

EXPLORING THE TEACHERS' PRACTICES OF CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN TEACHING SPEAKING: A CASE AT AN ENGLISH CENTER

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Abstract

As a teacher, providing corrective feedback is an opportunity to guide students toward success and help them achieve their full potential. By identifying areas where learners need improvement and offering guidance on correcting mistakes, teachers can help their students reach their full potential in English language proficiency. It is essential to deliver feedback in a constructive and supportive manner, focusing on specific areas for improvement rather than criticizing them. The paper explores teachers' practices using corrective feedback in teaching Speaking at an English center. Twenty teachers participated in the survey to give their general understanding of Corrective feedback. The study gathered data from different sources: interviewing and observing three teachers in the Speaking classrooms. The findings discovered that teachers are aware of the vital of corrective feedback in teaching Speaking. There were judgments between teachers' beliefs and practices. Recasts and Metalinguistic are two sorts of Corrective Feedback usually provided in this classroom at an English center.

Keywords: *Corrective feedback, feedback types, feedback timing, teachers' practices.*

KHẢO SÁT CÁCH THỨC GIÁO VIÊN SỬA LỖI CHO HỌC SINH KHI DẠY MÔN NÓI: NGHIÊN CỨU TÌNH HUỐNG TẠI TRUNG TÂM NGOẠI NGỮ

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Tóm tắt

Với giáo viên tiếng Anh, việc đưa ra phản hồi sửa lỗi là một cơ hội để hỗ trợ học sinh phát huy hết tiềm năng của mình và học tập hiệu quả. Điều cần thiết là đưa ra phản hồi theo cách mang tính xây dựng và hỗ trợ, tập trung vào các điểm cụ thể để cải thiện hơn là phê bình học sinh. Bài viết trình bày kết quả nghiên cứu cách giáo viên sửa lỗi trong dạy kỹ năng Nói tại một trung tâm tiếng Anh. Hai mươi giáo viên đã tham gia khảo sát để đưa ra hiểu biết chung của họ về phản hồi sửa lỗi. Nghiên cứu đã thu thập các nguồn thông tin xác thực bằng cách phỏng vấn và quan sát ba giáo viên trong các lớp dạy Nói. Kết quả cho thấy giáo viên nhận thức được tầm quan trọng của việc sửa lỗi trong dạy Nói. Ngoài ra, giáo viên cũng đã vận dụng nhiều cách khác nhau để sửa lỗi một cách hiệu quả.

Từ khóa: Phản hồi sửa lỗi, loại phản hồi, thời gian phản hồi, việc thực hành của giáo viên.

1. Introduction

“Giving feedback is one of the most important responsibilities of a teacher. It aims to bring about self-awareness and improvement.” (Gower et al., 2005, p. 163). Corrective feedback is a crucial aspect of teaching and learning. It allows students to understand where they went wrong and how they can improve their performance. Without it, learners may continue to make the same mistakes repeatedly, hindering their progress in mastering the language. Due to the gap in circumstances between traditional schools and language centers, teachers have different approaches to handling learners’ mistakes. Limitations in public schools’ teaching and learning process led to an increased demand for learning in external institutions. With outstanding features, the center creates an environment and opportunities for learners to access the language as much as possible. The level of language interaction between teacher-student and student-student is focused. Thus, teacher feedback acts as a bridge to promote the learner’s learning process. The instructor gives direct feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of each individual.

Undoubtedly, teachers have a critical role in students’ skill and cognitive development throughout the teaching and learning process. The process of learning a second language makes it clear that mistakes are inevitable when learning a new language. In this situation, the teacher’s criticism of students’ errors is seen as input that enables students to comprehend and retain more information. “Feedback is an important component of the formative assessment process. Formative assessment informs teachers and students about how students are doing relative to classroom learning goals” (Brookhart, 2008, p. 1). Errors are the impressions in the learning process that reflect learners’ productions. Pursuant to Sheppard, “Feedback is defined as the information and evaluation provided to learners on their output which becomes intake, and subsequently utilized to modify the interlanguage system” (1998, p. 176).

