

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF ORAL CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN SPEAKING CLASSES

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ABSTRACT

This survey was aimed at finding out students' perceptions towards lecturers' oral corrective feedback in speaking classes. This survey involved 100 fourth semester students of the Department of English Language Education at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University (UIN Ar-Raniry) in Banda Aceh. They were randomly chosen to fulfil the estimated population needed for the survey sample. A modified questionnaire from Calsiyao (2015) and Elsaghayer (2014) was used to collect the data. The results showed that the students perceived the lecturers' oral corrective feedback as an important part of language learning. The lecturers' oral corrective feedback was very helpful in improving the speaking ability of the students.

Keywords: Students' Perceptions, Oral Corrective Feedback, Speaking Class, Learning Improvement.

INTRODUCTION

Brown and Rodgers (2002) argue that, errors made by students in using the target language should be corrected. Research done by Kassa (2011) also showed that from four teachers being studied, all of them agreed that errors by students, especially oral errors in using the target language should be corrected. Rydahl (2005) also added that the majority of teachers found that error correction, usually called feedback, can help students to improve their language proficiency,

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therefore most teachers often perform error correction or provide feedback.

Previous studies have reported that providing feedback in EFL classrooms is still debatable. Agudo (2013, p. 265) has stated that “corrective feedback in classroom settings...[is] becoming a highly controversial issue, with arguments both for and against providing feedback.” For instance, Tomczyk (2013) and Samad, Rahma and Fitriani (2016) argue that corrective feedback should be provided in language classrooms because it can prevent students making the same mistakes in the future. Conversely, Alqahtani and Al-enzi (2011) and Elsaghayer (2014) conclude that learners might find teachers’ oral corrective feedback embarrassing and destructive when it is used too often.

The debate whether oral corrective feedback should be given or not has also been examined by Calsiyao (2015) and Méndez and Cruz (2012). They believe, over-correction of errors could be a factor that could destroy a students’ self-confidence and their performance in the future, while too little or no error correction at all might lead the students to think that they did not produce errors in using the target language. When students think that they have acquired sufficient target language their errors can last for a long time. Without teachers’ feedback, fossilization of errors could occur (Alqahtani & Al-enzi, 2011; Calsiyao, 2015; Ellis, 1986, 1999).

In Indonesia, a study conducted by Khunaivi and Hartono (2015) showed that corrective feedback in speaking classes was given in order to reduce the possibility of wrong target language use leading to fossilization. In addition, Maolida (2013) has stated that teachers’ corrective feedback is important to promote “young learners’ interlanguage development” (p.121). However, she also points out that, teachers should deliver clear corrective feedback in order to facilitate the students understanding of the correct target language use. Solikhah (2016) recently concluded that corrective feedback provided by their teachers can improve students’ speaking competence, though the teacher should not correct the students’ errors when the students are speaking. In other words, the corrective feedback should not break the flow of speech. From all these studies, it can clearly be inferred that corrective feedback is very common in language classes. Yet, it is very important to be given wisely by the teacher to avoid making the students feel uneasy towards the corrective feedback.

Researchers have found the advantages of providing feedback for students. Feedback, either in oral or written form or both together, is the medium to help students improve their performance in the future. Hussein and Ali (2014), Kirgoz and Agcam (2015), and Voerman et al. (2012), all say that feedback can be used to enhance language learning and make the students realize the way they express the target language has mistakes in it. In other words, feedback is given as a response to the students' errors when they use the target language. This response, whether implicit or explicit, shows that the students' utterances of the target language are not correct in some ways. It could be a correction of their pronunciation or their grammar or it could be a lexical or a collocation error or even a structural error e.g. not having a summary at the end of their speech.

In contrast with those who believe feedback is good to help students improve their target language, some researchers claim that feedback (especially corrective feedback) can cause setbacks in students' learning. According to Rahimi (2010, p. 76) and Agudo (2012, p. 123), corrective feedback should be avoided because it might be "harmful, time consuming, and ineffective." Moreover, Krashen (1982) and Truscott (2007) agree that corrective feedback is useless and harmful. In addition, 'overcorrection' of errors will damage the students' self-confidence because the students will be embarrassed when the teachers give the feedback in front of others (Elsaghayer, 2014).

A non-native English student will often produce errors in using the target language. However, those errors should be corrected wisely by the teachers. When those errors are over-corrected by their teachers, it will seriously affect the students' confidence that could lead to anxiety (Arnold & Brown, 1999). Therefore, teachers should know how and when feedback should be given. Otherwise, when the teachers fail to do it sagely, it can result in situations where some students will choose to stay in a 'defensive' mode (Agudo, 2013, p. 266). Some students could possibly think that the feedback given by the teachers is too critical and cannot handle it (Alqahtani & Al-enzi, 2011). When this situation happens, they deny the feedback and put themselves on the defensive.

