

Error Treatment Strategies: Preferences of Low Proficiency English Learners

*Siti Zarikh Sofiah binti Abu Bakar¹, Fairuz Husna binti Mohd Yusof²,
Normala binti Sulaiman³*

¹Universiti Teknologi Mara Cawangan Johor

²Universiti Teknologi Mara Cawangan Johor

³Universiti Teknologi Mara Cawangan Johor

*Presenting author: E-mail: sitiz148@johor.uitm.edu.my

ABSTRACT

The purposes of the study are to identify students' preferences on being corrected instantaneously or delayed and to investigate whether students prefer to be corrected by their lecturers or peers. As stated by Xie and Jiang (2007), only few teachers know a lot about error analysis and some related theories. Some teachers are not aware of how they correct their students' errors and how to avoid using treatment strategies that might embarrass or frustrate students as identified by Hendrickson (1978). Besides that, previous researches also found that some students felt demotivated and frustrated when their errors were corrected instantaneously by their lecturers. Therefore, this study addresses the concern of employing the appropriate error treatment strategies towards the students. Thus, a sample of ten Pre-Diploma students who were taking English for Pre-Diploma (ELC030) at Universiti Teknologi Mara Cawangan Johor was involved in the study. The purposive sampling method was used to choose the sample as this study. The data were collected from interviews which were conducted after error treatment was given to the students. The data obtained were analysed using content analysis. In congruent with previous researches, students prefer to be corrected at a later time instead on instantaneously. They were also more comfortable to be corrected by their peers compared to their lecturers.

Keywords: Students' Perception; Error Treatment Strategies; Oral Presentation; ESL Classroom.

INTRODUCTION

Xie and Jiang (2007) state that only few teachers know a lot about error analysis and some related theories. Most English teachers are not aware of how they correct students' errors and how to avoid using treatment strategies that might embarrass or frustrate students as identified by Hendrickson (1978). Therefore, identifying the students' preferences on how they want to be corrected could facilitate the teachers to use the most appropriate approach to give corrective feedback to low proficiency English learners.

Problem Statement

According to Abu Bakar (2014), correction of oral errors may inhibit a learner. For example, the students might feel humiliated, frustrated, and even demotivated. As a result, the students might not have the confidence to speak English as they are afraid that they will be embarrassed in the class when the teachers use inappropriate error treatment. However, it is not uncommon for students to adjust, or even abandon what they want to say in an effort to say it correctly, or to the teachers' satisfaction. Therefore, the first concern of the study is to identify students' preferences on being corrected instantly or delayed. The study also intended to investigate whether students prefer to be corrected by their lecturers or peers.

Research Questions

The research questions are:

- 1) Do students prefer to be corrected instantly or delayed?
- 2) Do students prefer to be corrected by their lecturers or peers?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Errors are important because they inform language teachers about the students' accuracy and their language learning process, and they help students to discover the systematic structure of the target language (Papangkorn, 2015). Research on error correction has been extensively done to investigate the necessity of error correction, the correct timing, the types of errors that need to be corrected and the persons who should deliver error correction. However, despite the importance of error analysis in the teaching and learning processes, there are some teachers who think of it as insignificant. In a study done by (Sakale, 2013), in Moroccan secondary EFL classes, significantly almost 50% of the teachers ignore the errors students make while the other 46% delay their correction and only 5% resort to peer correction. This is indicative of a deficiency at the level of negotiation and repair of the form of learners' utterances.

Errors are normally corrected based on the skills taught. In speaking classes, errors can be corrected both immediately and delayed, while the correction in writing classes is normally delayed so as to allow teachers to collect the students' written work and respond (Faqeih, 2015). In a study carried out by (Zhang & Rahimi, 2014), both high- and low anxiety Iranian EFL learners preferred to be corrected immediately in their oral communication classes rather than waiting for them to finish talking. It is believed that explicit correction was more effective than recasts. A study suggests that more explicit and obtrusive types of corrective feedback are more effective than the implicit ones such as recasts (Rassaei, 2013). He further illustrated that learners perceived obtrusive feedback such as explicit corrections, as corrective feedback compared to less obtrusive attempts such as recasts. As reported by (Esther Lee, 2013), the advanced students preferred to get explicit corrections rather than recasts, despite the latter has higher learner repair. Yang, 2016 summarised that metalinguistic feedback was preferred for all error types by learners while explicit correction and recasts were endorsed for phonological, lexical and grammatical errors.

