

Speak Up! Empowering Vocational EFL Students through Oral Corrective Feedback

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Abstract

Given the significance of corrective feedback in enhancing language learners' speaking skills, especially in boosting accuracy and motivation, this study aims to examine the impact of direct oral corrective feedback (OCF) on Indonesian EFL learners. While research has shown that teacher feedback plays a crucial role in student performance, there is limited insight into how students interpret and engage with feedback—a factor essential to its effectiveness. Employing a descriptive qualitative research method, this study involved 39 vocational school students from SMK Medikacom in Bandung, Indonesia. Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews, enabling a thorough exploration of students' responses, behaviours, and attitudes toward Oral Corrective Feedback (OCF). Oral Corrective Feedback (OCF) improved students' speaking skills, with Recast, Clarification Request, and Repetition being the most common types and Recast being the most effective for error correction without disrupting communication. Students reported gains in pronunciation, grammar, fluency, confidence, and teacher-student rapport. Some students, however, felt discomfort with feedback, highlighting the need for a supportive, non-judgmental approach to prevent negative emotional impacts. This study suggests that while implicit feedback benefits advanced learners, lower-proficiency students may need more explicit correction. To maximise OCF's impact, educators are encouraged to tailor feedback to individual proficiency levels and focus on fostering supportive, adaptive classroom environments.

Keywords: Oral corrective feedback, speaking skills, EFL classroom, student confidence and motivation.

INTRODUCTION

Oral Corrective Feedback (OCF) has become vital in language teaching, particularly in supporting foreign language learners' speaking proficiency. Defined as the immediate feedback provided to learners to correct spoken errors, OCF is crucial in guiding students toward more accurate language use by helping them recognise and rectify gaps between their current proficiency and target language norms (Nassaji et al., 2023). OCF is widely researched for its ability to improve pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary usage in real

time, offering learners immediate opportunities to self-correct and refine their language skills (Suzuki, 2022). This type of feedback supports language accuracy and fosters learner confidence, encouraging students to engage more actively in speaking tasks without fear of making mistakes.

Various OCF strategies have been identified to support language development effectively, each catering to different types of errors and learner preferences. Explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition each serve unique roles in enhancing learners' speaking skills (Zhao & Ellis, 2022). For example, explicit correction and recasts provide direct, corrective input, while elicitation and repetition encourage self-correction and facilitate active engagement in language learning (Sato, 2023). Research suggests that using a mix of these techniques, adapted to individual learner needs and emotional states, bolsters language accuracy and supports fluency and confidence in real-world communication.

OCF has garnered attention in EFL contexts, focusing on how it impacts students' language development and emotional responses. Research by Roothoof and Breeze (2016) sheds light on the differing attitudes of EFL students and teachers toward OCF. Their study, involving 395 students and 46 teachers, revealed that students generally desire more corrective feedback than teachers tend to provide, with a particular preference for explicit feedback types. Furthermore, students reported positive emotions in response to OCF, highlighting its potential to encourage student engagement and motivation. Adding to this understanding, Rassaei (2015) explored the role of foreign language anxiety in learners' responsiveness to various feedback types. By categorising students into high- and low-anxiety groups, the study demonstrated that low-anxiety learners benefitted from both metalinguistic feedback and recasts, with a more profound effect from metalinguistic feedback on their language development. Conversely, high-anxiety learners responded better to recasts, suggesting that implicit feedback may be less anxiety-inducing and, therefore, more effective for anxious learners. Haifaa and Emma (2014) further examined OCF by focusing on its effects on learning English modals—a complex area for many EFL/ESL learners. Working with pre-intermediate Arabic-speaking students, they found that recasts and metalinguistic feedback improved their understanding of English modals.

