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Exploring the Effectiveness of Oral Corrective

Feedback in an L2 Classroom Context

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Abstract

Corrective feedback (CF) has been a central topic of research within the discipline of second language acquisition (SLA) and language pedagogy, as there is a debate about the ways in which it should be used and the extent to which it contributes to language acquisition. This dissertation will focus on oral corrective feedback (OCF), with the aim of exploring the extent to which it is effective in L2 classroom contexts and examining its impact on language acquisition and learner engagement. To this end, it will draw on both theoretical frameworks and empirical research, first examining the relevant contextual information of SLA and the importance of instruction within this field, and then analysing the role of interaction in L2 classrooms and the key concepts influencing it. Finally, corrective feedback, and OCF specifically, will be explored in order to determine its effectiveness and identify the best ways of delivering it in language classrooms so that teachers can make informed decisions about its use and ultimately contribute positively to learners' linguistic development.

Keywords: second language acquisition, oral corrective feedback, interaction, classroom context, teaching methodology, language pedagogy

1   Introduction

The role of corrective feedback has been extensively researched in recent decades, especially in the discipline of second language acquisition and language pedagogy (e.g. Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Ellis, Loewen & Erlam, 2006; Sheen & Ellis, 2011; Mackey, 2012; Nassaji, 2015; Nassaji & Kartchava, 2021). Although a number of different approaches can be taken in this field, most of them agree that corrective feedback contributes positively to language acquisition. In the study of L2 acquisition, particular emphasis is placed on conversational interaction, as it allows learners to put language into use, thus contributing to the improvement of their linguistic performance and development (Ellis, 1984; Long, 1996; Loewen, 2020). During this interaction in a classroom setting, corrective feedback occurs orally, in which the teacher directs the learners' attention to the linguistic elements, specifically to a gap in their linguistic knowledge, by means of negotiation of meaning or corrections. There is a wide variety of strategies that can be used when giving CF orally, and the choice of strategy may influence the learners' ability to notice and internalise the correct linguistic forms. Some studies, for instance, suggest that recasts, the most commonly used CF strategy, may be the least effective in promoting acquisition, although implicit strategies may lead to deeper engagement in linguistic interaction and encourage negotiation of meaning, resulting in linguistic accuracy (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Loewen, 2020). Given the importance placed on conversational interaction and OCF in the field of second language acquisition, this paper aims to explore the extent to which it is effective in L2 classroom contexts, examining its impact on language acquisition and learner engagement. It will draw on research on SLA and the role of interaction in L2 classrooms, with the aim of identifying the best ways of delivering OCF in language classrooms, so that teachers can make informed decisions about its use and ultimately contribute positively to the learners' linguistic development.

2   Second Language Acquisition

In the linguistic discipline which studies language acquisition, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) refers to the process by which individuals learn a second language (L2), and also the field that studies this process. It is often used as a broad term that refers to adding another language to the first, but the difference between second language (SL) and foreign language (FL) has to be taken into account, which mainly revolves around the context in which the L2 is learned and what this entails. Thus, the former is learnt within a language community that speaks the target language, and the learner is surrounded by native speakers (e.g. learning Danish in Denmark), whereas the latter is learnt in a language community different from the language being learnt, so there will be little interaction with native speakers (e.g. learning English in Spain) (Saville-Troike, 2006). With *language community* we are referring to "a group of people who share knowledge of a common language to at least some extent" (Saville-Troike, 2006, p. 100), therefore multilingual individuals are members of two different language communities, and each of them influences the way they speak and how they see the world in each language, given that cultural and linguistic aspects also influence thought.

The term *communicative competence*, defined as "what a speaker needs to know to communicate appropriately within a particular language community" (Saville-Troike, 2003, quoted in Saville-Troike, 2006, p. 100), is crucial when speaking of SLA, given that developing this communicative competence is considered the goal of language acquisition. It does not only focus on linguistic structures, but also involves "the social and cultural knowledge speakers are presumed to have which enables them to use and interpret linguistic forms" (Saville-Troike, 2006, p. 100), i.e. when and how to speak, and to whom appropriately. The field of SLA is therefore not only concerned with the

cognitive aspects of acquiring a second language, but also with the social and cultural influences on the process, which gives rise to two approaches that can be taken within the field: one being the cognitive approach, which focuses on how learners represent and process language, and the other being the sociocultural approach, that studies the social contexts of language learning (Behney & Gass, 2021). For researchers that take the cognitive approach, interaction is one of the key elements that contribute to an effective acquisition of an L2, as it contributes significantly to the goal of achieving successful communicative competence, as we will see later. Furthermore, the discipline can be divided according to the context in which L2 acquisition takes place. The two main contexts are the uninstructed (also known as naturalistic) and the instructed SLA. The former takes place in everyday interactions, where there is no formal instruction (e.g. someone who moves to a country where the L2 is spoken, and acquires it through everyday use), while in the latter there is formal instruction which usually takes place in a classroom (e.g. learning the L2 in a language school). As one of the most common settings is the classroom, the discipline of Instructed Second Language Acquisition (ISLA) emerges as an attempt to study how instruction affects the process of learning an L2. Loewen (2020), in his book *Introduction to Instructed Second Language Acquisition,* provides a more detailed definition: "a theoretically and empirically based field of academic inquiry that aims to understand how the systematic manipulation of the mechanisms of learning and/or the conditions under which they occur enable or facilitate the development and acquisition of an additional language." (pp.2-3)

