EFL STUDENTS' PREFERENCES FOR CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN SPEAKING INSTRUCTION ACROSS SPEAKING COURSE LEVELS

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Abstract: This cross-sectional survey study investigates the preferences of freshmen and sophomores for corrective feedback in speaking instruction, which includes perception of corrective feedback, types of error to be corrected, timing of correction, sources of correction, and types of corrective feedback. Using questionnaire and interview to collect the data, the study found that the two groups welcomed the feedback, acknowledged the benefits of corrective feedback, but felt embarrassed when being orally corrected. Both the freshmen and sophomores wanted all their errors to be corrected. Whereas the freshmen preferred the grammatical errors to be always corrected, the sophomores preferred the phonological errors. With regard to the timing, the two groups expected their errors to be corrected after they finished speaking. Additionally, the two groups favored teacher feedback. Finally, regardless of the different types of errors, the most preferred feedback was explicit feedback, whereas the least preferred one was paralinguistic signal.

Keywords: students' preferences, corrective feedback, speaking course levels

Abstrak: Penelitian *survey cross-sectional* ini menginvestigasi preferensi pembelajar di tingkat pertama dan tingkat kedua terhadap umpan balik korektif dalam pembelajaran berbicara yang meliputi persepsi terhadap umpan balik korektif, jenis-jenis kesalahan yang harus dikoreksi, waktu pemberian koreksi, sumber koreksi, dan jenis umpan balik korektif. Dengan menggunakan angket dan wawancara untuk mengumpulkan data, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa kedua kelompok pembelajar yang diteliti senang dengan umpan balik korektif, mengakui manfaat umpan balik korektif, tetapi merasa malu ketika kesalahan mereka dikoreksi. Baik pembelajar di tahun pertama maupun pembelajar di tahun kedua ingin semua kesalahan mereka dikoreksi. Pembelajar di tahun pertama lebih suka kesalahan tata bahasa yang selalu dikoreksi dan pembelajar di tahun kedua lebih suka kesalahan pelafalan. Sehubungan dengan waktu pengoreksian, kedua kelompok pembelajar tersebut mengharapkan kesalahan mereka dikoreksi setelah mereka selesai berbicara. Selanjutnya, kedua kelompok tersebut senang dengan koreksi yang diberikan oleh guru. Tanpa memperhatikan jenis-jenis kesalahan yang berbeda, umpan balik korektif yang paling disukai adalah *explicit feedback*, sedangkan yang paling tidak disukai adalah *paralinguistic signal.*

Kata-kata Kunci: preferensi pembelajar, umpan balik korektif, tingkatan kelas berbicara

Currently, many of the language classrooms are communicative-oriented focusing on communication (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003)**,** which means that there is a tendency to give more

emphasis on meaning. Since meaning is more important, it spawns a question for the place of language form, particularly dealing with the question of how students learn the correct form of the target language. One of the ways to address this issue is through the provision of corrective feedback. As defined by Ellis (2009), corrective feedback is a type of input containing information about the accuracy of an utterance.

Recently, research on corrective feedback has been focusing on the most effective type of corrective feedback (Ellis, 2009). Unfortunately, there is no consensus yet about this concern. It seems very hard to determine the most effective type of corrective feedback. Although the question remains unresolved, the most essential point that should be kept in mind is that effective instruction can take place when it is in accordance with what the students need and expect. Corrective feedback as one form of instruction is likely to be effective when the students' cognitive and affective preferences are taken into consideration (Zhang, Zhang, & Ma, 2010). Hence, identification of students' preferences may be a good starting point for teachers to move closer to a better instruction. Further, it appears that students often learn better if the instruction matches their preferences. When there is a gap between the students' expectations and the teaching practice, the students may become demotivated to learn (Schulz, 1996 cited in Borg, 2003), which probably results in negative learning outcomes. Besides, students' preferences can potentially mediate language acquisition (Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Brown, 2009 cited in Park, 2010). It means that the closer the instruction to the students' expectations, the more easily the students proceed through language learning. In other words, accommodating the students' preferences may contribute to the success of instructional practices. For all those reasons this present study is conducted.

This study focuses on preferences for corrective feedback in speaking instruction, one of the productive-skill courses which generally requires the students to perform on-the-spot activities; students are supposed to be spontaneous in expressing their thought. Accordingly, from the students' side, the tendency to make errors in such instruction is greater, and from the teacher's side, the provision of corrective feedback might occur more frequently.