In terms of error types, it is expected that direct with metalinguistic error correction would yield better results than metalinguistic error correction alone because direct error correction provides students with explicit knowledge of their errors and how to correct them (Mawlawi Diab, 2015). It is emphasised that repeated application of this linguistic knowledge through practice exercises would hopefully allow students to internalize and produce it correctly. In his study to analyse these two types of error correction, it was significantly reported that the experimental group 1, who received direct and metalinguistic corrective feedback, reduced their pronoun errors more than the control and experimental 2 groups. This is because the metalinguistic correction which experimental group 1 received focused their attention on their pronoun errors that need correction, thus reducing the effort they needed to spot these errors.

The provision of corrective feedback can be made by teachers or even peers. Teachers should ensure that students fully understand how and why they treat errors as they do. Teachers have to explain why they provide different types of feedback across different error types. As to who should correct the errors, most students and teachers hold that to phonological, lexical and grammatical errors, teacher correction is better than self-correction or peer correction. (Motlagh, 2015).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study made use of qualitative analysis. For this study, the content analysis was used to analyse the data. The content analysis involves making sense of qualitative materials to identify core consistencies and meanings (Patton, 2007). Patton (1990) stated that the content analysis involves the process of identifying, coding and categorising the primary patterns of the data.

Sample

The sample for this study was 10 Pre-Diploma students from UiTM Cawangan Johor Malaysia who learn English as their second language. These students were taking the English for Pre-Diploma (ELC030) subject during the period of the study. Generally, the students taking this course have low proficiency in English which it is the factor of employing purposive sampling method for the study. The students were purposely selected as this study intended to investigate the preferences of error treatment strategies by low proficiency English learners.

Research Procedure

The ten (10) selected students were asked to present orally in front of the class. They then were given instant and delayed treatment by the lecturer. After that, error treatment was also provided by their peers. The students were also interviewed based on open ended questions and the data were recorded in a table. The data were coded and analysed using content analysis approach.

The procedure is illustrated in the diagram below:

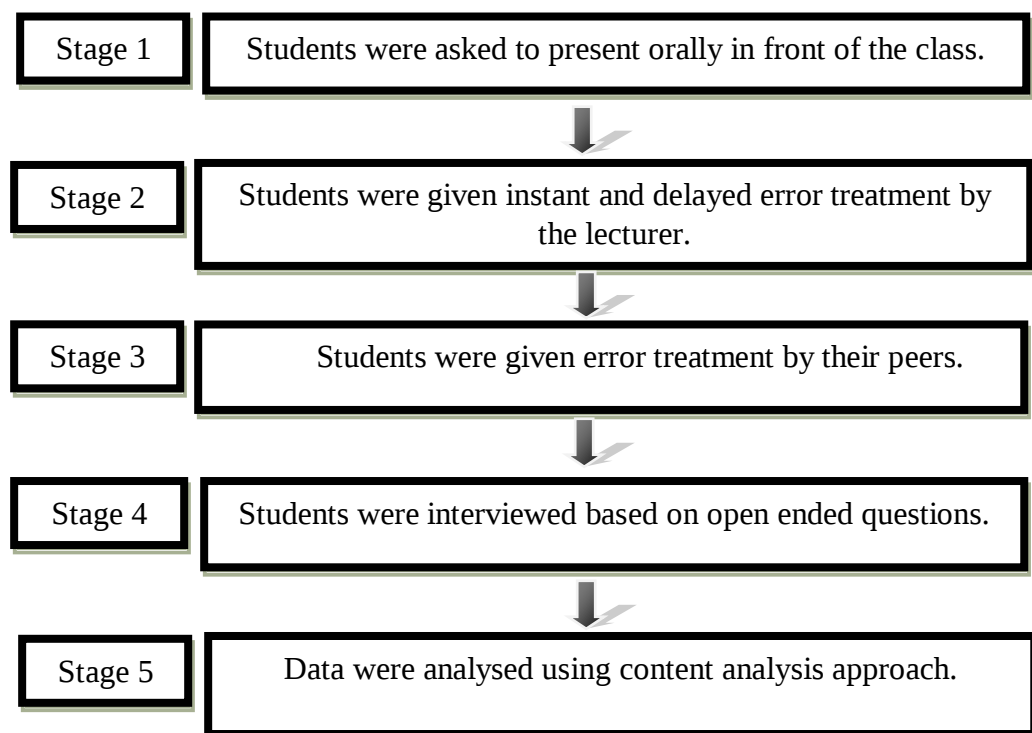


Figure 1 : Research Procedure

RESULTS

1) Do students prefer to be corrected instantly or delayed?

