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**EFL TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT ORAL CORRECTIVE  
FEEDBACK AND THEIR FEEDBACK-PROVIDING  
PRACTICES ACROSS LEARNERS' PROFICIENCY LEVELS**

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**Abstract**

The present study investigated EFL teachers' beliefs about oral corrective feedback (CF), their CF-provision practices across elementary and intermediate levels, and their beliefs-practices correspondence. To this end, the researchers conducted a semi-structured interview with the teachers and went on an overall forty-hour observation of their classrooms across both levels. The findings revealed that there was a significant difference in the teachers' employment of CF strategies across the two levels with more frequent presence of explicit correction, elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification request, and repetition at elementary level. Moreover, it was demonstrated that the teachers did not differentiate in their focus on morpho-syntactic, phonological, and lexical errors at both levels. The results further highlighted some areas of belief-practice mismatch in teachers' sensitivity to students' errors, their employment of different CF strategies, use of explicit and implicit CF, application of immediate and delayed CF, correction of global and local errors, focus on different linguistic targets, and reliance on self, peer, and teacher correction. The paper concludes with some pedagogical implications.

**Keywords:** CF strategies, elementary, intermediate, linguistic targets, belief-practice correspondence

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## 1. Introduction

As a decade-long pedagogical technique in a form-focused instruction (Tomita & Spada, 2013) with its critical role in theory construction (Li, 2014) and practical consolidation of learners' L2 knowledge (Lyster, Saito, & Sato, 2013), CF "constitutes a reaction to learners' incorrect linguistic form in order to help them notice their incorrect utterance and correct it" (Zhang & Rahimi, 2014, p. 429). Relying on the feedback that CF initiates, the learners are encouraged to notice the gap between their produced non-target-like interlanguage forms and standard target language forms (Ekembe, 2014; Ellis, 2009). As an evidence-based feedback signaling the presence of incorrect linguistic forms (Russell & Spada, 2006) and as a complex instructional-interactive phenomenon (Ellis, 2009) in reference to methodological approaches adopted by the teachers in research-practice domains (Russell, 2009), CF stands for "teachers' or other learners' responses to second language or foreign language learners' erroneous or inappropriate products, by reformulating the forms or giving clues for corrections" (Yoshida, 2008a, p. 525).

The recent literature in the context of instructed second language acquisition has witnessed a surge of interest in CF which could be due to the learners' comprehensible fluent oral production in communicative classrooms with their linguistic accuracy still lagging behind (Ammar & Spada, 2006). In this light, CF and exposure to instruction are complementary (Ellis, 2012; Goo & Mackey, 2013) so that the former shapes the basis of an integrated approach to the latter that attracts the learners' attention to the correctness of their utterances. As Lyster et al. (2013) assert, CF plays a critical role in teacher-generated scaffolding to the process of interlanguage development. Dłaska and Krekeler (2013) also highlight the effectiveness of feedback that depends on the quality of the current performance, the quality of the desired performance, and the bridging of the gap between the present and desired performances.

Given the significance of CF provision as one of the main instructional responsibilities of the teachers in the classroom (Mori, 2011) and the limited number of studies comparing the teachers' beliefs and actual practices of CF (Roothoof, 2014), there is an urgent call for addressing the teachers' beliefs

about the unforeseen dimensions of teaching including error correction (Basturkmen, 2012). To link the research findings to the reality of classroom life (Mori, 2011) and move beyond the detrimental non-correspondence between the belief systems of teachers and learners in terms of CF (Russell, 2009), it needs to be further investigated how the teachers move along the theory-research-practice line in their conceptualization and use of CF (Vasquez & Harvey, 2010).

Some recent research studies have explored the effect of CF provision on second language development (e.g., Elwood & Bode, 2014; Ene & Upton, 2014; Sato, 2013; Sheen, 2010; Shintani & Ellis, 2015; Zhang & Rahimi, 2014). A number of recent studies also support the use of CF for the development of learners' interlanguage system (e.g., Ellis et al., 2006; Li, 2010, 2014; Lyster & Saito, 2010; Sheen, 2010). Some other new studies have addressed the teachers' belief-practice correspondence in the area of CF (e.g., Mori, 2011; Roothoof, 2014). However, the teachers' CF practices at different levels of language proficiency on the one hand, and their concentration on erroneous linguistic targets at these levels on the other hand have escaped the attention of researchers working in this area. In addition, more in-depth studies on CF need to be done for exploring the correspondence between the underlying beliefs and actual practices of the EFL teachers teaching at two different levels.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1 Classroom-based studies on the effectiveness of oral CF

Oral CF may consolidate "oral skills through contextualized practice" which is facilitated "by noticing target exemplars in the input" (Lyster et al., 2013, p. 5). In this light, oral CF draws the learners' attention to erroneous utterances in a set of communicative activities. As Sheen (2010) acknowledges, oral CF may or may not be clear, it could be online and immediate, available to individual learners and the rest of the classroom, and takes the form of multiple corrections. According to Mori (2011), the three constructs underlying oral CF pertain to input, output, and interaction.