Many things should be taken into considerations by teachers as decision-makers in the classroom in dealing with the provision of corrective feedback. They need to consider the questions of *when, which, how,* and *who*. The *when* issue is a bit perplexing in oral corrective feedback as the teachers are confronted with two possibilities, either immediate or delayed, while written corrective feedback is always delayed. The second question is *which* errors should be corrected. The prominent concern in this issue is whether all errors should be corrected or only errors obstructing meaning (Sheen & Ellis, 2011), as from the point of view of communication, errors are classified into global errors and local errors (Ellis, 1997), or are categorized into three types: grammatical, lexical, and phonological (Tomczyk, 2013). The next issue is about *how* errors should be corrected. The how-question*,* in this case, refers to the strategy to correct the errors which are classified into two broad categories, namely reformulations covering explicit feedback and recast, and prompts covering elicitation, meta-linguistic, clarification requests, and repetition (Ranta & Lyster, 2007). Sheen and Ellis (2011) suggest an additional type, namely paralinguistic signals. The last is issue around the sources of correction: *who* should correct the error. In this case, the correction might come from teachers, peers, or the students who make the errors.

Katayama (2007), Park (2010), Abukhadrah (2012), Ok and Ustaci (2013), and Tomczyk (2013) have investigated students' preferences for corrective feedback in speaking instruction. The results of the aforementioned studies consistently indi-cate that most of the

students respond to corrective feedback positively. They require corrective feedback in the learning process. Yet, the students have different preferences in terms of types of errors to be corrected, sources of correction, and preferred type of corrective feedback. This study then explores the students' preferences for corrective feedback in speaking ins-truction by comparing the students' preferences across speaking course levels. The levels are divided into Speaking I, which focuses on daily communication, and Speaking III, which focuses on formal and academic communication. In addition, this study is focused on the students only. In other words, the aim of this study is to investigate the students' preferences for corrective feedback in speaking instruction which includes perception of corrective feedback, types of errors to be corrected, timing for correction, sources of correction, and types of corrective feedback. Specifically, it compares the students' preferences in terms of those aspects across different speaking courses.

METHOD

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design and involved 147 undergraduate students of *Universitas Negeri Malang* – State University of Malang, Indonesia, 74 of whom were taking Speaking I course (henceforth categorized as freshmen) and 73 were taking Speaking III course (henceforth categorized as sophomores)—the spea-king courses offered during the time of data collection of this study.

The data were collected through a close-ended questionnaire as the main data and semi-structured interview as supplementary data. The questionnaire which consisted of 36 items were divided into 5 aspects, namely students' perception of corrective feedback in Speaking instruction, types of error to be corrected, timing of correction, sources of correction, and types of corrective feedback. The questionnaire was adapted from Fukuda (cited in Park, 2010), Agudo (2013), and Katayama (2013). Park's (2010) study focused on the students' willingness to receive corrective feed-back, types of error to be corrected, timing of correction, sources of correction, and types of corrective feedback. Agudo's (2013) study focused on how the students perceive corrective feedback. Katayama's (2013) study focused on the students' attitude toward corrective feedback, types of error to be corrected, and types of corrective feedback.

Data collection was conducted in the second semester of the academic year 2014-2015. It lasted for 6 days. The questionnaire, as one research instrument, was distributed after the students were done with the learning process. It spent around fifteen minutes to fill up the questionnaire. Of the 147 research subjects, nine students from each level were chosen randomly to be interviewed. There were 19 questions asked during the interview. The interview lasted for around 8 minutes per interviewee.

The data obtained from the questionnaire and the interview were then analyzed descriptively. The students' preferences in this study are reflectted by their responses to the questionnaire items showing the level of *strongly agree, always*, or *very effective* depending on the items, which were then presented in the form of graphs. Mann-Whitney U test was calculated through the help of SPSS 22.0 to find out the significant difference between the two groups surveyed.

RESULTS

The five main points under investigation were students' perception of corrective feedback in Speaking Instruction, types of errors to be corrected, timing for correction, sources of correction, and types of corrective feedback.