Although it seems clear that instruction is beneficial for L2 learning, Loewen (2020) raises the issue that "L2 instruction is not always successful", as "students do not always learn what is taught in the L2 classroom" (p. 2), therefore it is worth investigating to what extent instruction interferes with L2 learning and how it does so. As there is

systematic manipulation of the linguistic mechanisms in instructed SLA, interaction should always be present in the classroom, as it is an essential tool when acquiring the L2 and reaching the goal of achieving communicative competence.

3   Interaction and Key Concepts

In the context of SLA, the term 'interaction' is used to describe conversations between a non-native speaker (NNS) and a native speaker (NS) (or even another NNS) of the language that is being learnt (Behney & Gass, 2021), which in a classroom context may take place between teacher and learners or between learners. Within the SLA discipline, the *Interaction Hypothesis* was proposed by Michael H. Long (1981, 1983), and later revised in 1996 (Long, 1996). The Interaction Hypothesis has now evolved into a theoretical approach called the Interactionist Approach, which explores how meaningful social interaction is crucial for effective language learning. Ellis (1984, p. 95) argues that "interaction contributes to development because it is the means by which the learner is able to crack the code", which means that even if the learner has not yet acquired some of the linguistic elements of the message, through the practice of putting language into use, they are able to improve their performance and, eventually, their learning. During this process, learners may not understand each other or have difficulties expressing themselves, resulting in a breakdown of communication and leading to the use of *negotiation of meaning* in order to maintain the conversation. As Loewen (2020) discusses, negotiation of meaning contributes to the learners' engagement in communicative interaction because their attention is directed to the linguistic elements, and the use of requests for clarification and confirmations (see examples (1) and (2) in section 3.3 below) ensures comprehension that facilitates communication and, later, acquisition.

Although meaningful interaction is highly beneficial for effective language learning, it can often be influenced by many aspects that revolve around the learner, namely individual differences. Loewen and Sato (2018) suggest that the most salient ones are: (a) anxiety, (b) cognitive abilities, (c) willingness to communicate, (d) learner beliefs, and (e) age. Anxiety is described as "the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry" (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986) which in this context occurs when learning a foreign language. This feeling negatively affects the ability to learn a new language, given that anxiety "makes the individual unreceptive to language input" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 127), thus failing to incorporate available linguistic data and limiting progress in language acquisition. Anxiety also influences the benefits learners gain from receiving corrective feedback, as Sheen (2008) found that low-anxiety learners were more likely to benefit from feedback than high-anxiety learners. Secondly, cognitive abilities include language learning aptitude and working memory, but only the former will be discussed, as it proves to be beneficial for interaction because learners that have language aptitude seem to have a more implicit type of attention to language during interaction (Loewen & Sato, 2018). This helps them to easily perceive and analyse the linguistic data that they are exposed to (i.e. syntax, grammar, pronunciation, etc.), making the language learning process faster and more effective (Loewen & Sato, 2018). In terms of the learner's attitude, their willingness to communicate and their beliefs play a significant role in their predisposition to learn a language. Firstly, learners are required to actively use the L2 in classroom contexts, as it has an impact on their attitude during interaction. If the learner is not willing to communicate in the L2, there is little chance of developing effective communicative competence, since there will be no room for negotiation of meaning and corrective feedback (which will be discussed below), thus making it difficult for the learners to become aware of their linguistic gaps and erroneous

linguistic forms in order to correct them and expand their linguistic resources. Furthermore, input and output are equally important in language learning; without one of them, there will be no effective language acquisition (Swain, 1985). Secondly, interaction should be equally valued by teachers and learners, since if they "see it as a useful activity, then they are more likely to benefit from it" (Loewen & Sato, 2018, p. 300), as the learners' positive attitude towards interaction will make them more participative in interactive activities, and also more receptive to receiving corrective feedback. Finally, the age of the learners is also important for interaction, as instructors must adjust classroom activities to the age group of the learners due to the varying capacity for engagement they may have, which greatly affects the effectiveness of the interaction.

As Loewen and Sato (2018) propose, a number of constructs are involved in interaction-based research. The most salient ones are input, output, negotiation of meaning and feedback, which will be explained in the following subsections.