Van Ha and Nguyen (2021) also examined this alignment in Vietnamese secondary schools involving 250 students and 24 teachers. Their findings revealed that students preferred feedback on all errors, while teachers focused on those affecting communication. Students also favoured teacher correction over peer or self-correction but desired training to improve peer feedback. Teachers, however, viewed themselves as the primary source of feedback due to concerns about the accuracy of peer corrections. Similarly, Yüksel (2021) investigated the alignment of beliefs and practices among 20 university EFL teachers in Turkey. Using classroom observations and interviews, they found inconsistencies between teachers' stated beliefs and their in-class practices. Teachers with the greatest incongruence often justified their choices, even when these corrective strategies proved ineffective.

While extensive research has examined Oral Corrective Feedback (OCF) in general EFL contexts, a gap remains in understanding its application within Indonesian vocational education, where students' English needs are career-focused and practical. Unlike traditional EFL students, vocational learners require English skills that enable them to communicate

effectively in professional environments. This study thus seeks to investigate the specific role of OCF in enhancing the speaking proficiency of Indonesian vocational students, with a particular focus on how it can help students identify and correct errors in ways that improve linguistic accuracy, fluency, and professional communication skills. Effective spoken communication is essential in this context, as students are expected to meet unique linguistic demands relevant to real-world workplace interactions.

To address these challenges, this study examines two key research questions: How can OCF be effectively implemented to improve linguistic accuracy and fluency among Indonesian vocational students? Which types of OCF best support self-correction and confidence in professional communication? The research aims to offer valuable insights into adapting OCF strategies responsive to vocational students' needs by answering these questions. Ultimately, the goal is to develop practical, career-aligned approaches to OCF, enabling educators to build students' readiness for professional English communication and equipping them with the confidence and skills required for success in real-world settings.

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative approach to explore the implementation of oral corrective feedback and its impact on students in a classroom setting. A case study design was chosen to enable a detailed examination of the phenomenon (Priya, 2020), allowing the research to capture the nuances of classroom interactions and feedback dynamics in a real-world educational environment. The participants included 39 vocational school students from class 11th RPL B at SMK Medikacom Bandung, Indonesia, and were selected through convenience sampling. Moreover, two primary data collection techniques were employed: observation and interviews. Direct classroom observations allow researchers to examine behaviours and activities in real-time, providing insights into aspects that participants may be unwilling to discuss, unaware of, or unable to recall. Observations conducted in naturally occurring contexts also enable examining relevant contextual factors (Morgan et al., 2016). In addition to observations, semi-structured interviews were used to explore learners' perceptions of the oral corrective feedback provided by the teacher during the teaching and learning process, as well as their preferences regarding the timing of feedback. This versatile and flexible interview method makes it suitable for gathering in-depth insights into participants' experiences (Kallio et al., 2016).

Further, the interviews were conducted in Indonesian, each lasting 10 to 15 minutes per participant. Participants were encouraged to elaborate on the reasons for their feedback preferences, allowing for deeper insights into their experiences. Meanwhile, the observation examined how the teacher provided feedback on learners' errors during teaching and learning. It was conducted in a class over two sessions, each lasting 2 hours, resulting in 4 hours of audio recording. The researchers acted as complete observers, sitting unobtrusively in a spot where participants were unlikely to notice their presence during interactions. Additionally, the audio recording was set up with the teacher's assistance to ensure minimal disruption to the classroom environment.

In data analysis, the data collected through observation and semi-structured interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, following the process outlined by Matthews and Ross (2010), which includes four steps: (1) identifying initial themes, (2)

interpreting the data, (3) examining relationships within the data, and (4) presenting the analysis results. For the interview data, after transcribing and identifying initial themes, the researcher conducted member checking with the participants to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data before interpretation based on the study's objectives. Additionally, the observation data were analysed to determine whether the corrective feedback used by the teacher helped students recognise their errors and to confirm students' preferences regarding corrective feedback.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This study investigated the application of Oral Corrective Feedback (OCF) in an EFL classroom, focusing on the teacher's feedback types. Findings revealed that the teacher predominantly used three types of OCF: Recast, Clarification Request, and Repetition. The following sections provide a detailed description of how each feedback type was implemented based on observation data.