Different classroom-based studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of CF strategies on second language acquisition in recent years

(e.g., Saito & Lyster, 2012b; Yilmaz, 2015). Along this line, indirect feedback differs from direct feedback in that the former highlights the locus of an error and the latter moves beyond the mere signaling of the locus of error and provides the correct version of the erroneous linguistic production (Kang & Han, 2015). This being the case, focused CF is said to be superior to unfocused one (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005). More specifically, “CF can be effective when it is noticed by learners and the learners obtain the feeling of achievement or contribution to the tasks through CF episodes” (Yoshida, 2008a, p. 526). In some recent studies, the students receiving recast (Saito & Lyster, 2012b) and those receiving recast accompanied by the provision of explicit information in form-focused tasks (Saito, 2013) outperformed those who did not observe any CF in the classroom. However, the findings of some intervention studies indicate that classroom learners who are prompted to develop target-like forms during CF provision are more likely to enhance their interlanguage system than those provided with recast forms of CF (Ammar & Spada, 2006; Ellis, 2007; Ellis et al., 2006; Lyster, 2004).

Researchers have also taken a keen interest in comparing different types of CF strategies (Lyster et al., 2013). For instance, in a classroom-based research on the effectiveness of CF, Lyster (2004) found that CF-initiated instruction contributes to better performance than the one with no CF in practice. According to Lyster (2004), in form-focused instruction, prompts are more effective than recasts. Exploring the effect of recasts and prompts in the acquisition of grammar, Ammar and Spada (2006) demonstrated that the groups receiving CF had a better performance in comparison to the control group. However, the group receiving prompts significantly outperformed the recast group. Ellis et al. (2006) also investigated the effectiveness of recasts and metalinguistic feedback on the acquisition of regular past tense forms in English. The study was conducted for the purpose of examining whether the learners’ exposure to two different CF types that foster explicit knowledge could lead to the development of implicit knowledge. In this study, it was shown that the metalinguistic feedback was more effective than recasts. According to Sheen (2007), the learners provided with metalinguistic correction had a better performance than those instructed with recast and their high scores were associated with specific variables such as language analytic

ability and attitudes towards CF. Thus, explicit correction accompanied by metalinguistic information resulted in higher levels of accuracy than the mere provision of recasts (Sheen, 2007). Although some researchers (Nassaji, 2009) believed that in comparison to implicit CF, explicit CF is noticed more frequently by the learners, it was revealed that implicit CF may be more effective in the long run (Li, 2010; Mackey & Goo, 2007). According to Saito and Lyster (2012b), the students exposed to recasts during their involvement in a set of tasks concerned with the development of argumentative skills outperformed the control group at both controlled-speech and spontaneous-speech levels. In another study, Saito (2013) demonstrated that the synthetic use of explicit phonetic information and recast form of CF could largely enhance the effectiveness of the instructional practices accompanied by CF strategies. According to Yilmaz (2015), exposure condition of feedback highlights its effectiveness and it is regulated by the structure of linguistic items.

Accordingly, experimental classroom-based studies on CF represent that the provision of oral CF is critically more effective than no provision of CF and there is a tendency for highlighting the importance of prompts or explicit correction in order to demonstrate their beneficial effects in comparison to recasts (Ellis, 2012; Lyster et al., 2013; Sheen, 2011). The variety of explicit CF strategies used in instructional contexts may be more effective than the implicit ones. In the classroom context, the learners benefit more from the teacher-generated prompts that are employed for the sake of self-correction than the teachers' implicit ambiguous recast which may be hard for the learners to notice (Roothoof, 2014). As Ammar and Spada (2006) concluded, the combination of recast and prompt could be effective for all types of learners. Yilmaz (2013) also revealed that mixed CF (combination of explicit and implicit CF) could be as effective as the application of explicit CF. Instead of adhering to comparative research studies for investigating the effectiveness of different CF types in pedagogical settings, researchers are expected to address the significance of different forms of recasts and prompts on the basis of a set of mediating factors, i.e. noticing and attention, cognitive factors (working memory), social factors (pedagogical setting, social status of interlocutors), and the type of target (the acquisition of L2 grammar, lexis,

phonology, and pragmatics)(Goo & Mackey, 2013). This means that the balanced use of CF in forms of prompts and recasts may vary depending on the classroom context and its accompanying variables (Panova & Lyster, 2002).

## **2.2. Classroom-based studies on provision of oral CF and linguistic targets**

Although the research studies demonstrate the highest frequency of CF provision in response to morphosyntactic types of errors, learners develop more accurate perceptions of CF in case of lexical and phonological errors and come up with a more successful repair of the linguistic targets which could be attributed to the communicative functions of both vocabulary and pronunciation (Kim & Han, 2007). This may indicate the more facilitative role of CF provision in learning target vocabulary and pronunciation than morphosyntactic features (Lyster et al., 2013). Regarding the provision of CF in addressing the morphosyntactic errors, Ellis (2007) compared the effectiveness of recast and metalinguistic knowledge. The learners who received metalinguistic feedback showed greater improvement due to the salience of the presentation and correction of grammatical features. According to Yang and Lyster (2010), the greater noticeability and saliency of irregular past-tense forms contributed to the effectiveness of recast, but the regular past-tense forms were noticed and repaired by learners in case of the teachers' provision of negative evidence in the form of prompt. Dilans (2010) also investigated the relative efficiency of CF strategies on the acquisition of lexical items. The study revealed that the groups exposed to the recast and prompt forms of CF improved their partial-precise and receptive-productive vocabulary knowledge base. However, the students received prompts in form of pushed output gained more in-depth knowledge of vocabulary. Nakata (2015) further explored the optimal feedback timing for the learning of L2 vocabulary and found that feedback timing had little effect on vocabulary learning irrespective of error frequency in this area. In addition, the studies that focused on the role of CF in development of phonological knowledge (Lee & Lyster, 2015; Saito, 2013, 2015; Saito & Lyster, 2012a) showed that recast could provide the negative evidence in response to the lack of output

