I. INTRODUCTION

Oral corrective feedback (OCF) has been widely used in language education. In speaking classes, the correction of students’ oral errors is vital for developing students’ competence (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Sheen & Ellis, 2011). As a consequence, OCF has caught the attention of many second language and language pedagogy researchers over the past few decades. Most of these studies focus on teachers’ beliefs and practices of OCF timing, or on learners’ beliefs and preferences of OCF timing. The present...
study explores both teachers’ and students’ perspectives, teachers’ practices of OCF timing in English classrooms in a Vietnamese university context.

In accordance with the globalized world, the Vietnamese Government approved a national education project for foreign language teaching and learning titled: “Teaching and learning foreign languages in the national education system”, targeting at improving the English competence of the workforce. More specifically, teaching strategies like OCF to improve student’s oral ability has been paid more attention. Understanding what teachers and students perceive and their preferences of OCF timing has been of significance to enhance students’ oral ability, thus develop their English proficiency. By comparing and contrasting teachers’ and students’ views on this topic, and by uncovering the underlying reasons for teachers’ decisions in their OCF practices, it is intended that a more thorough knowledge of these practices may be developed. Importantly, the exploration of the consistencies and inconsistencies between teachers’ practices and perceptions, as well as students’ expectations, should help improve Vietnamese students’ English learning outcomes in general and their speaking abilities in particular.

To achieve this aim, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are teachers’ and students’ perspectives of OCF timing in EFL classes?
2. When do teachers provide OCF in EFL classes?

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

Corrective feedback (CF) is regarded as “the feedback that learners receive on the linguistic errors they make in their oral or written production in L2” (Sheen & Ellis, 2011, p. 593). CF is categorized into three modes: written, computer-delivered, and oral. OCF is defined as “strategies used by a teacher or more advanced learner to correct errors in a learner’s speech” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 185) or the strategies that teachers employ to correct students’ errors in their spoken performance (Lyster & Ranta, 1997).

Immediate feedback and delayed feedback are two common kinds of OCF timing. Learners’ oral errors can be treated either immediately (erroneous oral utterances are fixed right after they are committed by the learners) or delayed (oral errors are fixed later) (Sheen & Ellis, 2011). Ölmezer-Öztürk and Öztürk (2016) also classify the timing of OCF as (1) immediate feedback (teacher provides feedback immediately after the errors are committed by interrupting students); (2) delayed feedback (waiting for students to finish their sentences and providing feedback at the end of their oral utterances without interrupting them); and (3) post-delayed feedback (teacher takes notes about the students’ errors and give feedback in a later session). Based on the literature, in this study, the timing of feedback was classified into immediate feedback (the teacher provides feedback
as soon as the students’ oral errors occur by interrupting them) and delayed feedback (the teacher provides feedback at some point later). For example, teachers might have provided OCF (or teachers might ask other students to provide OCF) immediately after the students finish their sentences, or after their entire speaking performance or at the very end of the lessons, with notes about their errors taken by the teacher without interrupting the students.

Research on teachers’, students’ perspectives and practices of OCF timing

Researchers have shown teachers’ support for delayed feedback (Fajriah, 2018; Mendez & Cruz, 2012; Ölmezer-Öztürk & Öztürk, 2016; Roothooft, 2014). Teachers might hesitate to give immediate feedback on students’ errors because it can negatively impact learners’ self-confidence and self-esteem (Kaivanpanah et al., 2015). It is believed that delayed OCF can avoid interruption in students’ utterances, which can be explained by teachers’ concerns with students’ emotions (Mendez & Cruz, 2012). Teachers in Firwana’s (2011) study said that interrupting students to give correction is acceptable.