3.1 Input

It is common knowledge that in order to learn a language, learners need as much exposure to the target language as possible to effectively acquire it, therefore it is an essential component in SLA, and in interaction specifically, as it is the way in which learners progressively discover the linguistic data they need to acquire a language. Mackey (2012, p. 9) refers to input as "the language that is available to a learner through any medium", and it can come in many ways, mainly being spoken or written (e.g., in TV shows, books or the teacher speaking in a class, among others). Although the importance of input in language acquisition is undeniable, the debate revolves around the type of input needed. The type of input determines the linguistic data learners perceive, which guides them in

acquiring certain structures or vocabulary. It also influences their progress in language acquisition, since receiving input which is too simple may limit their progress, but input which is too complex is ineffective, as it will be beyond the learners' comprehension capacity. Krashen (1977) discusses this issue in his *Input Hypothesis*, in which he emphasizes the need for the learners to be exposed to comprehensible input, that is, input that they comprehend but "contains only a few elements that are unknown to them, which they can figure out based on the situational and linguistic contexts" (Loewen, 2020, p. 44), thus developing the concept *i+1* (*i* being the current level of the learner, and *+1* representing language that is slightly more advanced than their current level). This concept refers to an input that goes slightly beyond the level of comprehension, which pushes learners to be aware of the specific linguistic forms, thus contributing to an effective progress in the acquisition of the target language by focusing on form.

3.2   Output

Another construct that is significant within the interactionist approach of SLA is output, which refers to the language that is produced by the learners. Swain (1985) developed the *Comprehensible Output Hypothesis*, which suggests that learners also need to create output in order to enhance their L2 development. This hypothesis states that, through output, learners have to "consider which specific linguistic forms encode which meanings" (Loewen & Sato, 2018, p. 291), thus they have to review their knowledge in order to choose the linguistic forms they need to convey their intended message as accurately as possible. In this way, they can test new linguistic forms in order to determine what works and what does not. If the interaction results in a communication breakdown or corrective feedback, modified output will take place, which is the "process of rephrasing or reformulating one's original utterance" (Mackey, 2012, p. 16). Therefore,

since the learner has been pushed to rephrase their original utterance to make it more appropriate or correct, it widens their linguistic resources and fosters L2 development, as this knowledge will eventually be internalized. Thus, modified output helps to improve fluency in the L2 and automaticity of language processes, which is beneficial for an effective L2 acquisition.

3.3   Negotiation of meaning

Negotiation of meaning is considered crucial to maintaining effective interaction between speakers, as learners work together to resolve communicative breakdowns or clarify misunderstandings that often occur in interaction. According to Loewen (2020), there are three main types of negotiation, as seen in the examples below. Example (1) shows a *confirmation check*, in which learner 2 is trying to verify whether the utterance has been correctly understood. Example (2) is an example of a *clarification request*, in which learner 2 tries to obtain more information in order to fully understand the preceding utterance. Finally, Example (3) shows a *comprehension check*, in which learner 1 is ensuring that the other learners have correctly understood the message.

(1) Confirmation Check[1]

Learner 1: She is going to give a speech in front of everyone.

Learner 2: **A pitch?**

Learner 1: A speech. She is going to talk in front of everyone.

(2) Clarification Request

Learner 1: I haven't watched it, do you recommend it?

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[1] All examples are created by the author of the dissertation.

Learner 2: **Recommend it?**

Learner 1: Did you like the film? Would you recommend it to me?

(3) Comprehension Check

Learner 1: You will have to write the name and fold the paper, then put it in the box. **Do you understand?**

Learner 2: Sorry, can you repeat?

Through this negotiation, learners can become aware of gaps in their production, highlighting areas on which they need to focus in order to improve their linguistic performance. In addition, it improves comprehension and encourages modified production, as learners have to adjust their speech to ensure a correct use of language that is understood by the listener, which often leads them to expand their linguistic resources (i.e. rephrasing, looking for synonyms, etc.). Most importantly, negotiation of meaning often ensures that interaction can be maintained.

3.4 Feedback

Feedback is considered the most important construct of the interactionist approach, given that it contributes to the learner's awareness of their linguistic performance and how to improve it. It can be referred to as a response to someone's utterance in relation to their linguistic production (or output), especially after a problem with what they have said (Behney & Gass, 2021). Positive feedback, on the one hand, serves to reaffirm that the learner's production is correct, which is essential for affective and effective instruction, and for maintaining the learners' motivation in learning the L2 (Ellis, 2009). However, this type of feedback has been the subject of little research, given that it is negative

feedback that contributes most to improving and learning the target language. We have previously talked about negotiation of meaning, which focuses on meaning to resolve a communication breakdown. However, in ISLA there is usually a strong focus on form, where the teacher pedagogically interferes in the class interaction to provide negative feedback to the learners. This type of feedback is known as corrective feedback, since it aims to correct those errors so that learners internalise the correct linguistic forms in order to make their productions as accurate as possible. In example (4) we can observe an instance of corrective feedback between two NNSs, in which one of the learners is trying to explain a future situation without using the future tense. Learner 2 is aware of the mistake and corrects learner 1 by adding the future form *will*, thus learner 1 notices the error and receives input of the correct linguistic form, resulting in the production of modified output.