Table 1. Recast observation data

No.	Student's Utterance	Teacher's Recast	Focus of Correction	Outcome
1	She don't like apples.	Oh, she doesn't like apples?	Subject-verb agreement	The student hears the correct form naturally
2	We goes to the library every week.	You go to the library every week? That sounds nice.	Subject-verb agreement	The student hears the correct form naturally
3	I have seen him yesterday.	You saw him yesterday? That's interesting!	Verb tense	The student hears the correct form naturally
4	They was playing outside.	They were playing outside? Sounds fun!	Subject-verb agreement	The student hears the correct form naturally

Table 1 highlights recasts as a corrective feedback strategy in an EFL-speaking context. In this approach, the teacher subtly reformulates students' incorrect utterances within the flow of conversation, allowing students to hear the correct form naturally without explicitly pointing out the error. This method maintains continuity in speaking activities, reducing potential anxiety and encouraging students to stay engaged. Recasts primarily addressed errors in subject-verb agreement and verb tense, which are essential aspects of grammatical structure in spoken language and help foster a balance between fluency and form. [Chin et al. \(2021\)](#) found that recasts induce multiple levels of "noticing"—including awareness of the corrective intent, form, gap, and underlying rule—more so than direct prompts. This increased level of noticing helps students absorb and internalize correct language structures as they receive examples of permissible forms in the target language.

Additionally, [Ghahari and Piruznejad \(2017\)](#) found that students exposed to implicit feedback, such as recasts, demonstrated a greater willingness to communicate, likely because this indirect feedback fosters a low-pressure environment that encourages

spontaneous participation and engagement in classroom activities. Similarly, Li (2018) observed that recasts were effective across various learner proficiency levels, suggesting their broad applicability in diverse classroom contexts. However, Nurhartanto (2016) raises questions about the overall effectiveness of recasts, suggesting that their impact may depend on individual learning strategies and students' dominant approaches to language acquisition. While recasts can reinforce learned material and wrap up concepts students are exposed to, they may not be universally effective across all learning styles or proficiency levels. This perspective indicates that while recasts offer valuable exposure to correct forms, their success may vary based on student characteristics and context.

Table 2. Clarification observation data

No.	Student's Utterance	Teacher's Recast	Focus of Correction	Outcome
1	How the speaker's personal experience.	Sorry, could you say 'speaker's' again?	Pronunciation/possessive form	Student self-corrects pronunciation
2	Coding is a way for writers to express creativity.	What do you mean by 'writer's'?	Word choice	Student corrects word to 'speakers'
3	The person talks about they life in story.	Could you repeat 'they life'?	Pronoun agreement	The student revises to 'their life'
4	I want to joining the competition.	Did you mean 'join'?	Verb form	Student changes to 'join'
5	He give good information for us.	Did you mean 'he gives'?	Verb agreement	Student corrects to 'gives'
6	The teacher say that it okay.	Could you say 'okay' again?	Pronunciation	Student repeats 'okay' with clearer pronunciation
7	I have many idea about project.	Did you mean 'ideas'?	Plural form	Student revises to 'ideas'
8	She go to shopping every weekend.	Could you say 'goes' instead of 'go'?	Verb agreement	Student corrects to 'goes'
9	They need more informations for decision.	What do you mean by 'informations'?	Plural form	Student removes 's' from 'informations'
10	I can makes my presentation better.	Did you mean 'make' instead of 'makes'?	Verb form	Student changes to 'make'

Table 2 illustrates how clarification requests were effectively used as a corrective feedback strategy to address students' spoken errors. In this approach, the teacher prompted clarification whenever an error was detected, encouraging students to rethink their responses and self-correct. Unlike direct correction, clarification requests subtly invite students to identify their mistakes by repeating or questioning specific words or phrases, fostering self-monitoring and reflective thinking. Behroozi and Karimnia (2017) affirm that clarification and explicit correction help students recognize inaccuracies in their utterances, effectively preventing error fossilization. This aligns with communicative teaching principles, as clarification requests support students' active engagement in refining their language use.