Not all of the errors made by students in using the target language should be corrected by their teachers. Errors that can interfere with the message or the communication should become the focus for the lecturers' concentration. Pronunciation is one type of error that can interfere with the communication. Gitsaki and Althobaiti (2010) found

that a beginner's use of the L2 can frequently produce phonological errors and these errors could cause misunderstanding in communication. The time for giving error correction also needs to be considered. The lecturers should avoid interrupting the students' performance since it could disturb the students' focus. Martinez (2006) concludes that teacher interruptions during their students' performances or before they've finished speaking could "break the flow of their speech", thus demoralizing the student and "lowering the motivation of the student" (p. 3).

In EFL classes, oral corrective feedback might be valued in a different way by the teachers than by the students. These different reactions could occur if English is not the instructional language used in teaching. A study done by Lyster et al. (2013) revealed that students wanted their errors to be corrected more than what their teachers had done rather than their teachers ignore their errors. However, teachers felt that too much feedback could affect the students' self-confidence and motivation and could cause anxiety and embarrassment (Fungula, 2013).

A pilot study addressed to five students was conducted to find out the students' perceptions. It was found that all the participants believed that the lecturers' oral corrective feedback was really helpful and necessary in their speaking classes. It helped the students avoid repeating the same errors in the future. However, they had different perceptions regarding the timing of the feedback. Three students strongly disagreed when their lecturers corrected their errors in the middle of their speaking performances. The lecturer, in their opinion, should wait until they had finished speaking. Another two students agreed with the lecturers' interference during their speaking performances because they could understand the reason why their lecturer did so. This research was important to be done because the timing and the way the feedback should be given have to be clearly investigated in order to improve teaching-learning processes in speaking classes.

Research Question

1. What will the students' perceptions be towards lecturers' oral corrective feedback in speaking classes at UIN Ar-Raniry?

Research Objective

1. To find out students' perceptions towards lecturers' oral corrective feedback in speaking classes at UIN Ar-Raniry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Feedback

A definition of feedback has been proposed by Nilsson (2004, p. 23) as translated by Rydahl (2005). Feedback is a method used "to express one's view with the aim of facilitating and/or promoting more appropriate actions in the future, in relation to a goal or a vision" (Rydahl, 2005, p. 5-6). To make it clear, feedback is a comment or a response from a person towards somebody else's work to facilitate her to be better in the future. Feedback can be either positive or negative or a mixture. For example, a coach can give feedback about how well and how badly their protege athlete is doing in a tournament.

In teaching, Ur (2006) in Pérez et al. (2013) has asserted that feedback is information provided by a teacher towards a student regarding her performance during teaching-learning processes. Additionally, Hattie and Timperley (2007) have said that feedback is a "consequence of performance." In other words, feedback is information given by an "agent" towards "one's performance or understanding" (p. 81). In the language classroom, feedback can be addressed as a response given towards errors or good performances in using the target language. As Gitsaki and Althobaiti (2010, p. 198) have said, feedback is an "immediate response to a learner's errors." Thus it can be concluded that feedback is commonly given immediately after an error is produced; positive feedback can also be given immediately after a good performance .

To sum up, feedback is an immediate response given by an 'agent' towards a learner's performance during the teaching-learning process in order to promote better performance in the future. There are several types of feedback that are usually used in the language classroom. Some scholars name them as positive and negative feedback, and others call them implicit and explicit feedback. Positive feedback is feedback that the teacher, parent, or peer gives to praise the student regarding their good performance. Positive feedback is beneficial in learning because it can motivate students to do better in future. Ellis (2009) admits that positive feedback as a response to the correctness of a learners' use of target language and performance is important to

motivate them to continue performing better. An example of positive feedback is a teacher, at the end of a students' performance, saying "Your speech was really excellent, Akbar." On the other hand, negative feedback is given as a response towards the errors made by a student in using the target language. Hussein and Ali (2014) say that negative feedback is a way to let the student know that she has made mistakes in using the target language. Ellis (2009) strengthens their argument by stating that negative feedback is used to show there are errors in what the learner has said. For example, when a student says "I not sees him for two days" a teacher could correct the grammatical error by saying "No, you should say, I have not seen him for two days."