(4) Learner 1: Tomorrow I go–

Learner 2: Will go

Learner 1: Tomorrow I will go to the park.

4   (Oral) Corrective Feedback

In a foreign language (FL) classroom, interaction plays a crucial role in the instruction of the L2, especially that between teacher and learners, as it fosters the development of learners' communicative skills and linguistic competence. While interaction between learners enables them to actively use the L2, receiving corrective feedback draws their attention to a gap in their linguistic knowledge, which helps them to identify and correct it in order to make the utterance more accurate, ultimately internalising this information and enhancing the learner's linguistic knowledge. In this way, errors are considered a

natural part of the learning process and an opportunity for linguistic development. As Behney and Gass (2021) discuss, oral interactions that result in learning start with an error, followed by a correction (i.e. feedback) and negotiation, which result in modified output following the correction. It is therefore essential that the learner is able to notice the error in order to effectively acquire the correct linguistic forms. Example (5) illustrates this interactional process:

(5) Interactional feedback

Student: We go to the cinema and watched the newest film.   ← Initiation

Teacher: When did you go to the cinema?   ← Feedback (negotiation)

Student: Yesterday.

Teacher: Then you what to the cinema?

Student: We went to the cinema.   ← Response (modified output)

Behney and Gass (2021) present three ways in which noticing can occur. In the first one, the learner receives input, but the output that they produce is different, thus there is corrective feedback in which the learner notices the error, and then produces modified output. In the second, the learner notices the difference between the input received and the output produced but does not understand the problem, and therefore does not modify their output. Lastly, the learner is not able to identify the error, and therefore produces unmodified output again. In this way, it is clear that for corrective feedback to be effective, the learner has to be aware of the error and have sufficient linguistic knowledge to understand the correction, leading to the production of modified output following the interlocutor's CF. Examples (6), (7) and (8) illustrate the three ways in which noticing can occur, in the same order as the explanations:

(6) NS: She goes to the park. ← Input

NNS: She go to the park. ← Output

NS: She goes to the park. ← Corrective feedback

NNS: She goes to the park. ← Modified output (notices the error)

(7) NS: She goes to the park. ← Input

NNS: She go to the park. ← Output

NS: She goes to the park. ← Corrective feedback

NNS: She go to the park. ← Output not modified (notices the error but does

not understand why it is wrong)

(8) NS: She goes to the park. ← Input

NNS: She go to the park. ← Output

NS: She goes to the park. ← Corrective feedback

NNS: She go to the park. ← Output not modified (does not notice the error)

According to Nassaji and Kartchava (2021), corrective feedback can be written and oral, and can be provided verbally or non-verbally (e.g. through body language). Whereas oral corrective feedback focuses mainly on improving the learner's linguistic accuracy, written feedback also takes into account the learner's overall production (e.g. cohesion, organisation, ideas, etc.). This dissertation focuses specifically on oral corrective feedback, considering the different ways of providing it and the aspects that influence it, and then exploring the extent to which it might be effective.

When attempting to determine the effectiveness of corrective feedback the controversy surrounding the type of feedback needed should be noted. Thus, we will first examine the different types of oral corrective feedback according to Nassaji (2015) (see Figure 1).
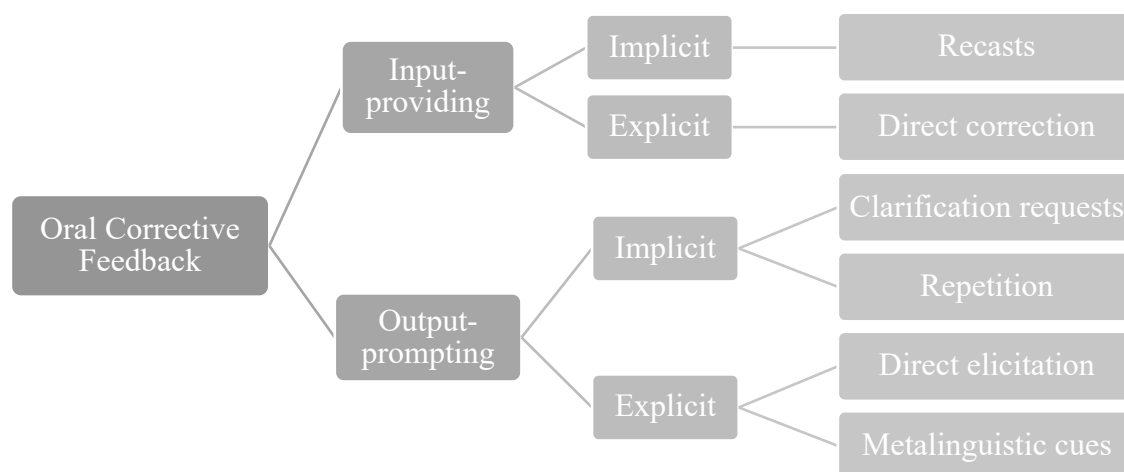