With the innovation and reform in the curriculum, students need to improve their English. English language centers are expanding to address the thirst for English of the younger generation. Distinctive features at the heart help learners communicate with the language more effectively. Learners have many

opportunities to express themselves. Corrective feedback obviously has a special role. The research paper will explore how teachers provide feedback to respond to learners’ mistakes in the speaking classroom. The question “What are teachers’ practices of corrective feedback in teaching Speaking at an English center?” is focused.

2. Literature review

2.1. Speaking

Speaking is one of the productive skills in language teaching. Effective communication in English is a valuable asset that can significantly enhance one’s prospects in various spheres of life. Furthermore, it facilitates building meaningful connections with individuals from diverse backgrounds, fostering relationships that transcend cultural barriers. Consistent practice coupled with an emphasis on projecting confidence and enthusiasm through your body language and tone of voice can go a long way. Speaking is the output when a learner comprehends enough knowledge.

Two hypotheses for the theory of speaking have been formed. Bygate (1987) stated that people do not just possess the theoretical knowledge of constructing sentences; instead, they must actively generate those utterances and adapt to the specific context. This entails swiftly making decisions, executing them seamlessly, and flexibly adjusting our communication when unexpected challenges arise. The expert considered speaking, including two significant elements of production and interaction skills, so speakers can flexibly interact with each other. The conversationalist is under time pressure to use “compensation” tools in processing a conversation. Simultaneously, the speaker needs to create an interaction with the listener so that both have unambiguous and natural utterances.

Alternatively, Harmer (2001) figures out two groups of features of speaking, language features (connected speech, expressive devices, lexis and grammar, negotiation language) and mental/social processing (language processing, interacting with others, on-the-spot information processing). Fluent speech necessitates more than just understanding language characteristics; it also demands the capacity to immediately process both information and language (Harmer, 2001).

Speaking is essential to communication, and several features make it effective. One crucial feature is clarity. A good speaker should be clear and concise in their message so the listener can easily understand it. Another critical feature is confidence. A confident speaker can capture their audience’s attention and deliver their message with conviction. Additionally, a skilled speaker knows how to use tone and inflection to convey their message effectively. They can use

their voice to emphasize key points and engage the audience. Finally, a good speaker can adapt and adjust their communication style to suit different situations and audiences. These features are essential for practical speaking skills, and anyone can improve their communication ability with practice.

2.2. Teaching speaking

Bailey (2003) stated that an honest conversation prefers something other than what the book provides.

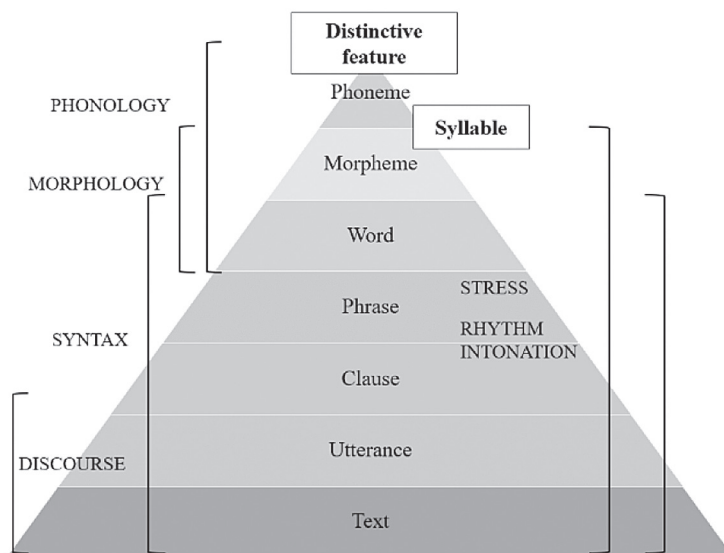


Figure 1. Interaction in the Language Curriculum: Awareness, Autonomy, and Authenticity (Longman, 1996, as cited in Bailey, 2003, p. 51)