With regard to EFL students’ perceptions of, and preferences for the timing of OCF, students tend to prefer delayed feedback. Ölmezer-Öztürk and Öztürk (2016) in Turkey found that students favored delayed feedback as it helped students to avoid confusion and to concentrate better on the ill-formed parts of utterances. In contrast, participants in other studies (Ananda et al., 2017; Gamlo, 2019; Kavaliauskiené et al., 2009; Lee, 2013) support immediate feedback as it may help students to remember and locate their errors and thus reinforce and enhance their speaking ability. Furthermore, immediate feedback can highlight errors for students and make it easier for them to analyze their errors (Ananda et al., 2017).

Studies on perceptions and preferences regarding OCF timing found that teachers and students share similar views on delayed feedback; both groups strongly supported feedback after they finished their utterances or after their oral performances. However, mismatches were reported by Roothooft & Breeze (2016), with students supporting immediate feedback but teachers thinking it could cause the students to have negative emotions.

In actual OCF practices, Soni (2018) revealed teachers using delayed feedback more frequently than immediate feedback. This may be because the teachers wished to avoid interrupting learners’ communication. However, this study also showed more use of immediate feedback on pronunciation errors than other error types. Similarly, Yiğit (2019) found teachers using immediate feedback more than delayed feedback. The choice of OCF timing was affected by the significance of the errors. The errors that could affect communication may be corrected immediately, while those that do not hinder the comprehension of the oral
messages can be corrected later (Roothooft, 2014).

In short, numerous studies have examined teachers’ perceptions and practices of OCF, teachers’ and students’ perceptions of OCF, students’ preferences for OCF in second language learning. However, few studies have simultaneously explored teachers’ and students’ perceptions of and preferences for OCF timing, how teachers’ perceptions impact their practices of OCF timing and students’ preferences for and expectations of OCF timing. This is especially true in the context of Vietnamese higher education. This study seeks to fill this gap.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research setting and participants

Since a qualitative case study aims to “understand the situation under investigation primarily from the participants’ and not the researcher’s perspective” (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 8), and allows the exploration of specific issues using different sources of data and various perspectives, this case study helped the researcher to have a deeper insight into the diverse perspectives of teachers and into the current practice of OCF timing in a Vietnamese university. In the current study, the research site selected was a public university in the north of Viet Nam. Research participants were five EFL teachers at Faculty of Foreign Languages and first-year English-major students from these five teachers’ classes. These students were in the second semester of their four-year BA course.

2.2. Research instruments

Classroom observation

Being one of the useful research methods, observation is regarded as “a powerful tool for gaining insight into situations” (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 562). The non-participant observational method was adopted in this study to help the researcher to observe teachers’ classroom practices, and teachers’ decisions during speaking lessons on when OCF strategies were given. As these were non-participant observations, the researcher did not involve in any classroom activities. In this study, classroom observations were conducted with video recorders to enable the researcher to explore how OCF timing was provided in the classrooms. Furthermore, field notes taken in observations helped the researcher gain some insights into what was happening in the classrooms. Each speaking class was observed for four 60-minute lessons. All observations were video recorded (20 hours in total) for transcription and analysis.

Semi-structured interviews with teachers

One frequently used method for data collection in qualitative research is interviewing (Cohen et al., 2017). Interviewing aims to discover people’s views, opinions, attitudes and experiences towards particular topics. One of the main
objectives of the current study was to explore how teachers perceive OCF; therefore, conducting semi-structured interviews in this study provided EFL teachers with an opportunity to express their views, explain answers, give examples of their practices of OCF timing and describe their experiences related to OCF timing. In the interview, the researcher used an interview guide with open-ended questions, and the teachers provided their detailed answers to the questions. The teacher interviews were conducted after classroom observations. Each interview lasted approximately 25-35 minutes.