Perceptions of Corrective Feedback in Speaking Instruction

Students' perceptions in this study cover their willingness to receive corrective feedback (Questionnaire Item 1), their feeling when being corrected (Questionnaire Item 3), and the role of corrective feedback in the learning process (Questionnaire Items 2 and 4). The following figure illustrates the percentages of respondents choosing the option *strongly agree*.
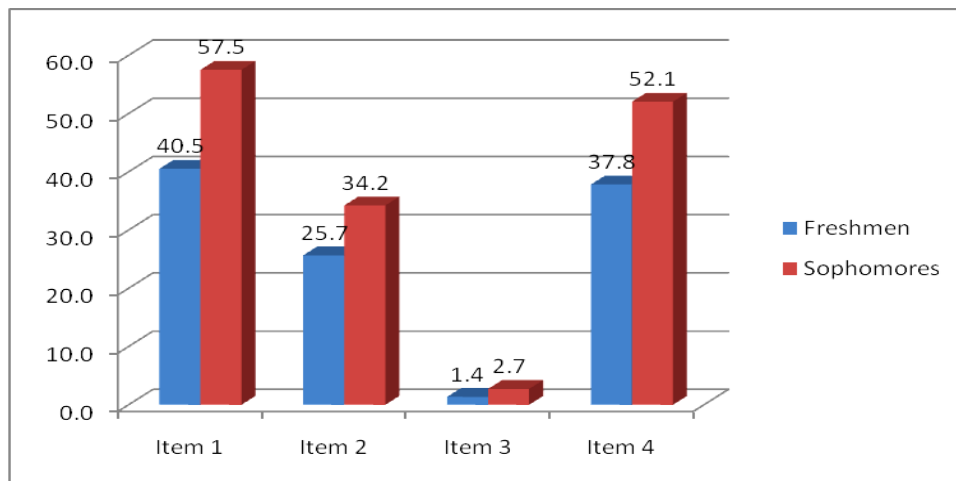
Figure 1 Students' Perception of Corrective Feedback

As could be seen from Figure 1, the majority of freshmen and sophomores strongly agreed to be given corrective feedback. The trend of data from the questionnaire is in line with the results of the interview, indicating that the students disapproved if their teachers ignore their errors. They further indicated that they need the corrective feedback to ensure whether they have produced correct utterances. In spite of the favorable attitude to receive corrective feedback, the results of Mann-Whitney U test show that there is a significant difference between the two groups surveyed for Item Number 1 (the sig. value is .040), which suggests that the sophomores expect to receive correction more.

Dealing with the students' feeling when being corrected, only 1.4% of the freshmen and 2.7% of the sophomores strongly agree to Item Number 3, stating that they feel embarrassed when their errors are corrected. However, it should be noted that such feelings do not influence the students' willingness to receive corrective feedback.

With respect to the facilitative role of corrective feedback, more than one third of the freshmen and sophomores strongly agreed with Item Number 2 that they have learnt a lot from the provision of corrective feedback. Besides, they agreed that the feedback is helpful; even the most frequently reported information from the interview suggests that the students need corrective feedback to help them notice their errors and then learn from the errors.

Types of Errors to be Corrected

In this present study, the types of errors are divided into errors from the point of view of communication and errors in terms of grammar, phonology, and vocabulary. To be more specific, questionnaire Item Number 5 refers to all error types to be corrected by teachers,

whereas Item Number 6 refers to errors that affect meaning only. Figure 2 shows the percentages of respondents choosing the option of *strongly agree* in each item.
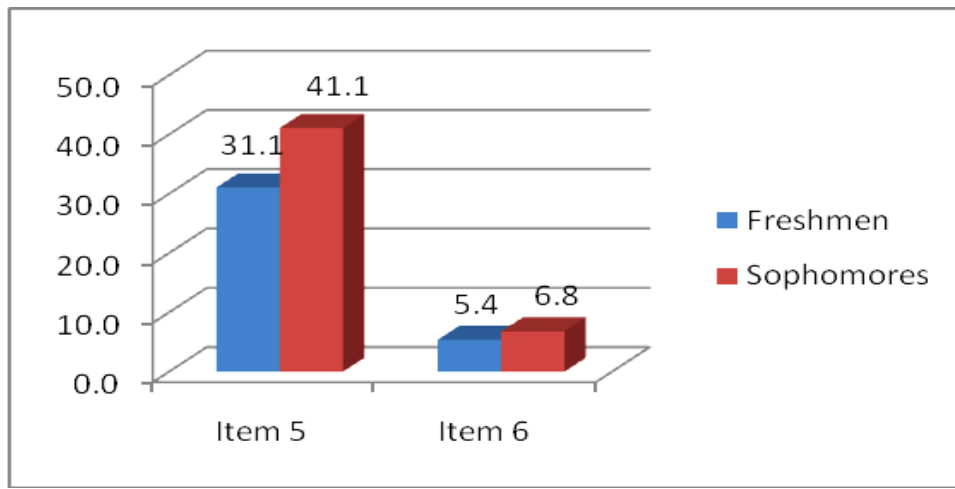
Figure 2 Students' Feedback Preferences for Communication Errors

As can be seen from Figure 2, nearly half of the freshmen and sophomores were in agreement to have all types of errors be corrected. In contrast with item number 6, only 5.4% of the freshmen and 6.8% of the sophomores strongly agreed to have correction on only errors affecting meaning. It seems obvious, therefore, that the students preferred to be corrected constantly.