To make what a person speaks, there are many sub-units. The components of speaking are required in creating a statement. Harmer (2007) claimed the stages of teaching speaking:

- Introduction
- Presenting the task
- Observation
- Feedback
- Follow-up activities on the topic

Feedback is expected to be given during the speaking activities or later to repair learners’ mistakes. “The teacher will often correct appropriately whenever there’s a problem” (Harmer, 2007, p. 131). Because mistake is the natural acquisition process in learning speaking, a teacher’s correction helps learners “clarify the understanding of meaning and construction of language” (Harmer, 1998, p. 62). Teachers should depend on the primary components

of speaking to build up appropriate tasks and then provide the reflection to learners’ productions. There are practical tasks to promote speaking skills in the classroom, such as dialogue, picture descriptions, information gaps, role-play, storytelling, and so on. To sum up, the teacher provides input language knowledge and context. Learners apply the given materials and work out the exercises under the coach. The teacher constructs functional activities with the principles of speaking. Learners also receive feedback during the process.

2.3. Corrective Feedback (CF)

The experts affirmed that “corrective feedback is one of the most important responsibilities of a teacher” (Gower et al., 2005, p. 163). The teacher is a “conductor” who indicates the learning process and how much learners comprehend the knowledge. Sheppard (1998) stated that “Feedback is defined as the information and evaluation provided to learners on

their output which becomes intake and subsequently utilized to modify the interlanguage system” (p. 176).

Corrective Feedback is a reflection of the teacher on learners’ oral or written productions. According to Lyster and Saito (2010), error correction is natural in practical classrooms; therefore, learners can build up and reinforce L2 knowledge through the teacher’s CF. “For some learning targets, especially performance-based ones, effective feedback is a matter of identifying something as it happens,” explained Brookhart (2008, p. 56). Corrective feedback is expressed during observation of students’ work. Providing corrective feedback in the classroom is an important aspect of helping students improve their understanding and skills. It’s important to do so in a constructive and helpful manner, focusing on the error rather than the student. By pointing out mistakes and offering suggestions for improvement, students can learn from their errors and make progress toward their goals.

2.4. Types and Timing of Corrective Feedback

Corrective Feedback varies and is categorized by diverse aspects of language. Ellis et al. (2006)

classify two types of CF based on the concepts of a language combining implicit and explicit feedback. Recasts are a place of implicit feedback which reformulate partially or fully a learner’s utterance and focus on the meaning of a conversation. Explicit feedback separates into explicit correction and metalinguistic feedback. By indicating an incorrect and repairing it, explicit correction shows what wrong a student made. Whereas metalinguistic is “comment, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of the learner’s utterance” (Lyster & Ranta, 1997, p. 47). On the flip side, Kerr (2017a) grouped CF techniques following (1) “The types of feedback given (prompts, and recasts/reformulations)” and (2) “How explicit and implicit the guidance is” (p. 6). Whichever way it is divided, there are six types of corrective feedback overview: Recasts, Explicit correction, Repetition, Elicitation, Metalinguistic, and Clarification request (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Kerr, 2017a). Lyster và Ranta(2007) arranged Recasts and Explicit correction in the Reformulations strategy; Repetition, Elicitation, Metalinguistic, and Clarification request are called Prompts.