Figure 1 Types and subtypes of oral corrective feedback

Oral corrective feedback can be divided into two main types, input-providing (also called reformulation), and output-prompting (also called elicitation). As the names indicate, the former is a strategy that reformulates the speaker's utterance into a correct form, while the latter attempts to prompt the learner to self-correct the erroneous utterance. Examples (9) and (10) illustrate the two types:

(9) Input-providing feedback (reformulation)

Learner: She baking when the phone rang.

Teacher: She was baking.

Learner: She was baking when the phone rang.

(10) Output-prompting feedback (elicitation)

Learner: It's sun today.

Teacher: It's SUN today?

Learner: Yes, the sun is out, it's sunny.

Input-providing strategies include two subtypes, called recasts and direct correction (also known as explicit correction). Recasts are an implicit type of reformulation, in which the teacher repeats the learner's utterance replacing the erroneous part with the correct form, whereas in direct corrections the teacher reformulates the utterance in the correct form as well as explicitly indicating the error, as in examples (11) and (12):

(11) Recasts

Learner: In hand she had a ball.

Teacher: Oh, so she had a ball in her hand?

(12) Direct correction

Learner: We play in the park yesterday.

Teacher: We played, because it's in the past.

On the other hand, output-prompting strategies include four subtypes, also divided into implicit and explicit. Clarification requests and repetition are implicit output-providing strategies, where the former consists in the teacher asking the student to clarify the message, and the latter consists in repeating the student's erroneous utterance with a rising intonation, which serves to indicate that the utterance has not been fully understood or contains errors. In both cases the erroneous element is not specified, which encourages the learner to identify the error and self-correct it. We have previously discussed requests of clarification as instances of negotiation of meaning and, as we can see, they can also

be considered a corrective feedback strategy. This is because they are used as a way of obtaining more information when the interlocutor does not have sufficient knowledge to understand an utterance and needs more context to do so, but can also be used to indicate that an utterance has an error and therefore cannot be fully understood, forcing the speaker to reformulate the utterance. On the contrary, direct elicitation and metalinguistic cues are explicit strategies, as the teacher identifies the error but still pushes the learner to correct it. Direct elicitation can take many forms, for example the most common one is to repeat the learner's utterance but stopping where the error is, thus specifying the element to be corrected by the learner. Metalinguistic cues provide the learner with metalinguistic information (i.e. rules, structures, etc.), specifying the erroneous part and the reason why it is incorrect. The following examples illustrate the types of output-prompting corrective feedback strategies:

(13) Clarification requests

Learner: Is the dog ago?

Teacher: What?

(14) Repetition

Learner: She buy a car.

Teacher: She buy a car?

(15) Direct elicitation

Learner: She went school.

Teacher: She went…? There's something missing before 'school'.

(16) Metalinguistic cues

Learner: He go to France last year.

Teacher: You need the past tense.

Learner: Oh, he went to France last year.

As briefly mentioned above, there is a significant distinction between implicit and explicit strategies, which leads to a different reasoning process in the learner when acquiring new linguistic data. Explicit feedback "directs learners' attention explicitly to the erroneous part", whereas implicit feedback "signals to the learner indirectly that his utterance may contain an error" (Nassaji, 2015, p. 56). The effectiveness of both types of feedback has been extensively researched, and as it has been suggested by Ellis et al. (2006), explicit corrective feedback is more likely to be effective, as the chances of the learner noticing the error are higher, thus influencing the learner's interlanguage system.

Numerous studies have shown that recasts are the preferred corrective feedback strategy. Since this is an implicit type of OCF, it is positively valued that recasts do not interrupt the flow of communication, as they consist in reformulating the learner's erroneous utterance into the correct one. However, as Lyster and Ranta (1997) noted in their study, recasts appear to be the least effective strategy in oral corrective feedback, since only 31% of recast moves led to uptake (i.e. the learner's response to corrective feedback, which results in the learner's successful incorporation of the correction), while the other examined strategies (i.e. explicit correction, repetition, metalinguistic feedback and clarification requests) led to 50%, 78%, 86% and 88% uptake, respectively. However, elicitation seems to be the most successful strategy, as all learners' utterances led to uptake. For language teaching to be effective, teachers must adapt their feedback strategies to the needs of learners, their levels of proficiency and the classroom context.