	a. Do you want your lecturer to correct or ignore your errors during your presentation ?
Student 1	Correct. Because same like before, I want to correct my pronunciation and grammar and anything.
Student 2	Maybe. Not all but maybe a little.
Student 3	Correct. Because aa..before presentation aa I not..means aa...I not sure I correct or not (sic).
Student 4	Yes, correct. Because I can learn from it.
Student 5	I think I want my lecturer to correct it.
Student 6	Ermmmm... I want the lecturer to correct my presentation.
Student 7	Ermmmm... The lecturer should improve our errors during the presentation., and it is because the audience also can hear what the errors (sic)
Student 8	Yes.. Yes.. I want to know how to be...(sic)good presenter.
Student 9	Yes.. I think lecturer should correct my errors during my presentation so that I want to present, the lecturer.. so that my presentation will become more...don't have errors. (sic)
Student 10	Yes... when during presentation, we also make wrong...so lecturer should to correct our presentation.(sic)

Table 1: Students' Responses (RQ1)

	b. Do you prefer your errors to be corrected immediately or after the presentation?
Student 1	Immediately. Because ape..(sic) because I'm not really confident with my presentation...If after, I forget what I present.
Student 2	After. Maybe after I (sic) presentation so I know all my mistakes where so I can do the best before this.
Student 3	During the presentation. Direct on the spot.
Student 4	After the presentation. Because during my presentation, I want to focus my presentation (sic). After that, she or he will correct.
Student 5	I prefer when I'm done.
Student 6	Aaarr...immediately..and after presentation.(sic)
Student 7	After. Because it will be interruption and shame.(sic)
Student 8	After. Because.... Not disturb me during the presentation. ' <i>Tapi kalau betulkan jugak tak malu sebab</i> '(sic) all people make mistakes.
Student 9	After the presentation. Because.... Maybe when.. when I present my presentation. I feel I have correct the error. (sic) I think it is more....for me it is more comfortable if the lecturer correct my error after the presentation.(sic) When the lecturer correct during presentation, I feel disturbed ' <i>tapi tak malu</i> ' (sic).
Student 10	Immediately. Because.... Aaaa...I know what I'm doing wrong in my presentation...I want to know fast... If after presentation, I think I forget what I doing in the presentation.(sic)

Table 2 : Students' Responses (RQ1)

	c. Do you want your lecturer to correct or ignore your errors immediately when you speak English ?
Student 1	Correct. Because it make (sic) me want to be better and it can make me improve my English.
Student 2	Yes. Aa..Correct.. Because I know what I (sic) mistake and I will improve myself to speak and know which one is correct.
Student 3	Yes. Because aa... my lecturer is (sic) know how to, the to correct.
Student 4	Yes. It is because make (sic) me more confident when I speak English.
Student 5	I want my lecturer correct (sic) my errors when I speak English because can improve my skills in English language.
Student 6	Yes. Because I want improve my spoken in English (sic).
Student 7	Yes. Because they want to improve our English (sic).
Student 8	Yes. To correct because... I want to improve my English.(sic)
Student 9	I want my lecturer to correct error when I speak English.. so that when lecturer correct my speak English..I will...I can improve my English more (sic).
Student 10	Yes, because they can improve my English to be good (sic).

Table 3 : Students' Responses (RQ1)

2) Do students prefer to be corrected by their lecturers or peers?

	a. Do you want your classmates to correct your errors during the presentation?
Student 1	Ya. If they want to correct me. But if they playful (sic).....
Student 2	Not sure. Err.. maybe I prefer teacher.
Student 3	No. Err... yes because I have a error.
Student 4	Yes. Because they know what I present it (sic). They know the mistakes. So, I can learn from it too.
Student 5	Yes. But sometimes, they do not know want to.
Student 6	Yes! Erm... because... ermmm...I more brave ask my classmates about my error (sic).
Student 7	Erm.. depends... Maybe someone main-main ke, <i>tapi kalau dia nak betulkan betul-betul, ok lah</i> '(sic).
Student 8	Yes..yes.. I am comfortable with that. Because to get some ideas and supports from my friends (sic).
Student 9	Yes..yes because when my classmates attend to correct my errors, we together... will help each other to improve our English (sic). And I am comfortable with that.
Student 10	Yes...because they too learn about the studies. They should know the correct. Yes...I want (sic).