Other types of feedback are implicit and explicit feedbacks. From the word itself, implicit means unnoticeable and explicit means noticeable. By giving implicit feedback, the teacher tries to correct the students' error without giving a clear explanation about what to correct. Conversely, explicit correction happens when the teacher corrects the students' errors by clearly pointing them out. According to Pérez et al. (2013), implicit feedback does not obviously state where the students' errors appear while explicit feedback is obvious and can be easily noticed and corrected by the students. Through explicit correction, the students will clearly know what their errors were, therefore they can fix them better. According to Ellis (2006), explicit feedback enables the students' to realize their errors better. Therefore they can do self-correction and the result, will promote students' learning. To conclude, explicit feedback is a noticeably way of correcting students' errors by clearly pointing out the error and giving a correct form of the target language. Conversely, implicit feedback is an error correction language that does not obviously signal the students' errors in using the target language.

Oral Corrective Feedback

For EFL students, making errors in using the target language is very common. Fidan (2015, p. 1311) has said that students' errors in using the target language are 'unavoidable'. In addition, Brown and Rodgers (2002) also state that almost all language learners (will) produce errors in learning a new language. This is due to the fact that English is not the first language that the students use in daily life. In addition, in an EFL context, Indonesian students have very limited exposures to the target language because it is only taught in school as part of the national curriculum and there are very limited opportunities to use it in society. Even worse, there is not enough time to get enough

practice in the target language in the classroom. Therefore, the teacher will be the main source to correct any errors. Hedge (2000) has claimed that feedback or error correction from teachers is needed when there is limited exposure to the target language. In the same vein, Brown (2001) has asserted that students are very reliant on the teacher in most EFL classes because they have very little feedback from their society.

Feedback, particularly corrective feedback, is one of the ways to improve students' ability in learning the target language. Gibbs and Simpson (2004) claim that feedback can:

“correct errors, develop understanding through explanations, generate more learning by suggesting further specific study tasks, promote the development of generic skills by focusing on evidence of the use of skills rather than on the content, promote meta-cognition by encouraging students' reflection and awareness of learning processes involved in the assignment and encourage students to continue studying” (pp. 20-21).

In short, corrective feedback is the response given towards students' errors in learning. Corrective feedback is an indication that there are errors in a learners' use of the target language (Ellis, 2006; Lightbown & Spada, 1999). Corrective feedback should be seen as a helpful input for the student if it is given at an appropriate time. This means that the teacher should consider the student when giving their feedback. The majority of students when corrected in the middle of their speaking will face difficulty to continue after the interruption of their ideas. Even worse, they will feel anxious that could lead to them speak 'very cautiously' from then on. As a result, they will not speak as fluently as they could do. Spiller (2009) has noted that:

“Students may complain that feedback on assessment is unhelpful or unclear, and sometimes even demoralizing. Additionally, students sometimes report that they are not given guidance as to how to use feedback to improve future performances. Even worse, students sometimes note that the feedback is provided too late to be of any use or relevance at all” (p. 2).

Furthermore, oral corrective feedback can be given as a response to correct students' errors in using the target language, particularly students' spoken errors. Fungula (2013) has stated that oral corrective feedback is a direct indication or clue given when there is an error that a student has produced when using the L2. Annie (2011) has noted that

oral corrective feedback is a teachers' verbal feedback in response to students' errors in speaking performance and often focusses on pronunciation, vocabulary and language patterns, communication skills, ideas and organization. In conclusion, oral corrective feedback is oral feedback given by a teacher or a peer as an indication that there are errors in a students' use of the target language.

Pros and Cons of Providing Oral Corrective Feedback

Scholars such as Ellis (1986, 1999), Alqahtani and Al-enzi (2011), Voerman et al. (2012), Tomczyk (2013), Maolida (2013), Hussein and Ali (2014), Kirgoz and Agcam (2015), Calsiyao (2015), Khunaivi and Hartono (2015) have found the importance of providing oral corrective feedback in the language classroom. They have said that corrective feedback should be given in order to improve students' language learning.

By providing oral corrective feedback, teachers can help the students to minimize the possibility of committing the same errors in the future. Valero et al. (2008), Rezaei et al. (2011) and Amara (2015) have all said that when teachers ignore errors by students in using their L2, over time those errors will become fossilized. Likewise, oral corrective feedback allows the students to notice the gap between the target language they produce and how it should be produced (Rezaei et al., 2011; Jiang & Yi, 2014). Thus, oral corrective feedback can promote the language development of students.