In this way, teachers can create a favourable learning environment that fosters both accuracy and communicative competence, and ultimately enhances the language acquisition process. For instance, beginner learners may need more clarity in receiving feedback (i.e. using explicit corrective feedback strategies) as they have yet to develop their basic skills, thus directing the learner's attention directly to the error, and sometimes providing a metalinguistic explanation avoids confusion and facilitates the understanding of the correction. For more advanced learners, implicit strategies may lead to deeper engagement in linguistic interaction and encourage them to reflect on their linguistic knowledge in order to foster self-correction. However, corrective feedback is often complex, as there seems to be some inconsistency and imprecision in the way teachers correct learners' errors (Sheen & Ellis, 2011), in addition to the fact that for CF to be effective, students have to notice the error and understand why there is a problem with their utterance.

4.1 Effectiveness

The effectiveness of corrective feedback has been extensively researched as it plays an important role in the interactionist approach to ISLA. However, there are several controversies about how CF is viewed within the discipline and in relation to language pedagogy, which may also influence its effectiveness. Ellis (2009) examines five controversies affecting CF, these being (1) the efficacy of CF, (2) the choice of errors to correct, (3) the choice of the corrector, (4) the choice of the CF strategy, and (5) the timing of CF. Since (1) may be affected by the other controversies, (2)-(5) will be examined first, and the efficacy of CF will be discussed last.

Ellis (2009) attempts to determine which errors should be corrected, going through the distinction between an 'error' and a 'mistake'. An *error* is the result of a gap

in linguistic knowledge (i.e. in the learner's competence), whereas a *mistake* refers to the learner's performance. However, Ellis believes that the distinction is not so definite, as it strongly depends on personal opinion. Although other authors discuss a variety of errors that should require CF, Ellis suggests that CF should target "marked grammatical features or features that learners have shown they have problems with" (p. 6). In addition, most methodologists as well as SLA researchers believe that CF should be focused (i.e., addressing specific error types), rather than unfocused (i.e. correcting all the errors that learners make) (see Harmer, 1983, and Ur, 1996, as cited in Ellis, 2009).

Next, Ellis addresses the issue of the corrector, whether it should be the teacher or the learners themselves (i.e. known as self-correction). Although self-correction is proven to be effective in promoting acquisition, there are some issues with the strategy. The most salient one is that "learners can only self-correct if they possess the necessary linguistic knowledge" (p. 7), which can be resolved through the following process: first, by encouraging self-correction and, if this fails, by a correction provided by the instructor.

The next controversy that Ellis addresses is the choice of strategy when performing CF. He presents the different types of CF, which can be classified into input-providing or output-prompting, and whether they are explicit or implicit (see Section 4). However, it should be noted that even within each type of strategy, there is a high degree of variation in the way it is delivered, making it very difficult to examine the effectiveness of all types of strategies, as it is often necessary to generalise when investigating them. Furthermore, the debate on the effectiveness of each strategy varies according to the researchers' objectives or their opinions, with some valuing the continued flow of communication, while others advocate a more pedagogical point of view. Ellis concludes that, although all types of CF favour acquisition, explicit strategies tend to be more

effective. However, it is complex to determine which specific types are generally most effective, as this may vary depending on the learners and contexts.

Next, Ellis shortly discusses the timing of CF, given that in oral CF teachers have to decide whether "correcting immediately following the learner's erroneous utterance or delaying the correction until later" (p. 11). Immediate CF is usually preferred during activities focused on accuracy, whereas delayed CF could be used in fluency exercises. Ellis, however, points out that it is not possible to reach a conclusion regarding the efficacy of immediate and delayed CF.

When discussing the efficacy of CF, Ellis brings together studies from researchers belonging to different pedagogical approaches, as the debate on the effectiveness of CF varies according to the approach taken. While some researchers believe that CF can be viewed negatively as too judgmental or inefficient to eliminate errors (see, for example, Ur, 1996), others, particularly those that belong to an interactionist approach (see, for example, Mackey, 2007), view CF as a valuable solution to encourage language development in the face of learner errors. When CF takes the form of negotiation of meaning, it is considered to be the most beneficial for creating an environment in which learners become aware of their knowledge gaps and can thus expand their linguistic resources with the feedback provided (VanPatten, 2003).

As discussed in the previous section, Lyster and Ranta (1997) explored the relationship between corrective feedback and learner uptake through different types of CF, which helps to determine how corrective feedback may contribute to the assimilation of linguistic data. They use the term 'uptake' to refer to "[the] student's utterance that immediately follows the teacher's feedback" (p. 49), which is a response to the teacher's attention to an error in the learner's initial utterance, and they distinguish two types, namely (1) uptake that results in repair of the error, or (2) uptake that still needs repair