Table 4 : Students' Responses (RQ2)

	b. Who do you prefer to correct your errors during the presentation ? Is it your lecturer or your classmate?
Student 1	Lecturer. Because the lecturer (sic) level is more (sic) higher.
Student 2	Lecturer. Because they have many (sic) experience about English. No classmates.
Student 3	My lecturer because urmm...is more is better (sic) know how to correc
Student 4	My lecturer lah. Because they most know (sic).
Student 5	I prefer my lecturer. Because my lecturer have more experience.
Student 6	Aaarr.... First...aarr.. I would prefer to my classmate, and before presentation..aarr... I prefer to my lecturer (sic).
Student 7	Lecturer.
Student 8	Lecturer. I believe my classmates but I believe my lecturer more (sic).
Student 9	The Lecturer. I am comfortable with them.
Student 10	Lecturer... I am comfortable with them because errmm... I ... aarr... because errmmm lecturer can teach me more (sic).

Table 5 : Students' Responses (RQ2)

	c. Who should correct your grammatical errors during the presentation?
Student 1	Both. (Lecturers and friends)
Student 2	Lecturer first. Then, maybe friends.
Student 3	My lecturer. Because same..They have knowledge.
Student 4	My lecturer. My friends also have errors.
Student 5	My lecturer.
Student 6	Ermm.. My lecturer.
Student 7	Lecturer
Student 8	Lecturer ah. Because lecturer is the jury when presentation. They give marks (sic).
Student 9	I think the lecturer too. Because as I said just now, the lecturer more knowledgeable, more experience, so that they can correct the errors (sic).
Student 10	I think the lecturer aah...because it is good to me to know about the correct grammar. I don't really believe my classmates to correct my error. 50-50 (sic).

Table 6 : Students' Responses (RQ2)

DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the discussion based on the two research questions.

RQ1: Do students prefer to be corrected instantly or delayed?

Students prefer delayed feedback because they do not want to be interrupted during their presentation. As stated by Long (1977), this type of feedback could avoid the inhibiting effects of interrupting learners. This also may cause them to lose focus and forget what they are trying to say. Some students are too focused on their presentation that they may not even listen to the feedback given attentively, hence causing the ineffectiveness of the feedback. For these types of students, delayed feedback may be preferred. This is to ensure that they are able to focus on the feedback and be able to take necessary action about it. As stated by Shute (2008), the initial error does not need to compete with the lessons that they are about to learn, in which can avoid confusions among learners. Furthermore, giving delayed feedback promotes guided learning and problem solving. It also encourages students to look back and understand about linguistic forms which could result to long-term learning.

However, some of them preferred to be corrected immediately. They probably want to minimise the embarrassment they may face if they were to be corrected after the presentation. This is because immediate feedback may constrain noticeability (Quinn, 2014). Besides that, some students may be comfortable to be given feedback instantly so that they would not forget about the mistakes they did earlier and be able to comprehend the errors better. In addition, some of them pointed out that they might forget about the errors they committed during the presentation if the feedback was given at a later time. This is congruent with Phye and Ande (1989) who stated that there is higher possibility for efficient retention if corrective information is given earlier.

RQ2: Do students prefer to be corrected by their lecturers or peers?

It was also found out that students preferred to be corrected by their lecturer compared to peers as they believed that the lecturer has better knowledge and experience regarding the subject matter. One of the reasons given by the student why the lecturer should correct him/her is he/she wanted to share the feedback with the classmates so that they also could learn from it. Besides that, the students could also know what is expected from them by the lecturer which may facilitate them to perform better in later tasks.

Rollinson (2005) said that peer feedback provides a less threatening, less patronising, friendlier and supportive environment to the learners. This enables the learners to be calmer and more subjective in receiving their peers' comments, hence helping them to understand their mistakes better. However, as the responses from the samples of the study suggested, some students did not trust their peers as there are issues in the peers' skills and language proficiency. That is probably why only one student preferred to be corrected

by his peers. This finding is congruent to Kouritzin and Vizard's (1999) finding which some students are more comfortable with their peers compared to their teachers.

In conclusion, most students preferred to receive the corrective feedback at a later time. Besides that, most students preferred to be corrected by their lecturers compared to peers. It is important to know students' preferences in receiving feedback to ensure the effectiveness of teaching and learning. The type of the feedback intervention determines the effectiveness of the feedback to a great extent (Van der Kleij, Eggen, Timmers & VeldKamp, 2011). Every student has his or her own preference regarding the error treatment strategies. The teachers need to be aware of this issue before they can apply the accepted methods of error treatment in the second language classroom.