Oral corrective feedback is not only perceived to have a positive effect but can also have a negative affect on language learners. Oral corrective feedback provided by the teacher could give a negative effect that can hinder students' language development if too much is given. Alqahtani and Al-enzi (2011, p. 216) suggest that oral "corrective feedback can only be used to a limited extent, after which it can become discouraging and destructive." In addition, Arnold and Brown (1999), Krashen (1982), Rahimi (2010), and Truscott (2007) have said that too much oral corrective feedback can destroy students' self-confidence, can demoralize students and can be very harmful and ineffective.

Moreover, oral corrective feedback is considered as useless if the feedback is given by their teacher at an unpredictable time during the students' speaking performance which might frighten them and make them stop speaking. As Martinez (2006) has said, teachers' error corrections that interrupt students in the middle of their performance,

especially in front of other students, can lower students' motivation and hinder language development. In addition, oral corrective feedback will be seen as negative feedback when the teacher gives the feedback carelessly without considering the students' anxiety that might appear right after the feedback is given (Elsaghayer, 2014).

In conclusion, oral corrective feedback has its advantages and disadvantages depending on how it is used and on how one views it. Therefore, teachers who usually provide oral corrective feedback should consider whether or not to give such feedback. However teachers should not ignore students' errors for a long time because when other students accept those errors as the "right utterances to be learnt" (Martinez, 2006, p.4), then fossilization of errors can occur. However, it is better for the teacher to avoid giving too much feedback that can hinder the language development of students.

In terms of types of oral corrective feedback, Lyster and Ranta (1997, p. 46-48) have proposed six different types of corrective feedback as a response to errors in language learning, they are: (i) explicit correction, (ii) recast, (iii) clarification request, (iv) metalinguistic feedback, (v) elicitation and (vi) repetition.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This survey investigated the perception of students to oral corrective feedback from teachers in a speaking class. The researchers used a questionnaire to collect data. The survey design was chosen because the researchers wanted to try to explore the perceptions of the participants regarding their experiences with oral corrective feedback and wanted to try to interpret those perceptions into meaningful descriptions. Mackey and Gass (2005), and Mathers et al. (2009) describe a survey study as a way of collecting information about attitudes, characteristics, and opinions from a large group of people.

This study resulted from a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methodology which focussed on descriptions of phenomena which occur naturally without manipulation of circumstances. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), Creswell (2003, 2014), Teddlie and Yu (2007), Driscoll et al., (2007) call this type of combination study mixed methods research. McKay (2006, p.16) has claimed that since "survey research is sandwiched between statistical, experimental research and qualitative research, it can use both

statistical and qualitative analysis.” In this study the researchers describe the perceptions of the students towards the oral corrective feedback they’ve received from their lecturers in their speaking classes.

Research Location and Participants

The location for this study was the Department of English Education in the Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University (UIN Ar-Raniry). This University was first established on October 5th 1963. Formerly, it was known as Ar-Raniry State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN Ar-Raniry) before it was officially changed to UIN Ar-Raniry on October 1st 2013. It is located on Jl. Ar-Raniry Kopelma Darussalam, Banda Aceh, Aceh Province.

The subjects for this survey were students in their fourth semester with the Department of English Language Education at UIN Ar-Raniry. The overall population of students was 254 with an average of 25-30 students per class. The students from the 2014/15 academic year were purposively chosen because they had already passed all speaking classes. Meanwhile, the object of this study was the oral corrective feedback given by their lecturers in their speaking classes at UIN Ar-Raniry.

In selecting the research subjects, the researcher used a simple random sampling technique. The researcher randomly selected five classes to find out the’ perceptions of the students regarding the oral corrective feedback that they had received from their teachers in their speaking classes.

Research Instruments

A close-ended questionnaire was used as the instrument in this study to gather information about the students’ perceptions of oral corrective feedback given to them by their lecturers in their previous speaking classes. A modified questionnaire from Calsiyao (2015, p. 397) and Elsaghayer (2014, p. 77) was used to gather the data. The questionnaire contained 13 questions in the form of statements with a four point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree, and (4) strongly agree.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed quantitatively in the form of percentages. To analyze the results from the questionnaire, the researchers used the percentage system following the formula proposed by Hatch and

Farhady (1982), Healey (2014, p. 26), Gravetter and Wallnau (2013 p. 40), and Sudjana (1992, p. 50).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaire included thirteen statements related to the oral corrective feedback given by their lecturers in their previous speaking classes. Items numbers 1 and 2 covered the good influence of the lecturers' corrective feedback, items numbers 4, 5 and 7 were related to the students' feelings, items 3, 6 and 10 discussed the students' emotional reactions, while the kinds or types of errors to be corrected were discussed in items numbers 8, 11, 12, and items numbers 9 and 13 were drafted to find out the best time to provide oral corrective feedback. The students' perceptions is presented descriptively below.