Table 1. Types of corrective feedback

Reformulations	Recasts	Give the correct form directly.	S: There is tables. T: There are tables.
	Explicit correction	Indicate an error before giving the correct form.	S: He is my mother. T: You mean She is my mother?
	Repetition	Express facial or raise voice to repeat an error.	S: I usually eat milk in the morning. T: EAT? I usually EAT milk in the morning.
Prompts	Elicitation	Suggest the correct form by multiple choice. Require a student to complete the sentence. Reformulate a student’s statement.	S: Last year, I go to Da Lat with my family. T: Last year, I “go” or “I went”?
	Metalinguistic	Provide questions, comments, or information without mentioning an error. Give a clue for students to recognize by themselves.	S: She has been to the market for 3 hours. She should be back soon. T: Did she finish her shopping?
	Clarification request	Show the misunderstanding by using “Pardon, Excuse me, Sorry, I don’t get your point, and so on.”	S: She go Vung Tau and me too. T: Sorry, I don’t understand.

With regard to the timing of corrective feedback, there are not many studies affirming delayed CF or immediate CF is better. Obviously, the period when CF is provided influences the effectiveness of the comprehensive process. Immediate CF may be useful for learners who can adapt the information as soon as making errors through a teacher’s evaluation from a theoretical aspect (Doughty, 2001). In contrast, Harmer (2007) claimed that in the pedagogical aspect, delayed CF is more available owing to its polite feature not stopping learners’ speaking. In another case, Fu and Li (2020) believed that both ways of giving CF are beneficial for the learning process.

3. Materials and Methods

The researcher used the mix-method to discover the usage of corrective feedback of teachers in teaching Speaking at an English center. The quantity and quality methods were combined to find out teachers’ understanding and their practical process in the classrooms. The study involved a questionnaire, interview questions, and classroom observations. The responses of participants from the survey and interviews answer the question of teachers’ perceptions about the role of corrective feedback in teaching Speaking. Observation sheets help to explore the main purpose of the paper, that is, CF used in classrooms. Besides, the study might compare the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices in applying CF in teaching Speaking at an English center.

The research was conducted in an English center in District 12, Ho Chi Minh City, with twenty teachers and three multi-level classrooms.

To speedily obtain general information, a questionnaire is the first choice, with a wide sample. There are four parts to the questionnaire, with 21

closed questions. Questions number 1 to 4 concerned lecturers’ understanding of CF. The next seven questions investigate the common type of errors that teachers concentrate on in Speaking. Questions 12 to 17 focus on the types of CF used in classrooms, and the last four questions talk about the timing of CF.

The next step is interviewing three teachers (Chi, Hieu, Huong - pseudo names). The teachers were randomly chosen due to the fact that they have different experiences working in the center. The interviewer delivers 10 questions to clarify teachers’ awareness about using CF in teaching Speaking. The questions (Q) also follow four dimensions: Q1 (the role of CF), Q2 (the corrected errors), Qs 3-9 (types of given CF), and Q10 (timing of CF). The interviewees’ answers are scripted and analyzed later.

Classroom observation is the last step in the research. The three classes of the interviewed teachers will be chosen that be coded by Class 1 (CL1), Class 2 (CL2), and Class 3 (CL3). The turns of error - correction are noted during the periods by observation sheets. The correction activities will be compared with the explanations of the interviews. The moves of corrective feedback are categorized into six types of CF.

4. Findings and Discussion

First, the role of CF in teaching Speaking is mentioned (see Table 2). Overall, all participants agreed on the significance of CF in teaching Speaking (M = 4.35). The role of encouragement received the second highest rate (M = 4.2). The two other statements had the value of 4.05 and 3.9, respectively, that teachers take care of learners’ expectations in repairing their incorrect, and learners’ speaking can be motivated by CF.

Table 2. Teachers’ beliefs about the role of corrective feedback in teaching Speaking

No = 20

	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1. CF is vital for EFL Speaking classes.	1	5	4.35	0.875
2. I am concerned about learners’ expectations of receiving feedback.	1	5	4.05	0.945
3. T’s CF plays a role in encouragement in Ss’ Speaking.	1	5	4.25	1.020
4. T’s CF helps Ss to motivate their speaking.	1	5	3.9	0.912

Three interviewed teachers conceded that CF contributes to promoting the process of learning and teaching (Q1). Hieu believed “CF is essential and valuable to students and teachers.” The learners’ development is measured, which helps each learner self-evaluate their ability. Moreover, Hieu thought that a mindset would be constructed well by chaining errors with knowledge. Hence, “they will be more confident in real conversations,” Huong stated.

