroom feedback researchers is on the role of feedback in observational, descriptive and writing teaching, while the empirical study of feedback in oral English classroom teaching is slightly weaker. Sun Ming and Zhao Fei (2007) studied the effect of interactive feedback on the development of children's L2 interrogative sentences. They found that interactive feedback could not effectively help reduce errors in auxiliary words and inflection. However, it had significant effect on errors in sentence function and word order. While reviewing the recent 10 years' research on feedback in second language writing, Wang Ying (2007) focuses on the role of teacher's written feedback, oral feedback, peer feedback and computer feedback in writing teaching, and finds that oral interaction plays an important role in composition planning, writing and revision. This view has been widely accepted by second language writing teachers and researchers. For many learners, feedback from spoken English provides them with space and potential for meaning negotiation. Zhang Kai (2014) analyzes the effects of oral corrective feedback(CF) on Chinese learners' acquisition of English articles and prepositions, and then he finds that clarification request plus metalinguistic feedback is more effective than the other two types of oral CF(direct correction, prompt plus direct correction.) Hong Yun(2013) conducts a study of corrective feedback and learner uptake in Chinese classroom at primary level. Transcripts were analyzed to compare the various moves in an error treatment sequence. Results includes the frequency and distribution of the six different feedback types used by the seven teachers, in addition to the frequency and distribution of different types of learner uptake following each

feedback type. Zu Xiaomei and Hong Yun (2014) have different opinions on the best error correction effect. She believes that in classroom environment, output-based prompt feedback is more effective than input-based recasting; explicit feedback strategy is more effective than implicit feedback strategy. So, in the second language classroom, which kind of corrective feedback method can make more effective use of classroom time and maximize the development of students' acquisition? In addition, what kind of response does the student give to show that he has successfully comprehended and corrected the errors? At present, the answers to these two questions in our research are slightly inferior. The study aims to inspire Chinese teachers to re-recognize oral error correction in class, so as to promote the development of students' second language acquisition more reasonably.

Research Design

3.1 Research Questions

The study, based on the analysis of an interview with a graduate student majoring in English, illustrates the complicated relationship of various errors, teachers' ways of correcting errors and certain responses from students. Specifically, it involves those three aspects:

(1) What are the types of students' oral errors?

(2) What is the most effective way for teachers to make oral corrective feedback to make more effective use of classroom time and maximize the development of students' acquisition?

(3) What is the best way for student to respond to teachers' corrections to show they have understood successfully and the errors have been corrected?

3.2 Object of Study

The research object is a graduate student of a major in Northwestern Polytechnical University. So far, she has studied English for 14 years, passed CET-4 and CET-6 and achieved good results. Introverted personality, do not like to speak actively in class.

3.3 Location and duration of interviews

She accepted the interview in the library for two hour and a half. The library is very quiet. Besides, no one bothers us during the interview.

Analysis of Research Results

4.1 Error Types of Oral English in English Classroom

After communication, the interviewee mainly recalled and stated some mistakes or errors that she often made in oral practice in class. After analysis, the author classifies the errors into the following categories:

4.1.1 Interlingual error. Interlingual error refers to errors are made due to the language being learnt (TL), independent of the native language.

(1) Speech error. It refers to incomplete pronunciation in expression.

(2) Errors in vocabulary change. There are some errors in the different ways of referential formation, such as derivative affixes, inflectional changes, synthetic changes, etc.

(3) Misuse of similar words. A mistake caused by improper grasp of synonyms or polysemy.

(4) Syntactic errors. It refers to the errors in phrases, tenses and sentences caused by the failure to comply with the rules of sentence formation.

(5) Social pragmatic failure. It refers to the inability to determine what terms are appropriate in a particular environment.

Generally speaking, in terms of language errors, there are phonetic errors, intonation errors, word errors, affix errors, syntactic errors, pragmatic errors and so on.

4.1.2 Interlingual errors: the errors result from language transfer and are caused by the learner's native language.

(1) Deficiency of the concept of tense. It refers to the phenomenon of confusion or neglect in the use of tenses or verb changes in English.

(2) The syntax is illogical. It refers to phrases or sentences that are not suitable for collocation or habits in English.

(3) Native language sentence structure. It is easy for learners to apply English sentences in their native language structure in a short-term reaction process.

(4) Lack of cultural knowledge. It refers to mistakes or misunderstandings caused by imperfect understanding of the cultural background of English.

(5) The context is not appropriate. It refers to an expression that is grammatically structured but not appropriate in a particular context.

4.2 Teachers' Corrective Feedback

4.2.1 Classroom Error Corrective Feedback Process

When students make mistakes in classroom teaching, teachers first need to determine whether to take corrective action. In the second language classroom, students' errors are ever-changing. As far as language errors are concerned, there are phonetic errors, intonation errors, word errors, affix errors, syntactic errors and pragmatic errors.

For these language errors, should teachers investigate every mistake or correct them selectively? According to the interviewees, the teacher will not correct all her oral errors. The teacher is selective in correcting her mistakes. Teachers usually correct her pronunciation errors, intonation errors and wording errors, and seldom correct her syntactic and pragmatic errors.

