

Learner-Informed Oral Corrective Feedback in Saudi EFL Classrooms: University Students' Perceptions and Preferred Feedback Strategies

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DOI Link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v15-i1/27485>

Published Online: 04 February 2026

Abstract

Oral corrective feedback (OCF) plays an important pedagogical role in supporting learners' spoken language development in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. However, the effectiveness of OCF depends largely on how well feedback practices align with learners' expectations and classroom experiences. This study examines Saudi EFL university students' perceptions of oral corrective feedback and their preferred feedback strategies when feedback is provided by transnational teachers. Using a quantitative survey design, data were collected from 198 first-year university students enrolled in intensive EFL courses. A structured questionnaire was employed to explore students' views on the importance, timing, and delivery of oral corrective feedback, as well as their preferences for commonly used OCF strategies. Descriptive statistical analysis using means and standard deviations revealed that students generally held positive perceptions of oral corrective feedback and regarded it as an essential component of effective language learning. The findings further indicated that students preferred teacher-led feedback that was clear and instructional, with explicit correction, recasts, and metalinguistic feedback rated more favourably than self-initiated strategies. These results highlight the importance of learner-informed feedback practices and offer practical pedagogical implications for EFL teachers, particularly transnational educators working in culturally diverse university classrooms.

Keywords: Oral Corrective Feedback, Learner Perceptions, Feedback Strategies, Efl Pedagogy, University Students

Introduction

Oral corrective feedback (OCF) is a common instructional practice in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms and plays an important role in supporting learners' spoken language development. Through oral corrective feedback, teachers respond to learners' spoken errors by drawing attention to inaccurate language forms and providing guidance on more appropriate usage (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Ellis, 2009). In EFL contexts, where opportunities to use English outside the classroom are often limited, oral corrective feedback becomes an essential source of language input for learners (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

Despite its pedagogical importance, oral corrective feedback remains a complex classroom practice. Research has shown that teachers differ in how frequently they correct errors, the strategies they use, and the timing of their feedback (Ellis, 2009; Li, 2010). At the same time, learners may hold specific expectations regarding how errors should be corrected. When teachers' feedback practices do not align with learners' expectations, corrective feedback may lead to reduced participation, increased anxiety, or disengagement during speaking activities (Schulz, 2001; Brown, 2007). Understanding learners' perceptions of oral corrective feedback is therefore crucial for ensuring that feedback practices are both effective and supportive.

Previous studies have highlighted that learners' preferences for oral corrective feedback vary across educational and cultural contexts. While some learners favour indirect feedback that encourages self-correction, others prefer explicit correction and clear explanations provided by the teacher (Lyster, Saito, & Sato, 2013; Alshahrani, 2016). These differences suggest that oral corrective feedback should not be treated as a one-size-fits-all practice, but rather as a pedagogical tool that needs to be adapted to learners' needs and learning backgrounds.

In the Saudi EFL context, university students typically have limited exposure to English beyond the classroom environment. As a result, teachers play a central role in modelling accurate spoken language and providing corrective feedback (Al-Harbi, 2019). In addition, many Saudi universities employ transnational teachers whose instructional approaches may differ from students' previous learning experiences. This situation highlights the need to examine how Saudi EFL students perceive oral corrective feedback and which feedback strategies they consider most helpful in their learning process.

Based on these considerations, the present study examines Saudi EFL university students' perceptions of oral corrective feedback and their preferred oral corrective feedback strategies when feedback is provided by transnational teachers. By adopting a learner-informed perspective, the study aims to contribute practical insights that can support more effective and context-sensitive feedback practices in university EFL classrooms.

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are Saudi EFL university students' perceptions of oral corrective feedback provided by transnational teachers?
2. Which oral corrective feedback strategies do Saudi EFL students prefer?

Literature Review

Building on the issues outlined in the Introduction, this section reviews key studies on oral corrective feedback with a specific focus on learners' perceptions and preferences in EFL contexts. Rather than presenting an exhaustive theoretical discussion, the review highlights empirical findings that inform the present study's focus on feedback practices in university classrooms.

Oral corrective feedback has been extensively examined in second and foreign language research, particularly in relation to the types of feedback strategies teachers use and their effects on language learning. Commonly discussed strategies include explicit correction, recasts, metalinguistic feedback, clarification requests, repetition, elicitation, and

paralinguistic feedback (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Ellis, 2009). These strategies vary in their level of explicitness and the extent to which learners are required to notice and respond to their errors.

A growing body of research has emphasised the importance of considering learners' perceptions of oral corrective feedback. Several studies have reported that learners generally view corrective feedback as beneficial for improving spoken accuracy, particularly when feedback is provided clearly and supportively (Schulz, 2001; Li, 2010). However, learner preferences are not uniform. While some learners prefer indirect feedback that promotes self-correction, others favour explicit correction and detailed explanations from teachers (Lyster et al., 2013).