REFERENCES

- Abedin, N. F. Z., Jaafar, Z., Husain, S., & Abdullah, R. (2013). The Validity of ASSIST as a Measurement of Learning Approach among MDAB Students. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 90, 549-557.
- Akemi Katayama. (2007) Japanese EFL students' preferences toward correction of classroom oral errors. *Asian EFL Journal*. 9(4): 289-305. Retrieved August,22,2013 from <http://www.sciencedirect.com.www.ezplib.ukm.my/science>
- Abu Bakar, S.Z.S. (2014) Students' perceptions on error treatment strategies of oral presentation practiced by english teachers in an esl classroom. *Prosiding Persidangan Antarabangsa Kelestarian Insan 2014*(2).
- Baharum, N. D., & Ariffin, K. (2014, January). Anxiety in Learning English Among Low Achievers: The Questions of Gender, Language Preference and Academic Performance. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Science, Technology and Social Sciences (ICSTSS) 2012* (pp. 299-308). Springer Singapore.
- Cohen, A.D. 1975. Error correction and the training of language teachers. *The Modern Language Journal*. 59(8): 414-422. Retrieved August,1,2013 from <http://www.jstor.org.www.ezplib.ukm.my/stable/pdfplus/325488.pdf>
- Erdogan, V. (2005) Contribution of error analysis to foreign language teaching. *Mersin University Journal of the Faculty of Education*. 1(2): 261-270. Retrieved October,10,2013 from http://efd.mersin.edu.tr/dergi/meuefd_2005_001_002/pdf/meuefd_2005_001_002_0261-0270_erdogan.pdf
- Esther Lee, E. J. (2013). Corrective feedback preferences and learner repair among advanced ESL students. *System*, 41(2), 217–230. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2013.01.022>
- Faqeih, H. I. (2015). Learners' Attitudes towards Corrective Feedback. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 192, 664–671. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.06.101>
- Hendrickson, J.M. (1978) Error correction in foreign language teaching: Recent theory, research and practice. *The Modern Language Journal*. 62(8): 387-399. Retrieved November,12,2013 from <http://www.jstor.org.www.ezplib.ukm.my/stable/pdfplus/326176.pdf>
- Kavaliauskienė, G., & Anusienė, L. (2012) Social Technologies Journal 2(1), p. 88–101. 2(1), p. 88–101. Retrieved November,22,2013 from <http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/elt/article/viewFile/23820/1511>
- Mawlawi Diab, N. (2015). Effectiveness of written corrective feedback: Does type of error and type of correction matter? *Assessing Writing*, 24, 16–34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2015.02.001>
- Mohd Basir, N., & Jangga, R. (2012). Factors affecting the mathematics performance of MDAB students.
- Motlagh, L. N. (2015). Who Do Learners Prefer to be Corrected by? Teachers or Classmates? *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 199, 381–386. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.522>

- Papangkorn, P. (2015). SSRUIC Students' Attitude and Preference Toward Error Corrections. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 197(February), 1841–1846. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.244>
- Patton, J.G., Woods, S.J., Agarenzo, T., Brubaker, C., Metcalf, T. & Sherrer, L. (1990). Enhancing the clinical practicum through journal writing. *Nursing Education*, 36 (5) 238-240.
- Patton, M.Q. (2007). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Phye, G. D., & Andre, T. (1989). Delayed retention effect: Attention, perseveration, or both? *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 14(2), 173–185.
- Rassaei, E. (2013). Corrective feedback, learners' perceptions, and second language development. *System*, 41(2), 472–483. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2013.05.002>
- Rollinson, P. 2005. Using Peer Feedback in the ESL Writing Class. *ELT Journal* Vol. 59/1 January 2005. Oxford University Press.
- RulaL.Diab. (2006) "Error Correction and Feedback in the EFL Writing Classroom." *English Teaching Forum*. 44: 2-13. Retrieved December, 3, 2013 from <http://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/english-teaching-forum-2006-volume-44-number-3>
- Sakale, S. (2013). Reflecting on error treatment in speaking among EFL Moroccan learners. *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science*, 12(1), 24–28.
- Shute, V.J. Focus on Formative Research. *Review of Educational Research*. March 2008, Vol. 78, No. 1, pp. 153–189
- Xie Fang & Jiang Xue-mei. (2007) Error analysis and the EFL classroom teaching. *US-China Education Review*. 4(9): 10-14. Retrieved January, 2, 2014 from <http://www.teacher.org.cn/doc/ucedu200709/ucedu20070902.pdf>
- Zhang, L. J., & Rahimi, M. (2014). EFL learners' anxiety level and their beliefs about corrective feedback in oral communication classes. *System*, 42(1), 429–439. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2014.01.012>
- Van Der Kleij, Eggen, Timmers & VeldKamp (2011). Effects of feedback in a computer-based assessment for learning. *Computers & Education* 58 (2012) 263–272.