For her, the mistake the teacher corrected most of the time was the knowledge she had not mastered. Because after the teacher corrected the mistakes, she found that she hadn't noticed them before, and she hadn't found that she hadn't mastered them. From the linguistic point of view, the teacher chose to correct her error. When she knows her own error, she will consciously correct it, which will increase her language knowledge and improve her second language acquisition ability. And when she is mistaken because of nervousness or shyness, teachers rarely correct it. She also

does not want teachers to correct her mistakes because: First, she knows what the correct expression is, but she is wrong because she is overly nervous. Second, sometimes when she realizes she is wrong, she will correct herself immediately; third, if she makes a mistake, the teacher immediately interrupts her speech and corrects it, which will make her feel embarrassed and forget what she wants to express.

To sum up, in oral English teaching, teachers generally correct errors of respondents and have a high tolerance for mistake. It is difficult for teachers to tolerate students' phonetics, intonation and lexical errors, but they are more tolerant of pragmatic and syntactic errors. The best time for students to accept corrections is when the teacher corrects her mistakes after her utterance. This will make it easier for her to correct her mistakes. Interruption of students' speech and immediate correction of errors will lead to students' embarrassment, anxiety and other negative emotions, which is not conducive to students' second language learning.

4.2.2 Student's Attitudes to Error Corrective Feedback

The interviewee holds a positive attitude towards teacher's corrective feedback. The interviewee expressed her willingness to ask her teachers to help her point out the mistakes, and felt sorry that her teachers did not do enough to correct her.

The interviewee told the author that teachers will adopt different ways in the process of correcting mistakes. The author classifies it into six categories: Explicit correction, recasts, clarification request, metalingual cues, elicitation and repetition. Among them, recast, elicitation request, and metalingual cues are the most frequently used by teachers, while explicit correction and repetition are the least used. However, interviewee believed that elicitation and clarification request failed to correct their errors well, because she sometimes did not realize that the teacher was correcting her errors, but misinterpreted the teacher's corrective tips as communicating with themselves. On the contrary, for her, metalingual cues and recast are better at correcting errors. The most unacceptable thing for respondents is explicit correction, because once the teacher corrects her mistakes in this way, she will feel very humiliated and her self-esteem will be hurt.

According to Yuan Fangyuan's classification of error correction types, recast, clarification request and elicitation belongs to Implicit Error Correction, while metalingual cues and recast and explicit correction are the ways of Explicit (2016). By comparison, except explicit correction, metalingual cues and recast of Explicit Error Correction are much better for learners to be awareness of their errors and then make efforts to correct those errors, which improves the competence in the process of SLA.

4.3 Student Correction Response

After the teacher corrects the student's mistake, whether the student can realize the mistake of her output and respond to the output of the speech is a sign of the success of the teacher's corrective feedback. If the student does not show a comprehensible reaction and continues her original meaning exchange, then the teacher's correcting intention can be regarded as failure. According to the interviewee's experience, when she responds in the following four ways, she understands the

teacher's corrective intention on behalf of herself and corrects her mistake in time. (1) Repeat the teacher's words. The teacher contains the correct language form in the correcting discourse, and the student simply succeeds by simply repeating the correct form of the teacher. (2) Integrate the teacher's corrective discourse into her own discourse. The teacher includes the correct form in the corrective action, and the student repeats the teacher's correction and integrates it into her sentence. (3) Self-correction. The correct form is not included in the teacher's correction, but the student corrects himself successfully at the teacher's prompt. (4) Student correction. The erroneous students failed to correct themselves at the teacher's prompt, but other students provided the correct language form. On the contrary, according to the personal experience of the interviewer, the following six kinds may indicate that the student has not corrected the corrected error, and the teacher needs to take further action to help the student correct the error: (1) A simple response to the teacher's corrections. For example, use simple answers such as "Is it?" "Hmm?" to agree with the teacher's corrective comments. (2) Similar errors. The student made another mistake when repeating the teacher's discourse. (3) Non-similar errors. When student comprehends the teacher's corrections, she neither corrects the original mistakes, nor repeats the original errors. Instead, she turned different mistakes. (4) Going astray. The student's response bypassed the teacher's intention of correcting errors, but did not make any more mistakes.

This enlightens teachers to pay attention to students' response to corrective feedback. If the student respond to the above six kinds of responses, it means that the errors of the student have not been corrected successfully. Teachers should start a new round of error correction. For corrected errors, teachers should use different teaching methods to strengthen the effect of correcting errors.

Result and Discussion

Through interviewing a student with oral error corrective feedback in a second language classroom, this paper draws the following conclusions:

(1) This paper summarizes the types of oral errors that students have in second language classes, including phonetic errors, intonation errors, word errors, affix errors, syntactic errors and pragmatic errors. Teachers have a lower tolerance for phonetic errors, intonation errors, and word errors, while they have a higher tolerance for syntactic errors and pragmatic errors.

(2) Teachers should choose appropriate ways of correcting errors according to students' individual differences in the process of correcting errors. In terms of time, the error correction should not interrupt students' meaning description. Teachers should try to correct students' errors after their utterances, especially for students with introverted personality and better learning ability.

(3) Explicit Feedback is much better than Implicit Feedback. However, it should be noted that when Explicit Feedback is used, more metalingual cues and recast are used and less explicit correction is used.

(4) Teachers should pay attention to students' response when correcting mistakes. When students repeat the teacher's words, integrate the teacher's corrective words into their own words, make self-correction and are corrected by classmates, it means that the teacher's corrections have

been successful. However, when students respond to the teacher's corrections in a simply way, hesitate and go astray, it means that the students have not corrected the corrected errors, and teachers need to take further action to help them learn. For corrected errors, teachers' manuscripts should be consolidated in other ways to prevent students from repeating them.

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