The observation data in Table 2 reveal that clarification requests were applied to various language issues, including pronunciation, word choice, pronoun agreement, verb forms, and plural forms. For instance, the teacher might prompt a student to reconsider a phrase by questioning their use of "writer's" instead of "speakers" or gently indicating a plural form error by asking, "Did you mean 'ideas'?" This approach allowed students to self-correct within context, reinforcing their understanding of language structures and vocabulary. Tasdemir and Arslan (2018) support the effectiveness of this strategy, noting that clarification is among the most preferred types of feedback, particularly when directed at frequent or significant errors. They further suggest that teachers should focus on correcting serious errors rather than every minor mistake, which aligns with the observed use of clarification requests in promoting meaningful language refinement.

Additionally, Zhu and Carless (2018) emphasize the role of dialogue in feedback, explaining that the clarification process engages both teacher and student in a dynamic exchange that stimulates active learning and enhances understanding. By prompting students to clarify their responses, the teacher fosters a dialogic interaction that reinforces the correct forms and encourages the students' proactive involvement in language improvement. Gedamu and Gezahegn (2021) highlight that directive clarification is an impactful approach, particularly when maintaining dialogue and guiding students to reassess their language output in real-time.

Table 3. Repetition observation data

No.	Student's Utterance	Teacher's Recast	Focus of Correction	Outcome
1	She don't likes to read.	She don't likes?	Verb agreement	The student self-corrects to 'doesn't like'
2	I goed to the market yesterday.	You goed to the market?	Past tense	The student changes to 'went'
3	He can sings very well.	He can sings?	Verb agreement	The student changes to 'sing'
4	They has a big family.	They has a big family?	Verb agreement	The student corrects to 'have'
5	I am more smarter than him.	More smarter?	Comparative form	The student revises to 'smarter'

6	This informations are useful.	This informations?	Plural form	The student changes to 'information'
7	She always go to the park.	She always go?	Verb agreement	The student corrects to 'goes'
8	The teacher give us homework everyday.	The teacher give?	Verb agreement	The student changes to 'gives'
9	I eats breakfast at 7.	I eats breakfast?	Verb agreement	The student revises to 'eat'
10	They was happy to see us.	They was happy?	Verb agreement	The student changes to 'were'
11	I have went to that place.	You have went?	Past participle	The student self-corrects to 'have gone'
12	She speak three languages.	She speak three languages?	Verb agreement	The student revises to 'speaks'
13	My friend and me goes to school together.	My friend and me goes?	Pronoun agreement	Student corrects to 'my friend and I go'

Table 3 demonstrates using repetition as a corrective feedback strategy to address students' spoken errors. In this approach, the teacher repeats the student's incorrect utterance with modified intonation or emphasis, subtly signalling the need for correction. Rather than directly providing the correct form, repetition serves as a prompt, encouraging students to self-correct. This method helps students actively engage in correction, fostering greater awareness of language structures within a communicative context. [Li \(2018\)](#) explains that repetition feedback is effective when the teacher highlights the error through repeated phrases or sentences, prompting students to identify the mistake and self-correct. In cases where students cannot self-correct, a follow-up recast provides the correct form, creating a layered approach to feedback.

The observational data in Table 3 show that repetition was applied across various grammatical areas, including verb agreement, past tense, comparative forms, and pluralization. For example, the teacher's repetition of "They was happy?" in response to "They was happy to see us" effectively led the student to revise their response to "They were happy." By emphasizing specific errors in this manner, the teacher encouraged students to recognize and correct their language use independently, maintaining the flow of conversation and enhancing communicative engagement. [Bozorgian and Kanani \(2017\)](#) note that repetition often co-occurs with other feedback types, particularly in cases where learners need additional guidance to internalize corrections.