intelligibility on the one hand, and foster the practice of appropriate phonological forms on the other hand.

### **2.3 Teachers' belief-practice correspondence in provision of CF**

Moving beyond the classroom observation, there is a need to explore the underlying reasons behind the teachers' actions and behaviors (Roothoof, 2014). To expand the depth and breadth of CF practices in classroom, exploring the role of teachers' cognitions and beliefs is of critical importance (Lyster & Mori, 2006). In Jean and Simard's (2011) study, the teachers believed that the global errors that disrupt communication need to be corrected for the purpose of avoiding the interruption of communicative flow of information which may decrease the students' confidence. According to Basturkmen, Leowen, and Ellis (2004), there is a tenuous relationship between the teachers' stated beliefs and their actual practices. Along this line, the teachers participating in the study expressed preference for correcting only the errors causing comprehension problems. However, they correct the linguistic errors that may not result in communicative problems. In Vasquez and Harvey's (2010) study that intended to raise the teachers' consciousness about CF through replication, it was revealed that at the beginning, the teachers expressed their concerns about the complexity of CF and its direct effects on students' self-confidence, self-esteem, and motivation. After the study was completed, the teachers moved away from the affective side of CF to the cognitive side of CF that addresses the significance of establishing the relationship between students' errors and their response to errors, levels of uptake, and interlanguage development.

The teachers are not simply the channels to implement the new concepts in the classroom. Instead, they are the thinking individuals who make pedagogical decisions on the basis of their knowledge system about the teaching-learning processes, instructional variables, and contextual factors (Borg, 2006; Johnson, 2009). Along this line, although the two teachers in Yoshida's (2008a) study believe in the beneficial effects of prompts in equipping the learners with the opportunity to negotiate the linguistic problems, they preferred the use of recasts due to their supportive nature to the classroom context. By presenting a quick guideline for teachers (Ellis,

2009), it has been shown that teachers need to consider their students' attitudes towards CF, address the correction of the errors, provide focused CF, ensure the learners' awareness of being corrected, employ a variety of oral and written CF strategies, concentrate on the timing of CF, highlight the importance of CF, address the cognitive and affective requirements for provision of CF, encourage learners towards self-regulation, and pay attention to the facilitative role of anxiety in provision of CF.

“Examining why teachers correct errors the way they do enables the researchers to explore research findings from more complex, multifarious perspectives, thereby providing more powerful explanation of classroom CF practice.” (Mori, 2011, p. 454). In this sense, teachers put their beliefs and research findings into practice in the process of providing CF in the classroom. Mori (2011) further demonstrated that the reasons behind the provision of CF by teachers is not limited to improving the linguistic development of the learners. Instead, they pay specific attention to enhancing confidence, independence, and communication potentials among the learners. Although the teacher educators do not prescribe or proscribe the use of certain CF strategies, teacher education and teacher training programs play a critical role in teachers' approach to the selection and application of CF (Lyster et al., 2013).

Some recent studies investigated the supportive role of CF in facilitating the process of L2 learning (e.g., Li, 2010; Lyster & Saito, 2010; Mackey & Goo, 2007; Saito, 2013; Saito & Lyster, 2012b). A number of other studies addressed the teachers' beliefs about CF and their actual classroom practices (e.g., Jean & Simard, 2011; Mori, 2011; Roothoof, 2014; Vasquez & Harvey, 2010). However, this study attempted to bridge the gap in the present literature by exploring the practice of the teachers who were simultaneously teaching at both elementary and intermediate levels in order to find the similarities and differences in provision of CF strategies at these two levels on the one hand, and addressing the erroneous linguistic targets that the teachers selected to highlight at the two levels on the other hand. Furthermore, this study attempted to investigate the correspondence between the teachers' stated beliefs and actual practices of CF. To this end, the following research questions were proposed:



1. Is there any significant difference in EFL teachers' employment of CF strategies across elementary and intermediate teaching levels?
2. Is there any significant difference in EFL teachers' focus on erroneous linguistic targets across elementary and intermediate levels?
3. What are EFL teachers' beliefs about oral CF?
4. Is there any correspondence between EFL teachers' beliefs about CF and CF-provision practices across elementary and intermediate levels?

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Participants

Five Iranian EFL teachers with the average age of 25 and 7 average years of English language teaching experience in private language centers participated in this study. At the time of data collection, the teachers were teaching the *English Result* (Hancock & McDonald, 2013) course book series at both elementary and intermediate levels to adult English language learners at Tehran Institute of Technology.