The other types of errors focus on grammar, phonology, and vocabulary. This item aims to know how frequent the students want each type of those errors to be corrected. Figure 3 shows the percentages of respondents choosing the option of *always* in each item.
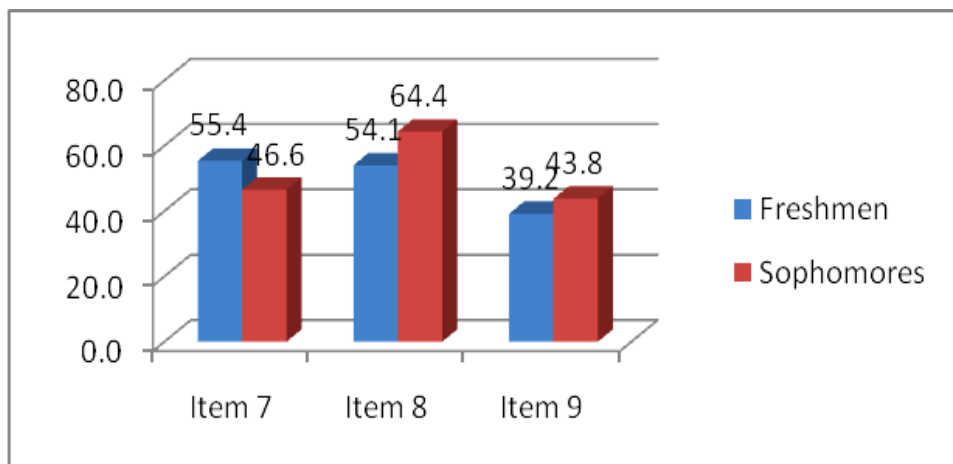
Figure 3 Students' Feedback Preferences for Grammatical, Phonological, and Lexical Errors

Figure 3 shows that there is a tendency for the freshmen to prefer grammatical errors (Item Number 7) to always be corrected because it was rated always by the highest percentage of respondents (55.4%). This freshmen's preference was followed by being corrected on phonological errors (Item Number 8) and lexical errors (Item Number 9). In contrast, for the

sophomores, there is a tendency to prefer to always be corrected on the phonological errors (Item Number 8), as indicated by the highest percentage (64.4%) of the respondents, choosing the option *always*, respectively, followed by preferences for correction on grammatical errors (Item Number 7) and lexical ones (Item Number 9).
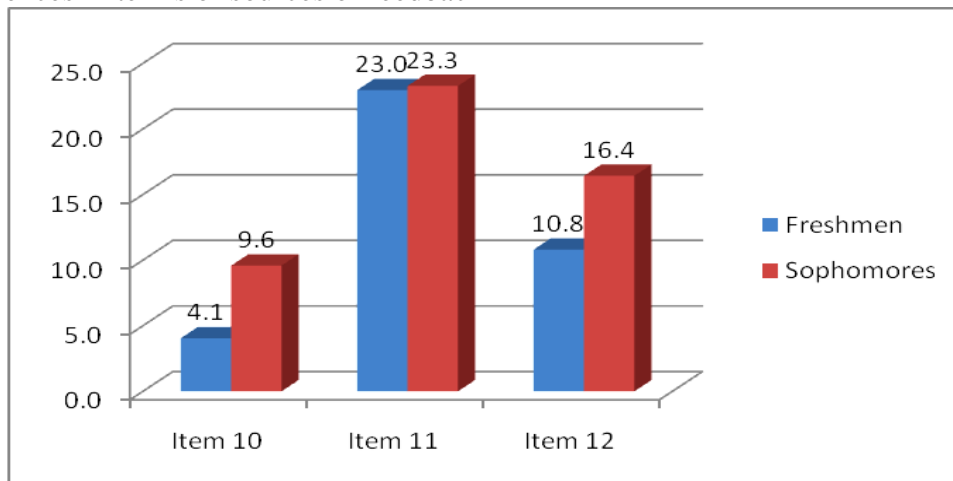
Timing of Correction

There are two options about when to treat the errors: immediate correction, that is, giving correction as soon as the errors are made although it might interrupt the speaking activity (Questionnaire Item Number 10), and delayed correction, that is, providing correction after the student finishes the speaking activity (Ques-tionnaire Item Number 11) or before the teacher ends the class (Questionnaire Item Number 12). Figure 4 shows the percentages of the students choosing the option *strongly agree* in each item.