Focus group interviews with students

In focus group interviewing, participants are encouraged to co-build knowledge of a particular issue. Focus groups are useful in data collection as they generate a deeper and better understanding of participants’ perspectives and experiences. In this study, focus group interviews with the students were adopted because they allowed the researcher to gain the English-major students’ diverse opinions and viewpoints on OCF timing in their speaking lessons as the interactions among interviewees would likely provide the perfect evidence and when the interviewees are the same and collaborate with each other (Cohen et al., 2017). More importantly, with this data collection method, the researcher was able to gain information from different perspectives at the same time. In this study, five groups of first year students were selected randomly from five participating teachers’ classes. Each group participated in one focus group interview (seven students per group). The student focus group interviews were conducted after classroom observations. During the focus group interviews, the researcher raised questions in the focus group interview guide, and the students shared their ideas and opinions towards the issues. Each focus group interview lasted approximately 60 to 80 minutes.

2.3. Identification of an OCF episode

An OCF episode comprises a trigger that shows a student’s oral error, the feedback move that indicates the teacher’s feedback move on the error, and an uptake that is the student’s reaction to the teacher’s feedback (optionally) (Ellis, 2009). In this study, an OCF episode was a teacher’s response following an oral error made by the student. An example of an OCF episode is demonstrated in the following example (from the observation of T3):

| Student: I can live independent | (Trigger: a student’s oral error) |
| Teacher: In this case, remember to use an adverb with the verb (Teacher’s feedback move: teacher’s response to the error) | |
| Student: I can live independently | (Student’s uptake: student’s response to the teacher feedback) |
| Teacher: Ok | |

(T3-O2)
2.4. Number of feedback moves of OCF timing

In order to explore the frequency of each kind of OCF timing that was used in EFL classes, during classroom observations, the timing of OCF was coded as immediate feedback and delayed feedback. Teachers’ moves of OCF timing were counted during their practices. To investigate which OCF timing the teachers most often used in their practices, the following equations show how the frequency of immediate OCF and delayed OCF were determined.

- Immediate OCF = \( \frac{\text{Number of immediate OCF moves}}{\text{Total number of OCF moves}} \times 100 \)

- Delayed OCF = \( \frac{\text{Number of delayed OCF moves}}{\text{Total number of OCF moves}} \times 100 \)

2.5 Identification of data source

As there were various kinds of data collection methods and research participants in this study, the sources of the excerpts were determined as follows:

- The letter “T” refers to “the teacher”, the letter “S” to “one student” and letter “Ss” refers to “students”.

- The researcher numbered five teachers from T1 to T5 and combined with the short form of interview (I), focus group interview (FI), observation (O).

- Each student in the focus group was also given an identification (ID) number from S1 to S7 (seven students in each group).

For example, the interview with T1 was identified by the term “T1-I”, and the second observation with T2 was determined by “T2-O2”. “T3-S5-FI” refers to S5 in the focus group interview from T3’s class, and “T5-Ss-FI” refers to all students in the focus group interview from T5’s class.

III. FINDINGS

3.1. Teachers’ practices of OCF timing

The observational data show that the teachers used both immediate and delayed feedback in their speaking classrooms. However, immediate correction moves were used almost three times more frequently than delayed feedback moves (245 moves (74%) and 86 moves (26%), respectively) (see Table 4.1). Increased occurrences of immediate feedback were observed in every teacher’s practice. Among the five teachers, T5 provided more immediate feedback than the others, with 55 feedback moves (90.2% of her OCF total). T3 used both kinds of OCF timing in a more balanced way, with 34 immediate feedback moves (52.3%) and 31 delayed feedback moves (47.7%).
Table 4.1: Practices of OCF timing by teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ practices</th>
<th>Immediate feedback moves</th>
<th>Delayed feedback moves</th>
<th>Total of OCF moves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>80.2%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>90.2%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>74.0%</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2. Teachers’ and students’ perspectives of OCF timing

3.2.1. Teachers’ and students’ perspectives of delayed feedback

When the teachers were asked about the most appropriate time to provide OCF, four out of the five said they favored delayed feedback. The following excerpts are examples of their perspectives:

I often leave error correction until later because I think it is useful to provide students with detailed feedback. I often note students’ errors, not all the errors, just the serious and important ones, and then provide feedback at the end of the speaking activities. Sometimes, I will write the ill-formed utterances on the board, draw the students’ attention to the errors, and then encourage them to give the right answers. (T3-I)

In the above data, T3 mentioned the possibility of taking notes of all the errors that students make during their speaking process. This would help teachers notice all the errors, select which of them should be corrected, and consider how to treat them most effectively. Furthermore, waiting for students to finish their sentences or speaking tasks, or giving corrections at the end of the speaking lessons, would improve students’ speaking fluency. In addition, it may help minimize their confusion, maintain motivation in their speaking process and allow them to build self-confidence and self-esteem. “It is good for students to speak naturally without interruption although the students themselves may forget all the erroneous utterances they have made. It can also help reduce their embarrassment and maintain their self-confidence. That’s why I try to take notes their errors and give them feedback later.” (T2-I)

Sharing the same views as their teachers, most of the students also preferred delayed correction. They agreed
that delayed feedback helped them to improve their speaking fluency because it did not break the flow of communication. In addition, it gave them the opportunity to take notes on their own and others’ errors. These views are reflected in the following excerpt:

We would feel more comfortable and encouraged with delayed feedback because we are not interrupted by teachers’ corrections. We can maintain our train of thought during the speaking tasks. We also have the opportunity to take notes on our errors, remember what teachers have just corrected and learn from our errors as well as our peers’ errors. (T1-S6, S4, S3-FI)

For first-year students, who can be easily embarrassed and frequently make errors in speaking performances, delayed feedback allows them to be more comfortable, motivated and confident in speaking lessons. Thus, this kind of OCF timing avoided embarrassing students. Furthermore, when teachers did their corrections later, students could learn from their classmates’ mistakes. In this manner, all students have the opportunity to learn from all the corrections – not just their own.

3.2.2 Teachers’ and students’ perspectives of immediate feedback

Although the teachers confirmed the benefits that immediate feedback could bring to students’ learning, most revealed that they tried to avoid giving feedback on students’ errors immediately. Their shared perspectives are reflected in the following excerpt:

Immediate feedback may make students recognize their errors right away. Furthermore, when teachers give feedback on students’ oral performances immediately, it makes the whole class understand clearly the errors. They can learn from immediate feedback better than delayed feedback. However, we do not think stopping students from giving feedback is a good teaching strategy. It can interrupt students’ speech, which may cause the loss of follow-up ideas and, subsequently, students’ decreased confidence and learning motivation. (T1-I)

This excerpt exemplifies the teachers’ reluctance to use immediate feedback for students’ oral errors as it could inhibit the students’ communication and demotivate their learning.

Among the five EFL teacher participants, T5 was the only teacher who preferred immediate feedback on students’ errors. She shared her positive view on immediate feedback:

It is a simple fact that many of my first-year students make a lot of oral mistakes in speaking classes; therefore, I think it is better to give immediate feedback because the students may forget what they have said if I give my corrections later. Furthermore, immediate correction helps to reduce misunderstandings of oral messages. (T5-I)

For T5, an immediate correction could help students notice their errors without
delay after committing them, making it easier for them to understand the erroneous parts of speech. More importantly, immediate feedback could help avoid misunderstandings of students’ messages and thus improve the quality of communication.

While the vast majority of the students strongly supported delayed feedback, three students from T1’s class focus group held positive views of immediate feedback. They explained:

When corrected immediately, we can notice our errors easily and clearly. Sometimes, when teachers correct us later, we do not remember what we have said before. Immediate feedback helps us remember how to produce the right version of the oral utterance, and we can use the correct forms of language next time. (T1-S3, S5, S6-FI)

According to these students, their teachers’ immediate corrections helped them locate their errors and know the correct forms of the faulty utterances without delay. Furthermore, immediate feedback helped them recognize their erroneous utterances and know the correct forms, thus help them to avoid making the same oral errors in future potentially.