Table 1. Teachers' information

Teacher	Age	Levels	Experience	Qualifications
Teacher 1 Teaching	29	E1-I1	10 years	Master in Language
Teacher 2 Teaching	26	E1-I1	8 years	Master in Language
Teacher 3 Teaching	27	E1-I1	7 years	Master in Language
Teacher 4 Teaching	23	E1-I1	5 years	Master in Language
Teacher 5 Teaching	26	E1-I1	6 years	Master in Language

#### 3.2 Instruments

##### 3.2.1 Observation

For the purpose of exploring EFL teachers' actual practice in using CF strategies and focusing on different linguistic targets across two different elementary and intermediate levels, the researchers relied on a 40-hour, non-participant observation. Along this line, each teacher's classroom was observed for 2 sessions at each level (about 4 hours). The audio-records of the

lessons were accompanied by one of the researchers' field notes in the classroom. All instances of the learners' errors and the teachers' use of different CF strategies in response to their erroneous oral productions in a variety of tasks and activities were recorded as carefully as possible. The frequency, type, task, and context of CF were also categorized by the researchers.

### 3.2.2 Interview

To analyze the interaction between the teachers' underlying beliefs about CF and their actual classroom practices on the one hand, and locating the areas of correspondence or non-correspondence between belief and practice on the other hand, a semi-structured interview was conducted before the classroom observations. The questions were raised in reference to the literature of theoretical categories and empirical research findings. The teachers were given the opportunity to talk freely about their own beliefs regarding the role of CF provision in general and their real-life classroom practices in particular. The interview questions were attached to the appendix section.

### 3.3 Theoretical framework

By reliance on a set of CF classifications suggested in recent studies (Ellis, 2009; Ranta & Lyster, 2007; Sheen & Ellis, 2011), the following strategies were employed for categorizing CF types observed in the classrooms:

**Recast:** refers to the alternation of incorrect utterances with correct linguistic forms without removing the content words immediately preceding incorrect utterances

**Repetition:** is concerned with repeating the learners' erroneous utterance in the process of underlining the errors by emphatic stress

**Clarification request:** indicates that the learners' utterance is not understood by the corrector

**Explicit correction:** refers to the presence of error and its immediate correction

**Elicitation:** is a condition under which the corrector repeats the learner utterance with rising intonation before the erroneous element to induce the learners' self-correction

### **3.4 Procedure**

In this study, one of the researchers observed these teachers' classrooms at both elementary and intermediate levels, took notes, and recorded the data in audio-based format as well. This 40-hour, non-participant observation was followed by the detailed analysis and classification of CF strategies for both levels. Using SPSS 18, the researchers conducted chi-square tests in order to address the employment of CF strategies in the classrooms. This was followed by working on another chi-square test that explored the teachers' focus of attention to different morphosyntactic, phonological, and lexical errors at these two levels.

To examine the correspondence between the teachers' beliefs and practices, the interviews with 5 teachers were conducted. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the three initial, axial, and selective coding stages for the purpose of identifying the main themes of oral CF addressed by the teachers.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1 Teachers' employment of CF strategies**

In response to the first research question, the results of the study (Table 3) revealed that the teachers made use of more CF strategies at elementary level in comparison to intermediate level. At both levels, the teachers frequently employed the largest number of explicit correction. Elicitation was another frequent CF strategy that the teachers used at both levels. However, the number of errors followed by the teachers' elicitation was estimated to be higher at elementary level. Although recast emerged more at intermediate level, the teachers' application of elicitation and recast was not significantly different at these two levels. The use of metalinguistic clues characterized by explanation and presentation of a set of examples was more frequent at elementary level. Overall, the teachers rarely used clarification requests and repetitions at both levels.

Table 2. Frequency of overall CF strategies

CF Strategies	Level	
	Elementary	Intermediate
Explicit correction	286	176
Recast	52	58
Elicitation	96	92
Metalinguistic clues	65	54
Repetition	11	4
Clarification request	20	14
Total	530	398

Table 3. Chi-square test results

	Value	DF	Sig. (two-tailed)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.44	5	.020

#### 4.2 Teachers' target of CF

In response to the second question addressing the target of CF on the part of the teachers, it was shown (Table 5) that although the teachers focused on morphosyntactic, phonological, and lexical errors more frequently at elementary level, there was no significant difference between the two levels in terms of the teachers' target of CF. Among different targets for error correction, grammar was ranked as the first. This was followed by pronunciation and vocabulary. This pattern of error correction may reveal the higher frequency and greater importance of grammatical and phonological errors at both levels that attracted the attention of the teachers.