As shown in Figure 4, out of the three choices about timing of correction, the biggest percentage of freshman (23.0%) and sophomores (23.3%) strongly agreed to get feedback provided after they finish the speaking activity. Immediate feed-back has the lowest percentage of agreement. In the interview, the inter-viewees asserted that immediate feedback appeared to bother their concentration as they tended to forget what they would say when they are being interrupted.
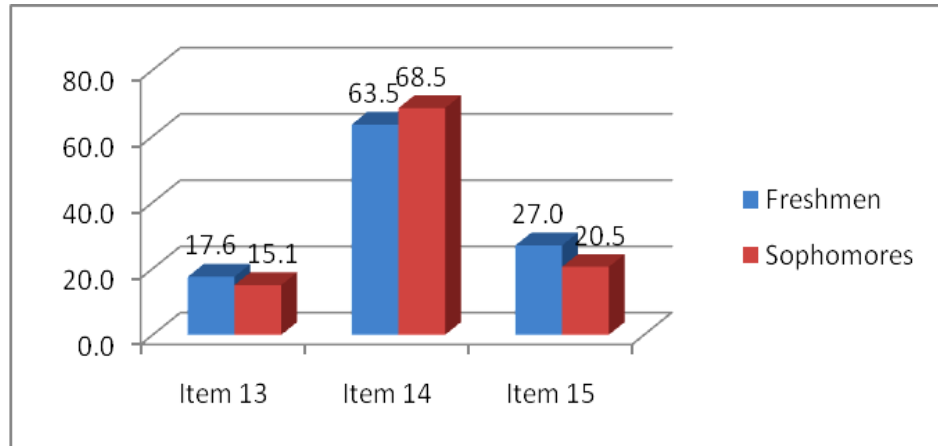
Sources of Correction

This aspect aims to know how the students value correction from peers (Questionnaire Item Number 13), teachers (Questionnaire Item Number 14), or the students who make the errors themselves (Questionnaire Item Number 15). Figure 5 reflects the students' preferences in terms of sources of feedback

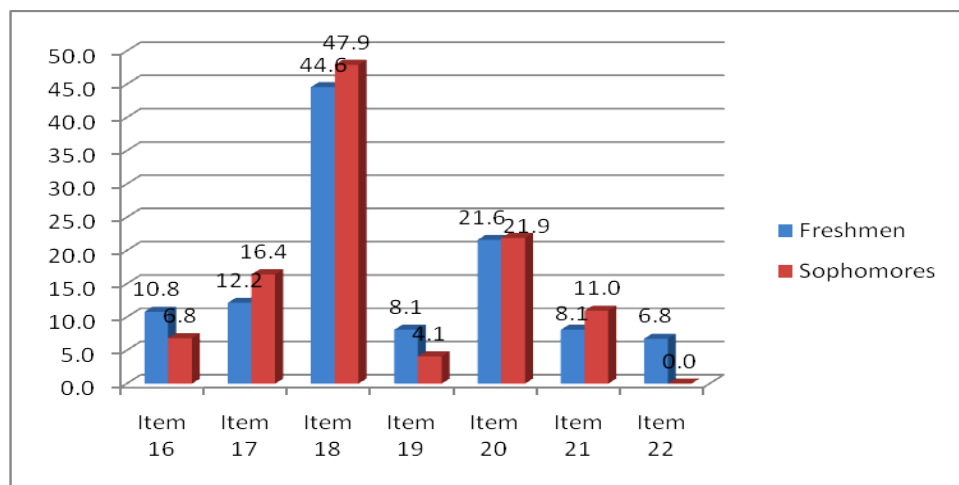**Figure 4 Students' Preferences on the Timing of Correction**

Figure 5 indicates a clear tendency that the two groups prefer to be corrected by teachers as shown by the highest percentages of both the freshmen (63.5%) and the sophomores (68.5%). This preference of teacher feedback is followed respectively by self-correction and peer-correction.

Figure 5 Students' Preferences on Sources of Feedback

Types of Corrective Feedback

In this present study, the types of corrective feedback are specified into the types of errors, namely grammar, phonology, and lexis. The students' preferences for the types of corrective feedback regarding grammatical errors are displayed in Figure 6. The feedback types include clarification request (Questionnaire Item Number 16), repetition (Questionnaire Item Number 17), explicit feedback (Questionnaire Item Number 18), elicitation (Questionnaire Item Number 19), metalinguistic (Questionnaire Item Number 20), recast (Questionnaire Item Number 21), and paralinguistic signal (Questionnaire Item Number 22).