(referred to as 'needs-repair'). 'Repair' refers to "the correct reformulation of an error as uttered in a single student turn" (p. 49). In this way, they conducted an observational study of six French immersion classrooms in Canada with different immersion degree programmes, focusing on how "teachers and students engage in error treatment during communicative interaction" (p. 43), excluding formal grammar activities. When analysing the audio recordings, Lyster and Ranta (1997) focused on the three Grade 4 classes and the split Grade 4 and 5 class, and the timing of the CF examined was immediate and provided by four teachers to the students. The different types of strategies used by the teachers were explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback (i.e. referred to as metalinguistic cues in Section 4 of this dissertation), elicitation and repetition. The results of the study show that 34% of learner turns contained (at least) one error or use of the L1, of these, the teacher provided feedback in 62%. Of the total feedback turns, 55% led to uptake by the learner, however, only 27% led to repair, which clearly shows that the number of turns leading to repair is remarkably low within the total number of turns in which feedback was provided. In addition, the different types of CF strategies were examined, with recasts being the most frequently used, accounting for more than half of all turns containing feedback (55%), and followed by elicitation (14%), clarification requests (11%), metalinguistic feedback (8%), explicit corrections (7%) and repetition (5%), although the last one often co-occurred with the other types of strategies. The effectiveness of each strategy can be examined in terms of the uptake following the teacher's feedback, although it should be noted that, in many cases, "feedback does not lead to uptake because there is topic continuation" (p. 53). Therefore, the percentage of moves leading to uptake in each CF strategy is as follows: elicitation has 100% of the moves leading to uptake, although it has a similar number of moves in the repair and needs-repair categories. Elicitation is

followed by clarification requests (88%), with only 28% leading to repair; metalinguistic feedback (86%) with an almost even distribution between repair and needs-repair; repetition (78%), with a slightly higher percentage of moves leading to needs-repair; explicit correction (50%), in which 36% elicit repair; and lastly recasts (31%), with 36% of moves leading to repair. As the results of this study suggest, it is clear that when trying to determine the degree of effectiveness of OCF, it will vary depending on the strategy used. Furthermore, effectiveness should not only take into account learners' uptake, but specifically repair, as this is an indicator that, in most cases, learners have correctly identified the error and understood the correction, which they will eventually internalise, thus improving their linguistic data.

On the other hand, Sheen and Ellis (2011) highlight the complexity of OCF due to different aspects. For instance, they present an ethnographic study by Sheen (2004), in which she analyses four macro teaching contexts (Canada immersion, Canada ESL, New Zealand ESL and Korea EFL), concluding that the type of CF used varies significantly across instructional setting, indicating the complexity of CF as an "international phenomenon" (p. 601). In addition, they point out that "teachers are often inconsistent and imprecise in how they correct errors" (p. 602), which may hinder the detection of errors or cause confusion among learners. Therefore, it is argued that if learners notice the correction and repair their erroneous utterance, CF does facilitate acquisition (Sheen & Ellis, 2011). Furthermore, researchers have examined the effects of implicit (in the form of recasts) vs. explicit (in the form of metalinguistic information) corrective feedback (e.g. Ellis, Loewen & Erlam, 2006; Sheen, 2007, cited in Sheen & Ellis, 2011). All of them concluding that, in a classroom context, explicit CF is more effective. Ellis et al. (2006) present the process that learners are supposed to go through in order to process feedback for acquisition, and how the two types of feedback engage these

processes. Firstly, when receiving feedback, the learner must be able to locate the error, and both recasts and metalinguistic information make the location clear. However, when attempting to correct the error, the learner must be able to identify the cause if the problem (whether it is pronunciation, morphology, syntax or semantics) when comparing the erroneous form and the target form. Recasts, on the one hand, do not specify the nature of the error, whereas metalinguistic information, on the other hand, clearly expresses the nature of the error and the connection between the erroneous form and the target form is established by the teacher, explicitly identifying the required target form (Ellis et al., 2006). Thus, explicit CF strategies are more effective in promoting language acquisition, as they prevent speculation on the part of the learner, avoiding confusion and mistakes in error identification.

To summarise, it is clear that corrective feedback, or oral corrective feedback specifically, is effective and necessary in instructed second language learning. Although we have seen that its effectiveness can be influenced by a number of factors, it is necessary to focus on learners' language production in order to reduce errors and improve proficiency. Oral corrective feedback thus directs the learners' attention to these linguistic gaps that they may have, and which they will have to adjust in order to ensure correct use of the language that is understood by the listener. Eventually, learners will internalise these linguistic data, thus enhancing their linguistic resources which will promote language accuracy and, therefore, an effective language acquisition. As we have seen, Ellis (2009) provided a number of controversies surrounding CF, reaching the conclusions that CF should take the form of negotiation of meaning to be most effective and should be focused. However, he argues that it is not possible to reach a conclusion on the best timing for providing CF, nor on the choice of strategy to be used, although we have seen later that there is a distinction in the degree of effectiveness between implicit and explicit

strategies, the latter being the most effective. In addition, the article by Lyster and Ranta (1997) showed that, there is considerable variation between each type of strategy, with varying degrees of learner uptake and repair in each of them, but proving, in fact, that all types of CF are effective.