Supporting these findings, [Ölmezer and Öztürk \(2016\)](#) observed that repetition significantly aids learners in detecting and understanding their errors. This subtle form of feedback enables students to focus on their spoken output, thus increasing their self-awareness and attentiveness to language form. Similarly, [Darabad \(2014\)](#) found that repetition of errors without immediate correction opportunities is an effective corrective feedback intervention, especially in improving learners' pronunciation, such as with plural

endings in "-s" or "-es." By subtly prompting students to reflect on their language use, repetition aligns with communicative language teaching goals, encouraging students to participate in meaningful interaction while developing a greater awareness of language form and function.

Impact of OCF on Student Confidence

The interview data underscored the positive impact of oral corrective feedback (OCF) on student confidence, with many students noting that receiving feedback boosted their assurance in speaking English. For instance, Student A12 remarked, *"Feedback can add confidence and help us speak more fluently,"* Student K7 shared, *"After receiving feedback, I feel more confident because the teacher corrects me in a supportive way."* Similarly, Student R5 explained, *"When the teacher gives feedback, I know what to improve, and that makes me less afraid to speak."* These reflections align with [Hartono et al. \(2022\)](#), who found that corrective feedback does not diminish students' self-efficacy or confidence but encourages them to consider the reasons behind their mistakes, promoting reflective thinking. Other interview students expressed how supportive feedback helps them feel at ease with errors, normalizing them as part of the learning process. Student P9 noted, *"Feedback helps me feel that mistakes are normal and that I can improve without feeling embarrassed,"* while Student L3 commented, *"It feels reassuring to know the teacher is there to guide us, which makes me want to speak up more often."* This sentiment is echoed in [Prapawadee's \(2021\)](#) findings, which show that OCF plays a crucial role in assessing and supporting students' speaking, ultimately helping them become more confident and willing to engage in public speaking.

Additionally, Student J11 observed that *"receiving feedback shows me what I'm doing right and wrong, which builds my confidence over time."* This reflects the findings of [Argüelles et al. \(2019\)](#), who suggest that feedback should focus on errors that impede communication to maintain the flow of language and preserve students' confidence. By correcting only those mistakes that impact comprehension, teachers foster an environment where feedback supports language growth without discouraging students from participating. These responses suggest that, when delivered thoughtfully, OCF can enhance students' self-esteem and their willingness to engage in speaking activities. The supportive, non-judgmental feedback provided by the teacher contributed to a positive classroom atmosphere, where students felt comfortable making mistakes and were motivated to improve. This underscores the importance of constructive feedback in building student confidence, supporting active engagement, and fostering a productive language learning environment.

Teacher-Student Connections through Oral Corrective Feedback

Students reported feeling valued and supported when receiving oral corrective feedback (OCF), with many highlighting that frequent feedback fostered a sense of closeness with their teacher. For instance, Student B13 shared, *"Being corrected makes us feel that the teacher is paying attention to us, which makes us more enthusiastic about learning."* Student K21 explained, *"When the teacher gives feedback, I feel like they care about my learning, which makes me want to improve."* These insights align with findings by [Sa'adah \(2019\)](#), who reported that corrective feedback does not discourage students from participating but reassures them that the teacher is actively involved in their progress.

Other students noted how feedback reinforced a sense of mutual respect and support. Student T4 commented, *"When my teacher gives feedback, it feels like they're working with me, not just correcting me,"* Student L8 added, *"It feels like the teacher sees us as individuals."* This sentiment was echoed by Student R16, who remarked, *"Getting feedback makes me feel like I'm not just another student but someone they want to help."* Student J10 further noted, *"The way the teacher corrects us makes it feel like they care about us personally, not just our grades."* Such responses highlight the relational benefits of OCF in creating a supportive and connected classroom environment.

Supporting research emphasizes the value both teachers and students place on constructive feedback. [Van Ha et al. \(2021\)](#) found that students highly appreciate timely feedback and view it as an indicator of teacher involvement and dedication. However, they also recognize teachers' concern for balancing feedback with students' emotional well-being and participation flow. Similarly, [Soruç et al. \(2024\)](#) observed that teachers provide OCF because they believe it improves learning and sense students' expectations for guidance and support, strengthening the student-teacher relationship. [Rohmah and Halim \(2023\)](#) further support the idea that OCF enhances student competence, showing that constructive feedback significantly aids students in improving their English-speaking skills.