Figure 6 Students' Preferences on Types of Feedback on Grammatical Errors

Based on the percentage of students' rating of the very effective feedback, it is obvious that the most preferred feedback for grammatical errors perceived by the freshmen and sophomores is explicit feedback, more specifically, it was rated very effective by 44.6% of the freshmen and 47.9% of the sophomores. The lowest percentage rated paralinguistic signal very effective.

The result of Mann-Whithey U test shows that the sig. value for Item Number 16 is .034 and Item Number 22 is .001, indicating that there is a significant difference between the freshmen and sophomores in perceiving clarification request and paralinguistic signals to treat grammatical errors. The mean rank of these two types of feedback from the freshmen is higher than that found in sophomores, suggesting that the freshmen preferred both types of feedback.

Another aspect being studied refers to the students' preferences for corrective feedback on phonological errors, as displayed in Figure 7.
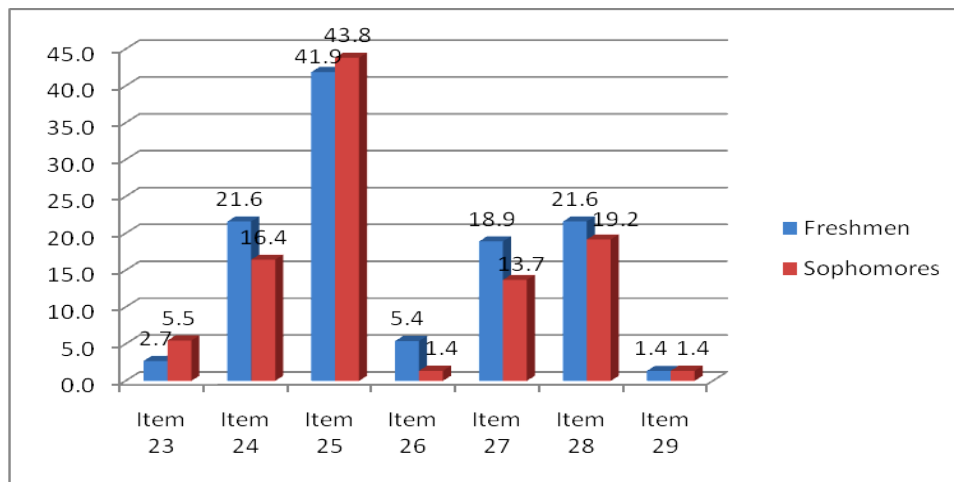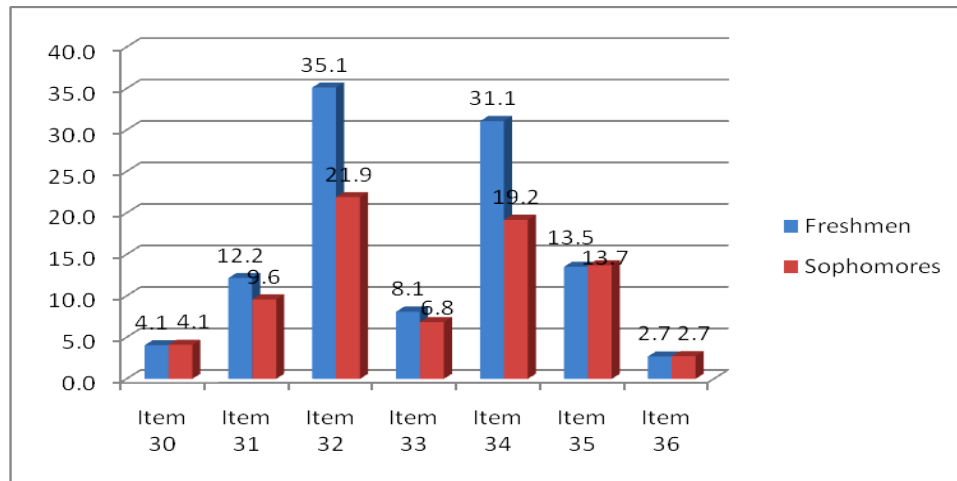

Figure 7 Students' Preferences on Types of Feedback on Phonological Errors

The same as those for grammatical errors, the feedback types for phonological errors include clarification request (Questionnaire Item Number 23), repetition (Questionnaire Item Number 24), explicit feedback (Questionnaire Item Number 25), elicitation (Ques-tionnaire Item Number 26), metalinguistic (Questionnaire Item Number 27), recast (Questionnaire Item Number 28), and paralinguistic signal (Questionnaire Item Number 29). Figure 7 reveals that explicit feedback was perceived as the most preferred, indicated by the highest percentage of the freshmen (41.9%) and that of the sophomores (43.8%), whereas paralinguistic signal was considered the least preferred.