Table 3 shows errors that teachers focus on and correct in teaching Speaking. Pronunciation is the aspect of language knowledge that received the highest rate (M = 4.3), then the common errors made by the class are corrected (M = 4.25). The next choice is a communicative misunderstanding (M = 4). Obviously, there are not all errors will be repaired in practicing Speaking (M = 3.1).

Table 3. The types of corrected errors

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
5. Errors related to communication purposes	20	1	5	4	1.026
6. Errors related to vocabulary	20	1	5	3.65	0.988
7. Errors related to grammar	20	1	5	3.9	0.912
8. Errors related to pronunciation	20	1	5	4.3	0.657
9. Only errors made by the whole class	20	1	5	3.35	1.040
10. The common errors	20	1	5	4.25	0.639
11. All errors	20	1	5	3.1	1.334

When sharing opinions, teachers had different priorities. Chi preferred grammar and pronunciation, while Huong favored “communicative content and

pronunciation” first, then grammar and vocabulary. However, depending on the content of a lesson, Hieu would decide to address which errors. It can be seen that educators prefer the fluency feature to accuracy.

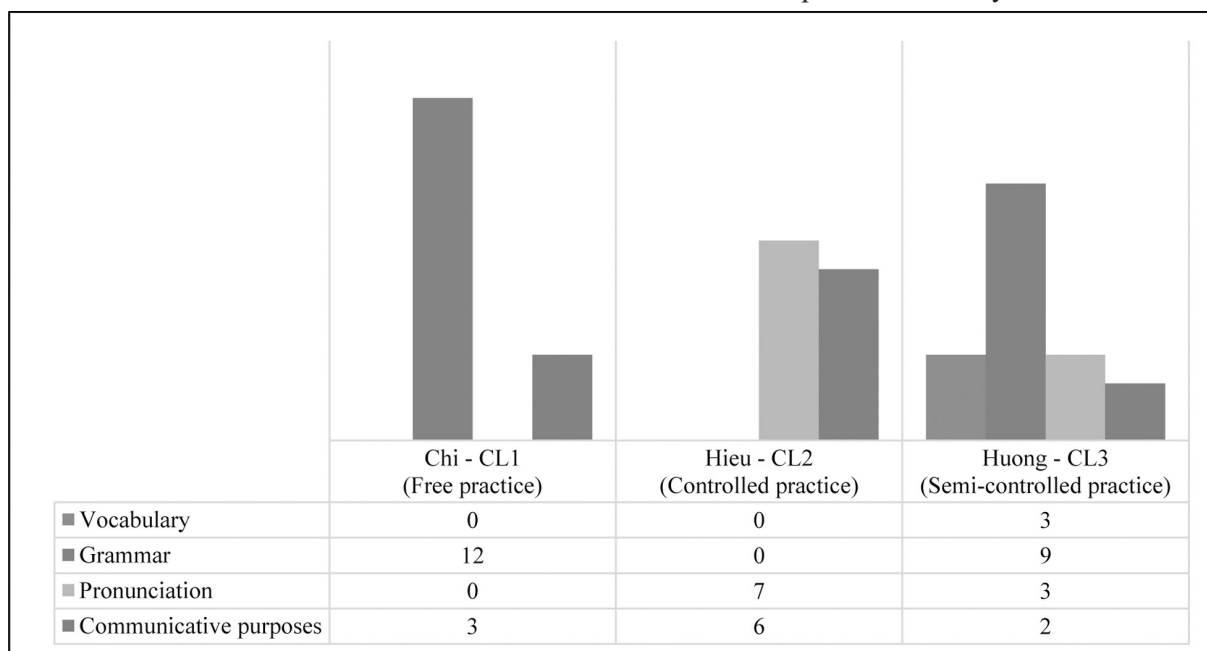


Figure 2. The types of corrected errors in the observed classrooms

Figure 2 represents the number of each error type in the classrooms. Three classes correspond to three types of practice consisting of free, controlled, and semi-controlled. First, Chi focused much on grammar errors which linked to her viewpoint. There was no pronunciation correction, but a few errors related to communicative purposes instead. Hieu was equally worried about two elements, pronunciation and communicative functions. Surprisingly, the lesson of CL2 was to make Yes/No questions in the simple past, and she had not focused on the grammar point yet as planned. Huong was only the teacher who created almost all types of errors when teaching Speaking. Due to the requirement of the lesson, there was a precedent for grammatical errors. Overall, there is no compatibility between

mistakes and lesson content. Teachers gave feedback to adjust these errors unevenly. Not really based on the content of the lesson, teachers focus on certain factors to correct errors. Unlike fluency-focused statements, teachers consider grammar more when learners practice speaking. Later, they focus on errors in the sense which relate to the purpose of communication.