Table 4. Frequency of overall CF targets

CF Target	Level	
	Elementary	Intermediate
Grammar	200	162
Pronunciation	192	132
Vocabulary	51	45
Total	443	339

Table 5. Chi-square test results

Value	DF	Sig. (two-tailed)	
Pearson Chi-Square	1.67	2	0.43

In this section, a handful of CF types observed at both elementary and intermediate levels were listed as follows:

**Elementary level:**

- **Explicit correction**

*S: Have you got a black shoes?*

*T: No 'a', black shoes.*

- **Recast**

*S: I am got a big house.*

*T: Oh, you've got a big house.*

- **Metalinguistic clues**

*S: Does he got an English book?*

*T: The teacher writes these two sentences on the board: "he has got an English book" and*

*"he has an English book" and explains to students that when "has" and "got" come*

*together, we make question form with "has". Otherwise, we start question with "does". My*

*father has and laptop. What's the question form?*

- **Elicitation**

*S: My birthday is on August 5.*

*T: 5 or 5<sup>th</sup>?*

*S: 5<sup>th</sup>.*

- **Clarification request**

*S: I like to eat snake for breakfast.*

*T: What do you mean by snake? Do you know what it means? It is snack.*

- **Repetition**

*S: I sometimes eat tea and biscuits for breakfast.*

*T: Eat tea?*

*S: Drink tea.*

**Intermediate level:**

- **Explicit correction**

*S: When I was a child, my parents didn't allow me to drive without evidence.*

*T: License.*

*S: Yes, license.*

- **Recast**

*T: On which floor do you live?*

*S: 5 floor*

*T: Like us, we live on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor. The 5<sup>th</sup> floor is so high that we have lots of problem.*

- **Elicitation**

*S: Films on DVDs is more convenient and cheaper.*

*T: is or are?*

*S: Films on DVDs are more convenient and cheaper.*

- **Metalinguistic clues**

*S: It has hardly rained this summer, hasn't it?*

*T: It is negative itself. Make the tag question positive. Hardly means never and it makes the*

*sentence negative. For example, Nothing can happen, can it?*

- **Clarification request**

*S: Some of the things in my country is smoogle.*

*T: What do you mean?*

*S: No law.*

*T: Smuggle*

- **Repetition**

*S: She don't know much about that Italian food.*

*T: She don't know?*

*S: didn't...*

**4.3 Teachers' beliefs about oral CF**

In response to the second question mainly concerned with investigating the teachers' beliefs about oral CF, the following themes were extracted:

Table 6. Teachers' beliefs about oral CF

<b>Teachers' beliefs about oral CF: A thematic framework</b>
Sensitivity to correction of students' errors
Use of different CF strategies at different levels
Employment of explicit and implicit CF
Reliance on immediate and delayed CF
Application of output-promoting strategies
Correction of global and local errors
Focus on different linguistic targets
Preference for self, peer, and teacher correction
Emphasis on affective side of CF
Reference to mental readiness for provision of CF
Promotion of CF for learners' interlanguage development
Presentation of factors affecting teacher's approach to CF

All 5 teachers believed in the importance of providing CF for the sake of promoting the oral performance of the learners. They further highlighted their sensitivity to the correction of the learners' errors:

*I am really sensitive to error correction. From the very first minute that I enter the classroom and start talking, I control myself not doing much error correction. (T2)*

All teachers further stated that the learners' language proficiency level is a determining factor for the provision of CF in the classrooms. They believed that their approaches to the use of CF in the classrooms take different forms across elementary and intermediate levels. For instance, T3 talked about the application of explicit correction and elicitation at elementary level and clarification request at intermediate level. T4 elaborated on using recast and repetition at elementary level and elicitation at intermediate level. T5 distinguished her use of explicit correction at the beginning level from elicitation at the intermediate level:

*The level of learners is very important. When the learners are at elementary level and make errors related to advanced level, I don't correct them. Because they start feeling confused and you send him from level 1 to level 7 and you should explain levels 2,3,4,5, and 6. Sometimes, you need to ignore.... They will grow up and learn. At elementary levels, I correct the learners in a riskier*

manner. Because when they go up to higher levels, they will not be really vulnerable. (T2)

According to the participant teachers, the use of explicit and implicit CF depends on the error type, situation, task, and learners' motivation: *I think both explicit and implicit corrective feedback are helpful. It depends on the situation and task and what we do in the classrooms. If the focus of task is on fluency, we should not correct the learners on the spot. If the focus of task is on accuracy, students must produce correct sentences. In this case, they must be corrected on the spot. (T5)*

Depending on the learners' level and type of error, the teachers stated that they normally use output-promoting strategies at higher levels for the purpose of giving learners the opportunity to process the errors and correct themselves:

*I think it is far better to ask for the output. At least, I give them an opportunity to process their errors. They correct themselves and make a kind of effort. Giving the corrected input to learners may not be really effective. It makes them repeat that error. What I want to say is that the learners need to involve themselves in error correction process. (T1)*

Regarding the immediate or delayed correction of errors, the teachers preferred the delayed form of CF which itself depends on the context. They further talked about the immediate error correction at elementary level which gradually takes the delayed form as learners develop their language proficiency and move toward the communication-based fluency:

*At upper levels, I prefer delayed corrective feedback. The higher the level, the more delayed the error correction will be. But, at elementary levels, you must be a little more on the spot. That's because if the basis is set incorrectly, it will continue in the same way at higher levels. (T3)*

In expressing their preferences for concentration on different linguistic items in provision of CF, the teachers talked about their orientations to the correction of phonological and morphosyntactic errors. However, the teachers believed that all linguistic targets are important and complement each other at different situations:

*All these three are important to me and this depends on different contexts. I am really obsessed with pronunciation and this is my own style. Number 2 is*



*collocation and it is really important to me. Number 3 is the correct use of grammar. (T2)*

For teachers, global errors are more important than local errors.