In summary, the results from the teachers’ interviews and the students’ focus group interviews show consistency between the teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the appropriate time to give feedback. In general, they all preferred delayed feedback in error correction.

The relationship between teachers’ perspectives and their practices

During the interviews, the teachers elaborated on the reasons they used immediate feedback more than delayed feedback. For example, T2 said: “With errors that might lead to the misunderstanding of the oral messages, I will correct right on the spot” (T2-I). For T4, keywords in students’ oral production were really useful for message comprehension:

Yes, I prefer delayed correction; however, with that error, I had to treat it immediately because it was an important word … I always consider the significance of the errors. If the keywords are not produced correctly, how can other students understand the meaning of the messages?” (T4-I)

Similarly, T1 expressed her concern about the influence of immediate feedback on students’ fluency: “I know it will affect the students’ flow of speech; however, I have to give correction because those errors are important in the comprehension of oral messages” (T1-I). And T3 said:

It depends, I must say. Sometimes I know if I stop to correct the errors, I will make students distracted, confused, and even lose their follow-up ideas, but I still opt for immediate correction to prevent misunderstanding of the oral message. (T3-I)

Although the teachers tended to correct errors immediately if the errors could affect comprehension of the oral messages,
they acknowledged the breakdown in students’ verbal fluency that immediate feedback may cause.

IV. DISCUSSION

The comparison between teachers’ and students’ perspectives

The data demonstrate that most of the teachers and students in this study expressed strong support for delayed correction. They believed that this kind of OCF timing helped to reduce students’ embarrassment and improve their self-confidence. The finding is supported by Fajriah (2018), showing that teachers and students perceived that giving corrections after students had finished their speaking performance, rather than interrupting them in the middle of speaking practices, was the most appropriate timing for effective error treatment. Similarly, Tomczyk (2013) found that delayed correction was especially favored by teachers who thought the interruption of students’ utterances could negatively impact their language learning and development. The students in that study, like those in this study, also preferred delayed corrections because they did not want the flow of communication disrupted as it caused them stress and they could easily forget the aim of speaking; some also claimed that immediate feedback even increased their error frequency if they started to form the belief that they could not perform in the target language.

The teachers’ reluctance to use immediate feedback is consistent with Kaivanpanah et al. (2015)’s study in which teachers agreed that immediate feedback could decrease learner’s self-confidence and even negatively impact their self-esteem. Also, teachers were afraid of interrupting and inhibiting their students’ participation in future practices (Mendez & Cruz, 2012). Furthermore, immediate feedback could interrupt communication and negatively influence students’ confidence and motivation (Roothoof, 2014). However, these findings are inconsistent with Firwana’s (2011) finding that interrupting students’ performances for error treatment would be accepted in the language classes.

The current students’ expectations of delayed correction align with those of Soni (2018)’s study, which claimed that students were comfortable having their errors corrected after they had finished their oral performances and that teachers’ interruptions might cause them to have negative feelings and even discourage them from taking part in further learning activities. Delayed feedback could not only help allay students’ anxiety but also offer them opportunities for self-correction (Ölmezer-Öztürk & Öztürk, 2016). However, these findings contradict Kavaliauskiené et al. (2009)’s idea, which found that 90% of students preferred immediate correction despite its impracticality. In Lee (2013)’s study, learners wanted to be corrected immediately while communication was maintained. And in Gamlo (2019)’s study, students preferred their errors to be
corrected immediately because they were concerned about forgetting errors they had committed or expected reinforcement of the correct forms of language to enhance their speaking ability. Another reason for students’ preferences for immediate feedback could be their impatience to know which errors had occurred; delayed feedback may cause them to forget their errors and make their analysis difficult (Ananda et al., 2017).