Next, regarding types of corrective feedback, six sorts of CF were frequently applied in teaching Speaking (see Table 3). The techniques used were fairly even, with the Clarification request being chosen the most ($M = 3.9$) and the Explicit correction coming second ($M = 3.85$). Elicitation and metalinguistic have the same value ($M = 3.8$). In contrast, Recasts account for the least proportion ($M = 3.6$).

Table 4. The frequency of using corrective feedback types in teaching Speaking

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
12. Recasts (<i>T gives the correct form directly.</i>)	20	1	5	3.6	0.821
13. Explicit correction (<i>T indicates the error and gives the correct one with an explanation.</i>)	20	1	5	3.85	0.988
14. Repetition (<i>T repeats the error by changing intonation or facial emotions.</i>)	20	1	5	3.75	0.967
15. Elicitation (<i>T gives the correct form by multiple choice/suggests a part of a statement for a student to complete it.</i>)	20	1	5	3.8	0.834
16. Metalinguistic (<i>T gives questions, comments, or information without mentioning an error/gives a clue for students to recognize by themselves.</i>)	20	1	5	3.8	0.768
17. Clarification requests (<i>T expresses the misunderstanding by using "Pardon. / Sorry? / I cannot get your point."</i>)	20	1	5	3.9	0.788

To clarify more pieces of evidence, Chi, Hieu, and Huong explained in detail in the interviews that provided much new information about their beliefs in CF. The teachers all said they exploited all types of CF to respond to students' inaccurate items, except for Chi. Chi reported that elicitation and clarification requests were two types that she did not use because it took time to wait for learners

to complete sentences. Therefore, Chi likes to echo mistakes by raising her voice. Chi believed the benefit of repetition is to highlight the incorrect. Nonetheless, six types of CF were practiced in the classroom, which was different from her plan (see Figure 3). Metalinguistics had the most move with 4 turns in giving CF, followed by explicit correction and repetition with 3 moves of each.