However, the teachers believe that they don't ignore the local ones:

*Global errors have higher frequency at elementary level. There are some discrete items in their minds and they put them together and say something. Global errors are always corrected especially when I myself don't understand or I feel that the learners don't understand. But, at higher levels, I witness more local errors. They miss third-person 's' or say the incorrect form of pp a lot in their talks. (T4)*

The teachers prefer self-correction, peer correction, and teacher correction in order. This is dependent on classroom atmosphere and student relationship:

*In the past, I was after teacher correction. But, now I believe in self, peer, and teacher correction order. At lower levels, the teacher usually gives hint and corrects the learners. But, at higher levels, I use self and peer correction. (T1)*

The teachers also paid attention to the affective side for correcting the learners' errors, where their motivation and self-confidence become really important:

*I do error correction in such a way that nobody feels ashamed. I need to make the learners understand that the error correction is a linguistic, not a personal matter. (T2)*

*Students' attitudes matter. For example, there is a 40-year old man in the class and the rest are young boys and girls. I try not to correct the man a lot. But, if I see the error is significant, I correct it implicitly in a delayed form. I write it on the board among other students' errors. I don't address that man directly because I think that the man is older with a kind of reputation, personality, and status in the city and in this context, he is my student. (T4)*

The teachers demonstrated that the mental readiness of the learners also matters:

*Students' developmental readiness is very important. Because I had classes in which I wrote the delayed correction on the board and the students take guard that these are not my errors. I mean the learner doesn't want to accept*

*his errors and take the responsibility to correct it. This is really important. They should see their real levels and their real errors. (T3)*

The effectiveness of CF for developing the learners' interlanguage development was also mentioned by the teachers:

*If the learners' errors corrected in due time, they play a very important role in learning. (T1)*

*I don't tell 100%. But, for short-term effect of 42 hours in a term, I feel that CF influences in 70 or 80% of cases in short-term and it could affect later production. (T4)*

The factors that influence the teachers' approach to error correction include experience, teacher training workshops, and books in order:

*What I studied before is always with me and I try to link my readings to classroom practices. The classroom atmosphere is what should happen. If a strategy works in the classroom, I keep it. If it doesn't work in the classroom even if all books in the world approve it, I put it aside and go with the learners' expectations and classroom realities. Maybe, those 1000 books written in a context completely different from our own context. Practice is usually in line with theory. What I read in theory (conferences and articles) are relevant to practical experience in the classroom. But, in EFL contexts or in religious or traditional contexts or some contexts with particular Iranian taste, I really experience something different in the classroom as a teacher and I count on it. (T2)*

#### **4.4 Teachers' belief-practice correspondence**

By comparing the teachers' beliefs about oral CF and their CF-provision practices, it was demonstrated that in many cases, the teachers' employment of CF strategies at elementary and intermediate level classrooms did not match their beliefs. Only the second teacher followed her beliefs in provision of explicit CF at both levels. This correspondence was also true for teacher 3 and teacher 5 at elementary levels. In addition, teacher 4 believed in use of elicitation at intermediate level and kept the same strategy in the classroom.

Table 7. Teachers' use of CF strategies at elementary level

Teacher	Explicit correction	Recast	Elicitation	Metalinguistic clues	Repetition	Clarification request
Teacher 1	45	14	8	14	0	0
Teacher 2	49	8	21	16	3	4
Teacher 3	65	11	16	16	4	9
Teacher 4	75	7	47	14	1	4
Teacher 5	52	12	7	5	3	3

Table 8. Teachers' use of CF strategies at intermediate level

Teacher	Explicit correction	Recast	Elicitation	Metalinguistic clues	Repetition	Clarification request
Teacher 1	34	24	14	13	0	2
Teacher 2	40	12	11	22	1	4
Teacher 3	33	7	8	5	1	4
Teacher 4	45	4	55	13	0	4
Teacher 5	24	11	4	1	2	0

Table 9. Reported and observed oral CF

Teacher	Reported CF		The most frequent observed CF	
	Elementary	Intermediate	Elementary	Intermediate
Teacher 1	Recast, repetition, clarification request	Recast, repetition, clarification request	Explicit CF	Explicit CF
Teacher 2	Explicit correction, clarification request	Explicit correction, clarification request	Explicit CF	Explicit CF
Teacher 3	Explicit correction, elicitation	Explicit correction, elicitation	Explicit CF	Explicit CF
Teacher 4	Recast, repetition	Elicitation	Explicit CF	Elicitation
Teacher 5	Explicit correction	Elicitation	Explicit CF	Explicit CF

There were some contradictory views about the frequency of CF strategies at elementary and intermediate levels. For example, teacher 1 believed in higher frequency of CF at elementary level due to the learners' lack of knowledge, whereas teacher 4 talked about the provision of more CF at intermediate level as the learners get involved in more oral communication and make frequent errors accordingly instead of receiving instruction and doing several exercises that commonly occur at elementary level. The actual classroom-based CF practices of teachers were in line with what teacher 1 believed. That is, the more CF at elementary level was the inevitable consequence of more errors emerging at this level.