Contextual and cultural factors also play a significant role in shaping learners' feedback preferences. In teacher-centred learning environments, learners may expect teachers to take a more active role in correcting spoken errors and providing accurate language models (Brown, 2007). Studies conducted in Middle Eastern and Saudi EFL contexts have shown that students often value explicit feedback and teacher guidance, particularly in speaking activities where accuracy is emphasised (Alshahrani, 2016; Al-Harbi, 2019).

Previous research has also highlighted potential mismatches between teachers' beliefs and learners' expectations regarding oral corrective feedback. When feedback practices do not align with learners' preferences, students may experience reduced confidence or anxiety during oral participation (Schulz, 2001). These findings underscore the need for learner-informed approaches to oral corrective feedback that take into account both pedagogical goals and students' perspectives.

Despite the growing literature on oral corrective feedback, there remains a need for studies that examine learners' perceptions and preferences in specific educational contexts, particularly in university EFL classrooms taught by transnational teachers. Addressing this gap, the present study focuses on Saudi EFL university students' views of oral corrective feedback and their preferred feedback strategies, with the aim of informing more context-sensitive teaching practices.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative survey research design to examine Saudi EFL university students' perceptions of oral corrective feedback and their preferred oral corrective feedback strategies. A survey design was considered appropriate as the study aimed to obtain a broad overview of learners' views and preferences based on their classroom experiences. By using a structured questionnaire, the study was able to systematically collect data from a relatively large group of participants and identify general trends in students' responses to oral corrective feedback practices. This design is commonly used in educational research to explore attitudes, perceptions, and preferences, particularly when the focus is on learner perspectives rather than cause-and-effect relationships.

Participants

The participants of the study were 198 first-year Saudi university students enrolled in intensive English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programmes. These students had regular exposure to oral corrective feedback during speaking activities conducted by transnational (non-Saudi) teachers. The participants were selected using a convenience sampling method, as they were readily accessible to the researcher during the data collection period. Convenience sampling is commonly adopted in classroom-based educational research, especially when access to participants is limited to specific courses or institutional settings. While this sampling method does not allow for broad generalisation, it is appropriate for exploratory studies that seek to understand learners' perceptions within a particular educational context.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from previous studies on oral corrective feedback and learner perceptions. Specifically, the questionnaire items were adapted from established instruments used in oral corrective feedback and learner perception research, including studies by Shulz (1996, 2001), Karchava (2012), and Ha (2020). These studies provided the basis for examining learners' views on the importance of oral corrective feedback, preferred feedback strategies, and technical aspects of feedback such as timing and error focus.

The adapted questionnaire was modified to suit the Saudi university EFL context in measuring students' general perceptions of oral corrective feedback, technical aspects of feedback (such as timing and error types), and preferences for specific oral corrective feedback strategies. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Prior to the main data collection, the questionnaire was reviewed to ensure clarity and relevance to the study context. The instrument demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha value of .962, indicating strong reliability.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted during regular class sessions with the cooperation of course instructors. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and assured that their participation was voluntary. They were also informed that their responses would be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. The questionnaires were administered to the students in paper-based format and completed during class time to ensure a high response rate. Out of 230 questionnaires distributed, 200 were returned, and 198 valid responses were retained for analysis after excluding incomplete questionnaires.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques. Means and standard deviations were calculated to summarise students' responses to each questionnaire item related to perceptions of oral corrective feedback and preferred feedback strategies. Descriptive analysis was considered appropriate as the objective of the study was to describe overall trends and patterns in learners' perceptions rather than to test hypotheses or examine causal relationships.

Results

Students' Perceptions of Oral Corrective Feedback

As shown in Table 1, the results indicate that Saudi EFL university students generally held positive perceptions of oral corrective feedback provided by their transnational teachers. Overall, students viewed oral error correction as an important component of effective English language learning in the classroom.

Table 1

Students' Perceptions of Oral Corrective Feedback

No.	Item	Mean	SD
1	Correction of spoken errors is important	4.50	1.00
2	Too much correction decreases motivation	4.10	1.20
3	Indicating errors without explanation is insufficient	4.10	1.06
4	Long explanations during correction are not preferred	4.20	1.17

Students strongly agreed that teachers' correction of spoken errors is necessary to help them improve their spoken English ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 1.00$). At the same time, they expressed concern that excessive correction could reduce their motivation to participate orally in class ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 1.20$). This suggests that while students value corrective feedback, they are also sensitive to the frequency and manner in which it is delivered.

In terms of instructional clarity, students indicated that simply pointing out errors without explanation was insufficient ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 1.06$). However, they also reported that overly long explanations were not preferred during oral correction ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.17$). These findings reflect students' expectations for feedback that is clear, focused, and supportive, without interrupting the flow of classroom interaction.

Technical Aspects of Oral Error Correction

Table 2 presented the technical aspects of oral error correction. Students showed a preference for being guided to recognise their own errors rather than being directly criticised in front of peers. Encouraging self-identification of errors was rated positively ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 1.00$), while direct highlighting of errors received slightly lower agreement ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.19$).