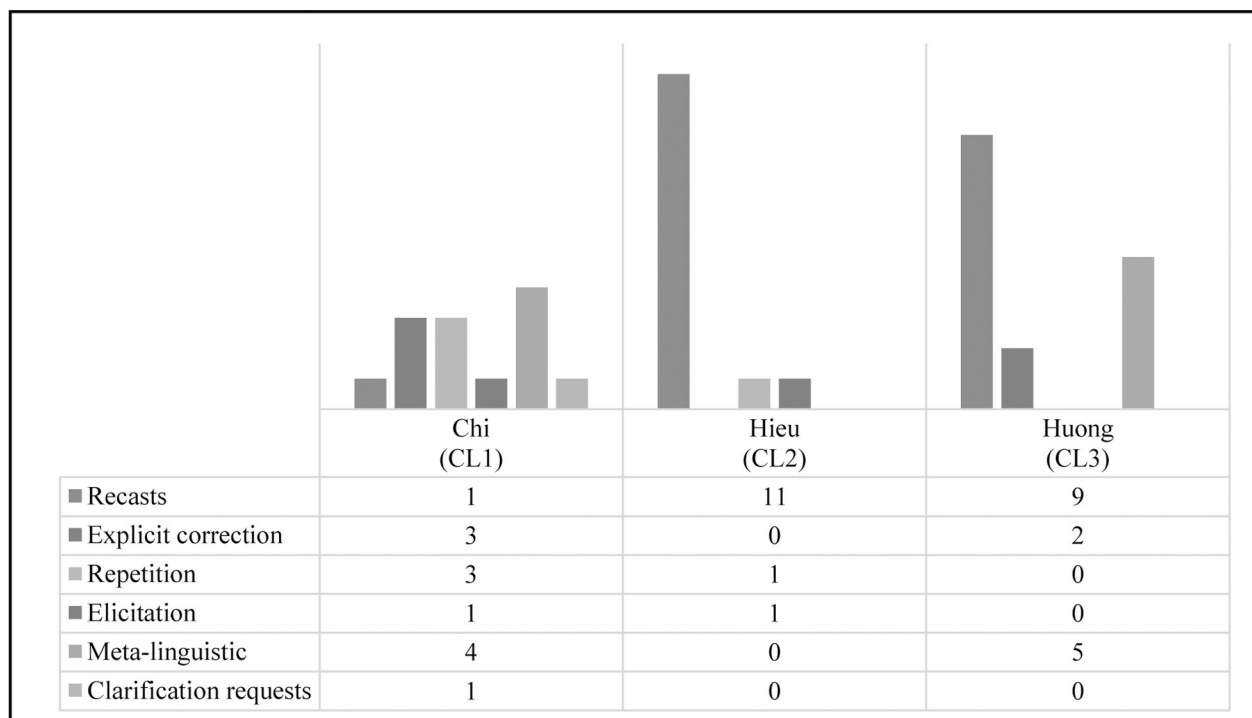


Figure 3. The corrective feedback moves in the observed classrooms

Similarly, Hieu and Huong’s practice is the opposite of their beliefs. To correct the error, they only used three types of CF in the classrooms. If Hieu shared that she preferred Prompting feedback, she used recasts of the Reformulations feedback type with 11 moves (see Figure 3). Then there was the repetition and elicitation with one turn. Huong also used two-thirds of the Reformulations feedback to correct learners’ mistakes (see Figure 3). However, there are still similarities; Huong also favored giving metalinguistic feedback because of politeness. Besides, metalinguistic

helps learners remember longer by self-assessment through suggestions from teachers. In general, recasts and metalinguistic are two types of feedback that are used mostly in speaking classes.

Speaking of the timing of corrective feedback, Figure 4 illustrates three groups of the feedback periods, including immediately (I), delayed after students’ speaking (D), and end of lesson (E). The study explored that teachers never gave corrective feedback at the end of a lesson. But, they also rarely stop a learner flow to correct an error.