Although the teachers stated that they use both explicit and implicit CF according to error type, situation, and task, the teachers mostly relied on explicit feedbacks than implicit ones at both levels regardless of the error types and situation-based functions of the tasks. More specifically, the teachers did not systematically and selectively focus on errors for the purpose of employing CF and their actual practices demonstrated the highest frequency of explicit correction followed by prompt (elicitations, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests, and repetitions), and recast. Moreover, the teachers highlighted the importance of using more output-promoting CF strategies in interviews, but they relied on different forms of input-providing strategies in practice. In other words, they used more recast and explicit correction in comparison to repetition, clarification request, metalinguistic explanation, and elicitation at both levels. The teachers stated that they prefer the delayed forms of CF strategies at both levels and talked about the application of more immediate CF strategies at elementary level. However, the classroom observation revealed that they rarely took notes at the time of students' involvement in a set of tasks and asked for later correction of errors. At both elementary and intermediate levels, the teachers employed a variety of direct and indirect CF strategies for putting the learners on the right track exactly at the time of erroneous production on the part of the learners. In this case, teacher 4 was an exception for her frequent reliance on delayed error correction.

The teachers also underlined the critical role of providing CF on both phonological and grammatical errors with the emphasis given to the former.

However, the observation revealed that the teachers preferred focusing on grammatical than phonological errors at both levels. Teacher 1, 2, and 5 followed the same strategy. However, teacher 3 relied on his beliefs in focusing more transparently on pronunciation errors at elementary level and grammatical errors at intermediate level. Moreover, teacher 4 corrected pronunciation errors more than other linguistic domains at both elementary and intermediate levels which was in accordance with her stated beliefs.

Although almost all teachers tended to centralize the correction of global errors preventing the flow of communication, they highlighted the local linguistic-bound errors as well. In addition, the teachers regarded the practicality of self-correction, peer correction, and teacher correction in their interviews, but they followed the reversed direction in their classrooms. In other words, they mainly relied on teacher-based explicit correction of errors followed by self-correction. Peer correction was rarely observed in the classrooms.

### **5. Discussion**

The results of the study revealed that the teachers made use of more CF strategies at elementary level in comparison to intermediate level. This may be due to the frequent number of errors made by the students at elementary levels on the one hand, and the teachers' concern for regularly correcting the learners' errors at basic levels for the purpose of preventing the fossilization of erroneous linguistic productions on the other hand. However, at intermediate level, the teachers employed fewer CF strategies as a consequence of the reduced number of errors made by the students on the one hand, and their own tendency for avoiding too much interference in students' linguistic production and communicative practices in a set of tasks on the other hand.

The teachers participated in the study employed explicit correction as the dominant CF strategy in their classrooms at both elementary and intermediate levels. This may indicate that the most practical CF strategy from the teachers' perspectives in this context was the explicit, input providing correction of errors (Ellis, 2006; Lyster, 2004). This being the case, the use of direct CF strategy could be associated with the teacher's concern for on-the-spot

provision of correct linguistic forms, interruption of communicative flow of interaction in a set of communicative tasks for the purpose of promoting accuracy, ignorance of involving the students in a challenge of correcting their own errors, and insensitivity to the learners' socio-affective response to error correction strategies.

Overall, although the teachers employed a combination of CF strategies at elementary and intermediate levels, they preferred using more explicit correction, prompts (elicitations, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests, and repetitions), and recasts at both levels with their higher frequency at elementary levels. In other words, the teachers made use of more explicit correction and recast as the two specific forms concerned with reformulation of non-target output in contrast to the application of prompts (Ranta & Lyster, 2007; Sheen & Ellis, 2011). Although implicit CF provides a more robust effect on L2 learning (Li, 2010; Mackey & Goo, 2007), the teachers may employ more explicit CF strategies due to their function for attracting the learners' attention (Nassaji, 2009). In contrast to the literature that claim recasts have the most repeated frequency in the classrooms (Lyster et al., 2013), the teachers participated in this study used more explicit corrections and prompts in comparison to recasts.

In this study, the teachers preferred concentrating on morphosyntactic, phonological, and lexical errors for the provision of CF strategies. Although the teachers moved in accordance with the literature demonstrating the highest number of CF in morphosyntactic areas, the learners develop more accurate perception, successful uptake, and appropriate self-repair of CF in case of lexical and phonological errors which may be due to their communicative functions (Kim & Han, 2007; Lyster et al., 2013). In addition, the teachers did not take into account the role of students' level of language proficiency in selecting the linguistic errors as the proper targets for the provision of CF.