4.2   Potential Teaching Implementation

One of the initial purposes of this dissertation was to identify the best ways of delivering oral corrective feedback in language classrooms, given that it is a way to contribute to helping teachers in the field of SLA. In this way, teachers can make informed decisions about the use of OCF and ultimately contribute positively to the learners' linguistic development. Therefore, the best way to deliver OCF in an L2 classroom context may vary according to the teacher's primary objective. After analysing both theoretical frameworks and empirical research, I have designed possible teaching implementations of OCF based on the differences that may influence the teacher's choice of strategy.

Firstly, depending on the number of students in the class, the teacher can decide whether to use explicit or implicit strategies. Classes at the school usually consist of large groups of students (between 25 and 30), in which explicit strategies would be recommended, as adapting teaching methods to individual learners in large groups is very complex; therefore, explicit strategies are more direct and allow most learners to clearly identify the error and the necessary correction (Ellis et al., 2006). On the other hand, implicit strategies may require a longer interaction between learners and teacher, where the learner can sometimes fail to identify the error and, subsequently, the correct form (Behney & Gass, 2021). With smaller groups (e.g. in language schools or extracurricular classes), implicit strategies appear to be a suitable option, as fewer learners allow for a more personalised experience. In this case, implicit strategies are preferred because they

may lead to deeper engagement in meaningful linguistic interaction, leading to negotiation of meaning and ultimately to greater linguistic accuracy (Loewen, 2020).

Secondly, age and proficiency level must also be considered. The younger the students, the more explicit the strategy should be, as identifying and correcting errors can be a complex task for young children. However, from the age of 11-12 onwards, implicit strategies can begin to be used, as students can be considered to have sufficient knowledge to identify errors without the teacher pointing them out explicitly. The same applies to the level of proficiency; the less proficient the learners are, the more explicit the strategies should be. As mentioned above, one of the problems with implicit strategies is that learners are unable to notice the error, or they notice it but do not know how to correct it (Behney & Gass, 2021). In this way, beginners should be provided with explicit OCF strategies, whereas intermediate and advanced learners can be provided with more implicit strategies. However, in the case of both age and level of proficiency, the best way to determine which strategies are most appropriate for a particular group of learners is to use different types of strategies during the first few lessons and observe how the learners respond. Eventually, the instructor will be able to adapt the choice of strategy based on the learners' linguistic development. In addition, these two conditions overlap and may sometimes contradict each other. Consider, for example, a group of adult learners who are just beginning to learn English. In this case, the instructor must determine whether the learners, given their intellectual maturity, are capable of identifying errors and correcting them after receiving implicit OCF or, on the contrary, have difficulty doing so because their level of proficiency is still insufficient. Therefore, the instructor will have to adapt the choice of strategy based on the students' response.

Furthermore, it is generally recommended that OCF addresses specific types of errors (Ellis, 2009), in other words, that it is focused OCF. For example, if a lesson is

dedicated to learning the past simple tense and a specific topic of vocabulary, the teacher should only correct errors related to what was learned in that lesson or, at most, errors in knowledge that students are assumed to have already acquired, but never attempt to correct all errors.

Finally, OCF should preferably be immediate during accuracy-focused activities and delayed during fluency activities in order to maintain the flow of communication (Ellis, 2009). For example, in an activity focused on accuracy, in which students have to produce sentences using the present continuous to see if they form it correctly, the teacher will provide OCF immediately after the student's production. However, in an activity focused on fluency, in which students have to explain what their dream school would be like based on a few questions, the teacher will provide OCF after the student has finished speaking (i.e. delayed OCF). In this case, the teacher can decide whether to address specific types of errors or correct all errors, always trying not to discourage the student.

5   Conclusion

In summary, this paper has explored the role of oral corrective feedback in an L2 classroom context, specifically its importance and the extent of its effectiveness. Drawing on both theoretical frameworks and empirical studies, it has been shown that OCF plays a significant role in facilitating language acquisition since, by directing the learners' attention to gaps in their linguistic knowledge and helping them to identify and correct them, it enables them to internalise this new information and improve their language skills. Through the analysis of numerous studies, it has been shown that the impact of OCF is strongly influenced by a number of factors, such as the type of feedback strategy provided or the learners' individual differences, these being their communicative anxiety or their willingness to communicate, among others.

When discussing the strategies used in delivering oral corrective feedback, recasts appear to be the most commonly used strategy, although it has been shown that explicit forms of feedback are more likely to elicit learner uptake, contributing more to the retention of target forms. In addition, the importance of meaningful interaction has been emphasised in order to encourage teachers to create communicative classroom environments that foster active participation and engagement with the target language, thus discovering the linguistic data they need to acquire a language and putting their linguistic knowledge into use.

Finally, this paper supports the view that OCF, if delivered carefully and considering the needs of the learner and the classroom environment, can be a useful way of enhancing L2 development.

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