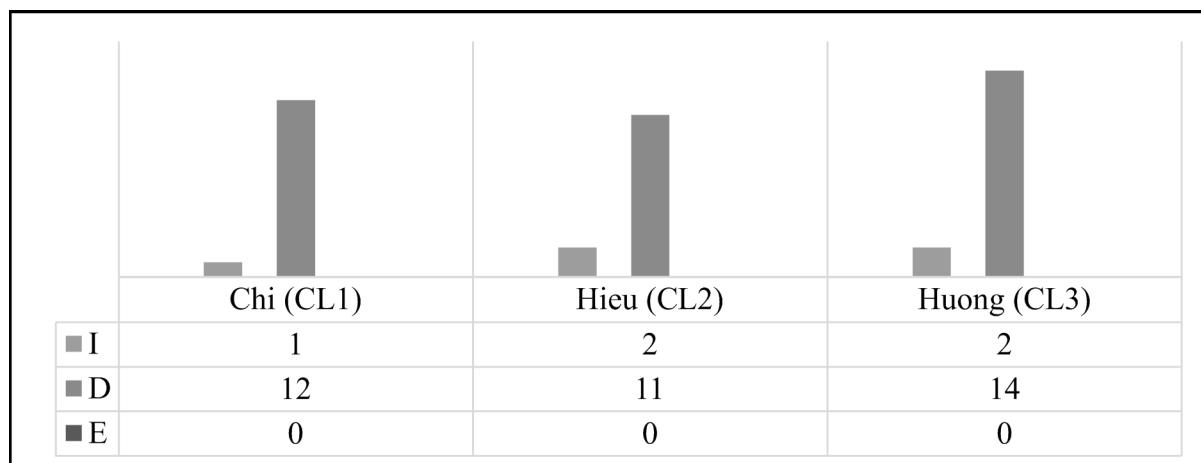


Figure 4. The period of the given corrective feedback in the observed classrooms

Compared to their explanations in the interviews, the three educators usually correct pronunciation errors urgently. They would wait for learners to finish their speeches in other cases. Only Hieu had different practices when giving feedback for pronunciation items. In her classroom, she listened to students and then corrected the mispronunciation after all. In Huong's circumstance, the teacher supported students at once when they could not build up ideas and speak fluently.

As mentioned by Sarandi (2016), "In terms of practice, corrective feedback is a frequently used teaching strategy that consumes a considerable amount of language teachers' time and energy, hence the importance of information regarding its (in) efficiency (p. 235)." The research found that there are gaps between teachers' perceptions of CF and their practices in the actual Speaking classrooms.

First, teachers pay careful attention to the grammar aspect when teaching speaking. Whether the foundation of the lesson is grammar practice or speaking free practice, teachers emphasize on accuracy so far. By chance, they attach importance to communication. Based on the characteristics of speaking in Figure 1, factors such as stress or rhythm intonation have not been considered in speaking. As such, the traditional method of grammar still dominates the core of speaking classes.

The second is CF type - the main finding - responding to the wrong products of direct learners. Teachers do not intend to use prompts or reformulations feedback due to many factors such as lesson content, learner ability, assessment requirements, etc. Therefore, teachers make assertions about which type of CF to use in the speaking classroom regularly is not satisfactory. Recasts and metalinguistic are two types that are used a lot in teaching speaking. Similar to the results of several related studies, recasts have always been dominant and are often used for fallen products (Sephehrinia & Mehdizahed, 2016; Rahmi, 2017; Ha, 2022). On the other hand, recasts can form bad habits for learners. Teachers always give accurate answers quickly, and learners take it as an obvious condition. This makes learners unable to think, even if they are confused,

and ignore the teacher's correction. As such, there is still a difference between the teacher's strategy and their practice.

Finally, the time to give CF is after the learner finishes the product. Teachers do not appreciate interrupting learners' speech because it can affect the thinking circuit and even cause learners to lose confidence. In addition, CF is also not provided at the end of the lesson. Perhaps the teacher is worried that the learner may forget the mistakes made during the practice. There is no connection between mistakes and lesson content.

5. Conclusion

The research identifies discrepancies between teachers' beliefs about CF and their actual practices in speaking classrooms. Firstly, teachers tend to prioritize grammar and accuracy in speaking instruction, emphasizing traditional grammar-focused methods. Secondly, teachers predominantly use recasts and metalinguistic feedback for correcting learners, but this approach may lead to learners becoming overly reliant on quick, accurate answers and not thinking independently. Lastly, CF is typically given after learners complete their speech, as interrupting them can affect their confidence, but it is also not provided at the end of the lesson, potentially disconnecting mistakes from the lesson content. Overall, there is a gap between teachers' strategies and their implementation of CF in speaking classrooms./.

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