Participating in semi-structured interviews on their beliefs about oral CF, the teachers frequently mentioned their sensitivity to correction of students' errors, use of different CF strategies, employment of explicit and implicit CF, reliance on immediate and delayed CF, application of output-promoting strategies, correction of global and local errors, focus on different linguistic targets, preference for self, peer, and teacher correction, emphasis on affective

side of CF, reference to mental readiness for provision of CF, promotion of CF for learners' interlanguage development, and presentation of factors affecting teacher's approach to CF. The participant teachers' beliefs about oral CF were in line with Roothoof's (2014) study demonstrating the teachers' tendency for moving away from immediate feedback that may interrupt the communication and negatively influence the students' confidence and motivation. In addition, the findings of this study followed Leeman's (2007) work in that the teachers believed in beneficial and relevant contributions of CF to their practices. Vasquez and Harvey (2010) also addressed the importance and complexity of CF that may result in a set of fundamental questions about the adequate frequency, type, and contexts of CF on the part of teachers. The teachers of this study did not follow a systematic approach to CF practices as they elaborated on their contradictory views on the use of different CF strategies at elementary and intermediate levels. More specifically, these teachers pursued their own intuitive personal views rather than conforming to a systematic model of CF that takes into account a number of factors, i.e. error type, situation, task, learners' level of proficiency, and their affective filters. Therefore, we need to explore how the teachers' cognition of CF could be in line with the relevance of research findings and daily classroom practices (Mori, 2011)

According to Ellis (2009, p.9), "the teacher has to select both the particular strategy to use in response to a learner error and the specific linguistic devices for realizing that strategy". In this sense, the teachers' practices of CF are characterized by the two features of imprecision and inconsistency. The former pertains to the teacher's indistinguishable use of different strategies, whereas the latter represents the teachers' tendency for responding to individual differences in practice (Ellis, 2009). Along this line, the complexity of CF strategies hinges on the questions raised about their appropriateness, frequency, and effectiveness on the one hand, and the concern with their influence on the learners' self-confidence and motivation on the other hand (Vasquez & Harvey, 2010). As Basturkmen, et al. (2004) acknowledged, there was a relatively weak relationship between the teachers' beliefs and practices in this study. There were some areas of belief-practice mismatches in terms of the teachers' sensitivity to students' errors, their

employment of different CF strategies, use of explicit and implicit CF, reliance on immediate and delayed CF, correction of global and local errors, focus on different linguistic targets, and preference for self, peer, and teacher correction. For example, the participant teachers highlighted the significance of prompts and employed more recast and explicit correction strategies in their classrooms instead as revealed in Yoshida's (2008b) study. Moreover, although the teachers underlined the importance of correcting global errors, they randomly corrected both global and local errors (Basturkmen, et al., 2004). In this study, the multidimensionality of CF forms and functions might depend on the tripartite framework of learner variables, teacher variables, and context variables. The participant teachers were expected to address the learners' cognitive potentials and affective responses, rely on their academic background and experiential practice for establishing theory-practice link, and consider the nature of situation-based tasks and activities in selecting different CF strategies. However, the teachers did not conform to a systematic model for the correction of the learners' errors and in the real context of the classroom, they put aside their theory-driven and practice-oriented beliefs and made a sudden decision for correcting the learners' erroneous production and facilitating their interlanguage development. As Mori (2011) asserted, the scope of CF research needs to be expanded by addressing the social, cultural, personal, and experiential factors that could put the teachers' conceptualization of CF into their daily classroom practices.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study investigated the teachers' beliefs about oral corrective feedback and their feedback-providing practices across learners' proficiency levels. The findings revealed that there was a significant difference in teachers' employment of CF strategies at elementary and intermediate levels with more explicit correction, elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification request, and repetition at the elementary level. Furthermore, there was no significant difference in teachers' focus on target linguistic items for the provision of CF. However, the teachers had more correction of grammatical, phonological, and lexical errors at both levels. In addition, the semi-structured interview results showed the recurrent themes mentioned by the



teachers including sensitivity to correction of students' errors, use of different CF strategies, employment of explicit and implicit CF, reliance on immediate and delayed CF, application of output-promoting strategies, correction of global and local errors, focus on different linguistic targets, preference for self, peer, and teacher correction, emphasis on affective side of CF, reference to mental readiness for provision of CF, promotion of CF for learners' interlanguage development, and presentation of factors affecting teacher's approach to CF. Also, the classroom observation data represented some areas of belief-practice mismatches that were mainly reflected in provision of different CF approaches, strategies, and targets.

This study could be of critical importance to the teachers who intend to facilitate the interlanguage development of the learners and need to make use of error correction opportunities for putting the learners on the right track. Along this line, the study calls for a more systematic, selective, and practical approach to oral CF in teacher education programs and teacher-training courses. Furthermore, there is a need for investigating a comprehensive-informative model that is both theory-led and practice-oriented while taking into account different perspectives of CF, such as teacher, learner, context, task, and learning processes. The teachers could follow a set of reflective practices for centralizing the role of CF in the process of improving their pedagogical practices and developing the learners' language proficiency. This study may go beyond the awareness-raising stage and ask for the teachers' reconsideration of using a variety of CF strategies at different levels.

Future studies are expected to comparatively investigate the CF-provision practices of teachers at different levels of language proficiency at different language centers. Further studies could also explore the use of CF strategies across teachers' academic backgrounds and teaching experiences. In addition, the researchers could compare the effectiveness of oral and written CF while concentrating on a specific linguistic target.

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