As for lexical errors, the students' preference for corrective feedback can be seen in Figure 8. The feedback types include clarification request (Ques-tionnaire Item Number 30), repetition (Questionnaire Item Number 31), explicit feedback (Questionnaire Item Number 32), elicitation (Questionnaire Item Number 33), metalinguistic (Question-naire Item Number 34), recast (Questionnaire Item Number 35), and paralinguistic signal (Questionnaire Item Number 36).

Figure 8 Students' Preferences on Types of Feedback on Lexical Errors

As displayed in Figure 8, the highest percentage of the freshmen (35.1%) and sophomores (21.9%) reflects preferences on explicit feedback on lexical errors, whereas the least percentage refers to paralinguistic signal. Such preferences are in line with those of grammatical and phonological errors.

Based on those limited data, it could be inferred that the students, regardless of their different levels of Speaking courses, preferred teachers to overtly indicate their errors, no matter whether the feedback is given in response to grammatical, phonological, or lexical errors.

DISCUSSION

The discussion is organized based on the five aspects under investigation, presented as research results in the previous section.

Perceptions of Corrective Feedback in Speaking Instruction

The findings of this study corroborate that the students' willingness to receive corrective feedback seems to be indisputable. It is reported that the students' willingness to receive corrective feedback is more than the teachers' wish to supply the feedback (Park, 2010). Based on the results of the interview, it turns out that the underlying reason behind the students' willingness to receive corrective feedback is the benefit offered by corrective feedback which could assist the students to notice their errors. Further, the instructional practice might also play a role in affecting the students' willingness to receive corrective feedback. In the interview, all the interviewees affirmed that they are used to receiving corrective feedback when they produce incorrect utterances. They, thereby, have been accustomed to the feedback.

As indicated by the results of inferential statistics, there is a significant difference between the two groups surveyed. The sophomores seemingly wanted to be corrected more thoroughly. It, therefore, could be safely deduced that the higher the students level, the more concerned they are with the accuracy of their utterance. This phenomenon might be attributed to the students' different levels of exposure in which the sophomores had gone through several Speaking courses, namely Speaking I course and Speaking II course.

Corrective feedback could make the students feel embarrassed, annoyed, and inferior (Truscott, 1999). The findings of this present study reveal that such thought is true. Some students felt embarrassed when their errors are being corrected. It possibly arises because the students have committed errors in producing the language that ultimately causes them to be corrected. However, it should be noted that feeling embarrassed does not directly mean that the students do not want to be corrected.

In response to the role of corrective feedback, the provision of corrective feedback supposedly could boost the students' awareness of their errors. This is related to the idea of noticing a gap in which corrective feedback could assist the students to notice the discrepancy between their interlanguage and the target language (Kim, 2004; Li, 2010; Sheen and Ellis, 2011). This idea is in line with the results of the interview.

Types of Errors to be Corrected

Excessive corrective feedback could reduce the students' motivation to learn and discourage them from participating in the classroom because they will not say anything unless they believe that they have correct utterances to produce (Martinez, 2006). Thus, teachers should be selective in choosing which errors to correct. However, the findings of this study reveal that there is a clear tendency for the freshmen and sophomores surveyed to prefer all their errors to be corrected, no matter whether or not it affects the meaning of the utterance.

The preference for correcting all errors might be related to the essence of corrective feedback which could boost the students' language awareness. This idea is in line with the results of the interview in which the students asserted that they want the teacher to correct all errors because it helps them to know their errors so that they do not repeat the same things in the future. Although the students wanted all errors to be corrected, certain domains need to be given more emphasis. In this case, grammar and phonology are perceived as more essential so that errors in these two domains should always be corrected.

Timing of Correction

The findings of this study indicate that correction timing preferred by the freshmen and sophomores is delayed until they finish speaking. It corroborates the findings of the research by Park (2010) and Tomczyk (2013). Delayed feedback allows the students to finish the message they want to convey. It, thus, does not disturb the flow of conversation. This might be the plausible reason why the students preferred delayed feedback. Although the students preferred to be given delayed feedback, they disliked if it is given before the teacher ends the class. In the interview, the interviewees stated that it is too long to wait until the class ended. They could have forgotten what they have uttered.