Table 2

Technical Aspects of Oral Error Correction

No.	Item	Mean	SD
1	Encouraged to identify own errors	4.30	1.00
2	Errors highlighted directly by teacher	3.90	1.19
3	Correction during speech	3.70	1.30
4	Correction after completing utterance	4.30	1.00
5	Correcting obvious errors	4.20	1.10
6	Correcting accuracy-related errors	4.10	1.00
7	Not avoiding complex errors	4.10	1.20

With respect to timing, students generally preferred corrective feedback to be provided after they had completed their spoken utterances ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 1.00$), rather than being interrupted mid-speech ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.30$). This indicates a preference for feedback practices that minimise disruption and reduce speaking anxiety.

In relation to the types of errors that should be corrected, students tended to support correction of most spoken errors, particularly those affecting accuracy and clarity. High levels of agreement were found for correcting obvious errors ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.10$) and accuracy-related errors ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 1.00$). Students also indicated that teachers should not avoid correcting errors simply because they require more complex explanations ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 1.20$). Overall, the results suggest that students favour thorough but considerate feedback practices in spoken language instruction.

Preferred Oral Corrective Feedback Strategies

Table 3 presented students' preferred oral corrective feedback strategies. The findings show that students expressed clear preferences for certain oral corrective feedback strategies used by their transnational teachers. Among the strategies examined, explicit correction ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 1.00$), recasts ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 1.00$), and metalinguistic feedback ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.00$) were rated most favourably.

Table 3
Students' Preferred Oral Corrective Feedback Strategies

No.	Strategy	Mean	SD
1	Explicit correction	4.30	1.00
2	Recasts	4.30	1.00
3	Metalinguistic feedback	4.20	1.00
4	Repetition	4.20	1.00
5	Paralinguistic feedback	4.20	1.00
6	Clarification requests	4.00	1.00
7	Elicitation	3.90	1.20

Repetition and paralinguistic feedback were also positively perceived (both $M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.00$). In contrast, strategies that required students to self-correct with minimal teacher input, such as elicitation ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.20$), received comparatively lower ratings. These results indicate that students tend to prefer teacher-led feedback that provides clear guidance and linguistic support during spoken interaction.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that Saudi EFL university students hold positive views of oral corrective feedback and regard it as an important element of effective language learning. Students' concern about excessive correction suggests a need for balanced feedback practices that support accuracy without discouraging participation.

The strong preference for explicit correction, recasts, and metalinguistic feedback reflects learners' expectations for clarity and instructional guidance (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Ellis, 2009; Schulz, 2001). In contexts where exposure to English outside the classroom is limited, students may depend more heavily on teachers to provide clear models of correct language use (Alshahrani, 2016; Al-Harbi, 2019). This reliance may also explain the lower preference for elicitation, which requires learners to self-correct with minimal guidance.

Students' preference for feedback delivered after completing their spoken utterances highlights the importance of maintaining fluency and reducing speaking anxiety (Brown, 2007; Ellis, 2009). By favouring correction after completing their spoken turns, students appear to prioritise confidence and communicative flow over immediate interruption. This finding aligns

with pedagogical recommendations that advocate delayed or selective correction during speaking activities to reduce anxiety and encourage participation.

For transnational teachers working in Saudi EFL classrooms, these findings underscore the importance of adapting feedback practices to learners' expectations and educational backgrounds. While learner autonomy is an important instructional goal, students in this context appear to benefit from feedback approaches that are more teacher-guided and explanatory. Adopting learner-informed oral corrective feedback practices may therefore contribute to more effective classroom interaction, higher student engagement, and improved spoken language development.

Conclusion

This study investigated Saudi EFL university students' perceptions of oral corrective feedback and their preferred feedback strategies in classrooms taught by transnational teachers. The findings show that students generally hold positive perceptions of oral corrective feedback and consider it an important component of effective spoken language learning. In particular, students preferred feedback that is explicit, instructional, and teacher-led, with explicit correction, recasts, and metalinguistic feedback rated more favourably than strategies requiring self-correction. The results also indicate a clear preference for feedback to be provided after students have completed their spoken utterances, highlighting the importance of maintaining fluency and reducing speaking anxiety during oral activities.

Based on these findings, EFL teachers are encouraged to adopt learner-informed feedback practices that balance accuracy and fluency. Providing clear and timely feedback while avoiding excessive interruption may help enhance learners' confidence and classroom engagement. From a theoretical perspective, the findings support the view that the effectiveness of oral corrective feedback is closely linked to learners' expectations and learning contexts. Methodologically, the study demonstrates the value of survey-based approaches in examining learners' perceptions of feedback practices. In terms of future research, qualitative or mixed-method studies may further explore how learners' stated preferences align with actual classroom feedback practices, while longitudinal research could provide deeper insights into the longer-term effects of different oral corrective feedback strategies on spoken language development.

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