The results from the analysis of the results from the questionnaire showed that, in general, all the students perceived that lecturers' oral corrective feedback was an important part of language learning, especially for speaking classes. The majority of the respondents agreed that the lecturers' oral corrective feedback was very beneficial and helpful in improving their speaking skills. This result concurs with that of researchers (Alqahtani & Al-enzi, 2011; Calsiyao, 2015; Ellis, 1986, 1999; Hussein & Ali, 2014; Kirgoz & Agcam, 2015; Khunaivi & Hartono, 2015; Maolida, 2013; Solikhah, 2016; Tomczyk, 2013; Voerman et al., 2012) who have all said that oral corrective feedback (OCF) provided by teachers is very important to enhance language learning and thus results in improving students' language development. In addition, the students believe that the lecturers' OCF enabled them not to repeat the same errors in the future. Hussein and Ali (2014) and Tomczyk (2013) agree that lecturers' feedback is a way to correct students' errors and as a result the students will avoid making the same error in future meetings. Therefore the students claimed that they learnt a lot from the lecturers' OCF.

The claim above was also supported by the students' perceptions that clearly indicated that all the students did not feel bad or angry when the lecturers corrected their oral errors. However, all the students agreed that they were upset when they did not know what errors that their speaking lecturer was correcting. This indirectly implied that the students preferred to be corrected explicitly. One of the reasons for this was that the students needed to understand which error their lecturer was trying to correct. Therefore, the lecturer should give the feedback

in an understandable way. In other words, the oral corrective feedback should be given explicitly so the students will easily know what their error was and will be able to make the necessary corrections. Ellis (2009), Ur (2006) and Maolida (2013) have said that explicit, clear and noticeable feedback will enable learners to know what their errors are and to correct them immediately. Moreover, all respondents to this research were worried about making oral errors in speaking classes. Therefore, lecturers should avoid giving destructive feedback.

In relation to the types of error to be corrected, the researchers concluded that students wanted all kinds of error to be treated in order to know how the wrong use of the target language could be corrected. Surprisingly, the students all disagreed with the idea that their speaking lecturers should correct every single error that they produced. The students noted that, the lecturers should not excessively correct their errors because it can lower their confidence, especially when they are corrected in front of others. Calsiyao (2015), Elsaghayer (2014), Méndez and Cruz (2012), and Spiller (2009) have all said that over-correction towards students' errors can increase students' anxiety and decrease students' self-confidence. Elsaghayer also added that over-correction especially when it is given in front of other students can cause embarrassment and inferior feelings amongst students.

Lastly, the students all agreed that their lecturers should not interfere or interrupt the students before they had finished speaking. Martinez (2006) and Solikhah (2016) also objected to the idea of providing feedback before a student had finished her speaking performances because it can distract the student and break her concentration. Martinez also said that students often forget what they had intended to say when their teachers interrupt them and give them feedback during their performance.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In general, all students agreed to receive lecturers' oral corrective feedback. From the questionnaire analysis, it was found that the students believed that feedback provided by their lecturers was useful and made them learn something. The students showed almost the same feeling about the possibility to commit spoken errors. All students worried they might produce an oral error but they were not mad when they produced an oral error. The students also had the same opinion when they did not understand which part of what they said contained

errors and felt uneasy when they did not know what their lecturer was correcting. Therefore, lecturers have to deliver clear, explicit feedback. It can be concluded that students perceived lecturers oral corrective feedback was an important part of language learning because they learnt how to use the correct form of the target language after being corrected.

From the results of this survey, suggestions for speaking lecturers and students, and for future researchers can be given. Since the students perceived oral corrective feedback was helpful and very important in their language classes, the lecturers should provide oral corrective feedback whenever he or she finds the students commit errors. This is intended to enable the students to become aware of their errors and to avoid repeating the same errors. Another benefit is that oral corrective feedback can avoid fossilization of errors in language from occurring.

In addition, the students should understand that by providing oral corrective feedback the lecturers want their students to have better speaking skills. Moreover, the lecturers want to provide them with a correct way of using the target language. Therefore, the students should not think that oral corrective feedback is the lecturers' way to destroy the self-confidence of the students.

From this research, it was found that students' anxiety resulting from immediate feedback is an important issue to be considered. Future researchers might want to investigate the effects of lecturers' oral corrective feedback towards students' anxiety. The research can also be particularly addressed for high and low anxiety learners to find out their preferences for types of oral corrective feedback by their lecturers. Another possible field of research can be done by observing the types of oral corrective feedback that the lecturers are providing the most and enquire about the students' perception towards them.

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