Sources of Correction

The correction could come from teachers, peers, or students who make the errors. Yet, the findings of this study reveal that among the three sources of correction, teachers are the most preferred correctors as perceived by two groups of students.

Zacharias (2007) in her research comparing Indonesian teachers' and students' attitude toward teacher-correction found that that there were several assumptions which make teacher-correction is favored by most Indonesian students. The assumptions are that teachers are regarded more competent, which makes their feedback more valid and reliable, and

teachers are the source of knowledge, which makes them the right and authoritative figures in the Speaking Instruction. In a nutshell, what causes Indonesian students' preference for teacher-correction is the strikingly different levels of competence between the teachers and the students.

The freshman and sophomores' preference for teacher-correction is followed by self-correction and peer-correction. "Self-correction seems to be preferred to correction provided by others because it is face-saving (Mendez and Cruz, 2012)." It might have to do with the efforts that the students make to repair their own errors.

Regarding peer-correction, the stu-dents may be doubtful of his/her friend's ability that makes them deliberately ignore their friend's feedback (Philp, Walter, and Basturkmen, cited in Lyster et al, 2013). This idea coincides with the result of the interview. Some of the interviewees in this study said that it is fine to be corrected by their peers, as long they are more superior. Thus, the students' preference for peers-correction seemingly could be influenced by who provide the correction.

Types of Corrective Feedback

There are many types of corrective feedback which could be used by teachers to respond to the errors. However, teachers should be very careful in choosing which feedback to use. As found by Agudo (2013) in his study, students could be worried if they do not understand the feedback.

The students' preference for the type of corrective feedback might be influenced by how they perceive the effectiveness of the feedback (Abukha-drah, 2012), in which the effectiveness is influenced by the quality of the feedback covering "consistency, accuracy, and comprehensibility" (Lee, 2008).

Further, the types of error could significantly affect the choice of feedback (Lyster and Saito, 2010). Nonetheless, the findings of this study suggest that the freshmen and sophomores preferred to be corrected using explicit feedback, no matter whether it is used to respond to grammatical, phonological, or lexical errors. Explicit feedback as the most favored type of feedback involves obvious statements from the teacher that the students have produced an incorrect utterance followed by the correct form of the utterance. Thus, the error and the correct form are overtly contrasted, which makes it more comprehensible. In spite of the comprehensibility offered by explicit feedback, it does not provide a chance for students to repair their errors because it already provides the correct form.

Another appealing finding from this study is that both of the groups surveyed ranked the paralinguistic signal as the least favored type of feedback to respond to all types of error. It might be attributed to the vagueness of nonverbal language such as gestures or facial expressions. Even though paralinguistic signal provides a chance for the students to correct their errors, it might be hard for them to identify what is wrong with their utterance since the corrector only signals the errors by using a gesture or facial expression. Besides, this type of feedback does not provide a cue to help the students to self-correct, which ultimately makes them unable to self-correct.

Although there is a difference between the freshmen and sophomores in the orders of preferences for types of corrective feedback for grammatical and phonological errors, many of them are not statistically significant, except clarification request and paralinguistic signals for grammatical errors.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the students' willingness to receive corrective feedback and the role of corrective feedback seem to be unquestionable. Although some of the freshmen and sophomores are embarrassed when they are being orally corrected, it does not influence their willingness to receive correction when they are making errors. In addition, neither freshmen nor sophomores differ in the ways they perceive all errors to be corrected. Yet, certain domains, that is, grammar and phonology need to be given more emphasis. In terms of timing of correction, the freshmen and sophomores prefer delayed-feedback, provided after they finish the speaking activity. The most preferred correction is one which is delivered by the teachers. Finally, regardless of different Speaking course levels and types of error, explicit feedback was perceived as the most preferred corrective feedback, whereas paralinguistic signals were the least favored ones.

SUGGESTIONS

Some suggestions are addressed to Speaking lecturers and future researchers. For Speaking lecturers, they are expected to provide corrective feedback when the students commit errors considering that most of the students want their errors to be corrected. Furthermore, it is essential to accommodate the students' preferences in the teaching practices because the students' preferences could affect the way they acquire the target language. For future researchers, they could probe the students' preferences by utilizing a qualitative approach in order to yield a richer data. Further research could also be directed to compare between the students' preferences and the teacher's classroom practice, or compare the students' preferences across different proficiency levels or ages.

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