The relationship between teachers’ perspectives and practices

The increased use of immediate feedback by the teachers shows the inconsistency between their tendencies to use OCF timing and their actual practices of it. This also mismatched students’ expectations as a majority of them wished to have their errors corrected after they finished their sentences or their oral performance. Yiğit (2019) also found that EFL instructors preferred giving delayed feedback even though they provided almost all of their OCF during students’ oral performances. The teachers in the current study also said their concerns about the effects of errors on message comprehension were underlying reasons for their frequent use of immediate feedback. This supports the finding of Roothooft (2014)’s study, in which teachers said that errors that hinder communication may require immediate OCF, while other errors may be corrected later. This finding also shows teachers’ beliefs in the focus on task types when deciding to correct errors immediately or later. Mendez and Cruz (2012) also indicated that if a task is focused on accuracy teachers should give immediate correction, and if it is focused on students’ fluency, they could delay correction.

V. CONCLUSION

This study focused on teachers’ and students’ perspectives and the practice of OCF in EFL classes. A majority of both teachers and students preferred delayed feedback over immediate feedback. One of the underlying reasons was a concern for both students’ anxiety and communication breakdown. Immediate feedback was also thought to affect the cognitive process negatively by stopping students’ thinking and causing the loss of follow-up ideas. In their practices, the teachers were observed to use more immediate feedback than delayed feedback, which did not strictly match their own perceptions or the students’ expectations. The reasons for the more use of immediate feedback would be the fear of message misunderstanding. However, to enable students to be more self-confident and motivated in their oral performance, teachers should take students’ expectations for OCF timing into account when giving OCF to facilitate students’ English learning and their oral proficiency.

REFERENCES


APPENDIX:

Interview guide - teachers

1. Have you ever considered to OCF provision? How crucial is OCF while teaching speaking in English?
2. Could you explain more about the above ways of feedback?
3. Which factors do you take into consideration when providing OCF?
4. Which timing of error correction do you prefer when giving OCF? Do you immediately give correction right after the error has been committed (immediate feedback) or you prefer to wait until students finish their sentences or performance to give feedback (delayed feedback)?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of immediate feedback?
6. What are the advantages and disadvantages of delayed feedback?
7. Are there any factors that might affect your decision of the time to give feedback?

Thank you for your cooperation.

Focus group interview guide - students

Focus group interview guide - students (English version)

1. To what extent is OCF important in your oral learning process?
2. How was your feeling with teachers’ OCF provision? (Comfortable, uncomfortable, satisfied, unsatisfied, etc). Can you explain in more detail?
3. Are you satisfied with your teacher’s OCF provision? Can you explain in detail?
4. Which timing for error correction do you prefer to receive? Do you want your teachers immediately give correction right after the error has been committed (immediate feedback) or you prefer them to wait until you finish your sentences or performance to give feedback (delayed feedback)?
5. Could you please give reasons if you prefer your errors to be corrected immediately by your teachers?
6. Could you please give reasons if you prefer your teachers to wait until you finish your sentences or performance?

Thank you for your cooperation.

Câu hỏi phòng vấn nhóm tập trung - Sinh viên

1. Theo bạn sự lỗi nói cần thiết như thế nào trong quá trình học nói?
2. Bạn có hài lòng với cách sửa lỗi của giáo viên không? Bạn có thể giải thích lý do tại sao không?
3. Thời điểm nào bạn mong muốn được sửa lỗi? Lỗi được sửa ngay sau khi bạn mắc lỗi (sửa ngay) hay giáo viên sẽ đợi bạn nói xong câu ấy hoặc phân trình bài rơi mới tiến hành sửa lỗi (sửa sau)?
4. Bạn hãy chia sẻ lý do bạn mong muốn được sửa lỗi ngay sau khi bạn mắc lỗi?
5. Bạn hãy chia sẻ bạn mong muốn giảng viên sẽ đợi bạn nói xong câu hoặc phân trình bài của mình rồi mới sửa lỗi của bạn?

Cam ơn về sự hợp tác của bạn.

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(Ngày nhận bài: 14/6/2022; ngày duyệt đăng: 08/9/2022)