Challenges and Considerations in OCF Delivery

Despite the largely positive response to oral corrective feedback (OCF), some students expressed discomfort with certain aspects of its delivery. For instance, Student G14 shared, *"Sometimes, being corrected right away makes me feel nervous and like I'm being put on the spot."* At the same time, Student Q9 noted that *"Immediate feedback can be discouraging, especially if I'm trying to focus on what I want to say."* This sentiment was echoed by Student M3, who remarked, *"I sometimes feel embarrassed when the teacher corrects me in front of everyone, and it makes me want to speak less."* Additionally, Student D17 expressed a feeling of detachment, saying, *"Feedback is helpful, but it sometimes feels like the teacher is distant or just pointing out mistakes instead of supporting me."*

These responses highlight the complexities of delivering OCF effectively, as its impact can vary significantly based on individual student needs and emotional states. Research supports these findings, suggesting that factors like anxiety and personality influence students' perceptions and comfort levels with OCF. [Rassaei \(2015\)](#) found that students with low anxiety benefited more from metalinguistic feedback and recasts, whereas highly anxious students showed greater improvement with recasts alone, as metalinguistic feedback could intensify anxiety. This suggests that more sensitive approaches, such as delaying feedback or using less direct methods, may be preferable for some students. For instance, Student K20 remarked, *"It's easier for me to hear corrections after I finish speaking, so I don't feel interrupted."*

Students' gender and anxiety levels can also influence their preferred feedback type. [Geckin \(2020\)](#) noted that female students preferred delayed feedback and repetition to reduce anxiety, whereas male students tended to favor elicitation and appreciated the opportunity to self-correct. This variability in preferences is echoed in Student L22's comment, *"Sometimes, I feel a little discouraged if I get corrected too often in one session. It's hard to feel close to the teacher in those moments."* Similarly, [Mufidah \(2018\)](#) observed that students in highly anxious groups found OCF to be more debilitating than helpful, as it

heightened anxiety and sometimes hindered language production. For these students, receiving immediate feedback may disrupt their speaking flow, leading to further hesitation and nervousness.

Additionally, Ergül (2021) found that teachers often use non-verbal cues, like smiling, to soften the potentially face-threatening impact of feedback, which can help students feel more supported and less self-conscious. This aligns with student feedback indicating a need for a more supportive tone in corrections, as Student D17 highlighted, “*It sometimes feels like the teacher is just pointing out mistakes instead of supporting me.*” These findings suggest that while OCF is generally beneficial, a tailored approach considering individual emotional and situational factors is essential to maximize its effectiveness. Adjusting feedback delivery to align with students’ comfort levels and communication styles can help prevent negative emotional responses, allowing OCF to remain a constructive tool for language development and a supportive teacher-student relationship.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how oral corrective feedback (OCF) influences student confidence, teacher-student relationships, and specific challenges in EFL speaking instruction. The results highlight OCF's positive effects on student confidence, with many students feeling supported through constructive, personalized feedback that fostered a more motivating learning environment. However, the effectiveness of OCF varied based on individual preferences, particularly for anxious students who preferred delayed or indirect feedback, indicating that flexible, sensitive approaches are key. Factors like gender, anxiety, and comfort with self-correction affected students' preferences for feedback types (e.g., recasts, repetition, elicitation). Tailoring OCF to each student’s emotional state and learning style enhances its impact, balancing language accuracy with fluency. Limitations include the study’s small, context-specific sample and reliance on self-reported data, which may not fully capture immediate feedback responses. Future research could explore diverse samples, track students’ reactions over time, investigate individual differences, and assess the effects of immediate versus delayed feedback and teachers' non-verbal cues to further adapt OCF practices in EFL settings.

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