*THE JOURNAL OF ASIA TEFL* Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 45-72, Autumn 2009

# *Corrective Feedback and Learner Uptake in Primary School EFL Classrooms in China*

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This article examined the classroom interaction of two teachers and their pupils (36 Grade 5 and 35 Grade 6) in 26 lessons (totalling 15.2 hours) to investigate the way in which these teachers spontaneously attended to form, and to determine the extent to which these Chinese young learners could and did subsequently demonstrate uptake in their production. In addition, individual interviews (approximately 8 hours) with both teachers and learners were carried out to assist interpreting lesson transcripts in relation to corrective feedback and learner uptake. The results suggest that both teachers often take advantage of corrective feedback, creating opportunities for learners to correct errors, and learners are capable of correcting errors after a prompt. Such attention to form that provides learners with an opportunity to negotiate of form or meaning can potentially benefit L2 learning. This article concludes with implications for pedagogy, research and teacher professional development that are made based upon these findings.

**Key words: corrective feedback, learner uptake, EFL classroom, focus-on-form instruction**

## INTRODUCTION

According to Ellis, Basturk, and Loewen (2001), the term of focus-on-form is used to refer to any planned or incidental instructional activity to

draw learner's attention to linguistic forms in a meaning-focused lesson (see also p. 37, for the definition). Pedagogically, corrective feedback is an important component of focus-on-form instruction, referring to a teacher's response to learner errors (see also p. 38, for the definition). The surge of research in the area of focus-on-form instruction over the past two decades can be attributed to several factors. One has been theoretical realization that the importance of corrective feedback claimed by White (1987), who suggests that what is necessary for second language (L2, henceforth) learning is not comprehensible input, but incomprehensible input. She argues that incomprehensible input (i.e., corrective feedback) that pushes learners to modify their output is the impetus for learners to recognize the insufficiency of their inter-language. Additionally, some researchers suggest that comprehensible input alone is not sufficient for successful L2 learning (Allen *et al.*, 1990), and comprehensible output is also required (Swain, 1985).

Different L2 learning hypotheses have put 'corrective feedback' at the center stage as a facilitator of L2 learning. For example, the interaction hypothesis (Long, 1996) posits that interaction which pushes learners to modify their output in response to corrective feedback may facilitate L2 learning, as this type of interaction brings together corrective feedback, learner capacities, and learner output. Learner output is often termed learner uptake in focus-on-form studies (see also p. 39, for the definition of uptake). The interaction hypothesis has served as a major theoretical framework for empirical studies on focus-on-form over the last 20 years or so. Noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990, 1995) suggests that corrective feedback helps learners to notice the gap between inter-language and target forms. Corrective feedback that provides learners with an opportunity to correct the errors can not only help learners to notice errors in the production, but also potentially push learners to produce comprehensible output (Schmidt, 1990; Swain, 1985). As a result, corrective feedback has been considered as a way of drawing learners' attention to notice the discrepancy between their inter-language and the target forms (Schmidt, 1990); uptake has been considered as evidence that learners notice the form (Lightbown, 2000). According to

Swain's (1985) output hypothesis, learner's output and teacher's consistent corrective feedback is necessary for L2 learning.

In addition to these theoretical perspectives, the realization of focus-on-form research has also been accompanied by empirical prominence. Focus-on-form has recently gained attention in studies across various L2 education contexts (e.g., Carroll & Swain, 1993; Ellis *et al.,* 2001; Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Questions have been raised regarding the role that focus-on-form instruction plays in L2 learning. A number of researchers have looked specifically into its nature and role in L2 teaching and learning (e.g., Doughty & Varela, 1998; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Oliver, 2000). Some studies have examined the differential effects of explicit and implicit focus-on-form instruction on learning (e.g., Carroll & Swain, 1993; Ellis *et al.,* 2006), with some general finding that explicit instruction is more effective than implicit instruction (see, also, Norris & Ortega, 2000, 2001). Some researchers have provided important insights into the role of focus-on-form in L2 learning (e.g., Long *et al.*, 1998; Mackey & Philp, 1998; McDonough, 2005). The majority of the studies have demonstrated that focus-on-form instruction that provides learners with an opportunity to modify their output plays a positive part in L2 learning.

## Defining 'focus-on-form'

Long (Long, 1991; Long *et al.,* 1998) has proposed that instructional options can be of three types, depending on whether the focus is on meaning, forms or an integration of both meaning and forms. Meaning-focused instruction encompasses communicative tasks and activities in which the primary goal is language use (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). However, form-focused instruction involves "any pedagogical effort to draw learners' attention to language either implicitly or explicitly" (Spada, 1997, p. 73). Form-focused instruction has been further divided into a focus-on-formS and a focus-on-form (Long, 1991, 1996). Focus-on-formS is defined as instruction in which syllabi and lessons are based on linguistic items, and participants are

primarily concerned with linguistic items (Long, 1991).

## Defining 'corrective feedback'

Teachers' responses to an error are also known as corrective feedback. Corrective feedback refers to a teacher's utterance that identifies a learner error and provides feedback in response to the error (Schachter, 1991). Ellis *et al.* (2006) offer a more comprehensible definition of corrective feedback:

> Corrective feedback takes the form of teacher's responses to learner utterances that contain an error. The responses can consist of (a) an indication that an error has been committed, (b) provision of the correct target language form, or (c) metalinguistic information about the nature of the error, or any combination of these (Ellis *et al.,* 2006, p. 340).

To explore focus-on-form instruction in content-based context, Lyster and Ranta (1997) have identified different types of corrective feedback that French immersion classroom teachers provided when an error arose in their lessons. The category includes explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation and repetition. Corrective feedback differs in terms of whether it is explicit or implicit in nature. Explicit feedback involves an overt indicator of a committed error; whereas in implicit feedback types, there is no overt indicator of a committed error. Implicit feedback often takes the form of recasts. According to Long (2007, p. 2).

> recasts refers to a reformulation of all or part of a learner's immediately preceding utterance in which one or more non-target like (lexical, grammatical etc.) items are replaced by the corresponding target language form(s), and where, throughout the exchange, the focus of the interlocutors is on meaning not language as an object.

Explicit feedback can take two forms: explicit feedback and metalinguistic feedback. Explicit feedback refers to a teacher's response clearly indicating

that what a learner said is incorrect (e.g., "No, not doed—did.") and thus affords both positive and negative evidence (Ellis *et al*., 2006). Lyster and Ranta (1997, p. 47) define metalinguistic feedback as "comments, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of the learner's utterance" (e.g., "You need present tense."), which affords only, negative evidence.

## Defining 'uptake'

Another key construct in the research is 'uptake' which has been examined in a substantial number of studies (e.g., Carroll & Swain, 1993; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Lyster, 1998). Uptake has been used with two different meanings. Slimani (1992:197) has defined uptake as "what learners claim to have learned from a particular lesson" (see also Allwright, 1984). Lyster, however, uses uptake to refer to learners' response to teacher's corrective feedback on the error they made.

Lyster and Ranta define uptake as

> A student's utterance that immediately follows the teacher's feedback and that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher's intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student's initial utterance (Lyster & Ranta, 1997, p. 49).

In this study, learner uptake is used to describe learners' immediate responses to teachers' corrective feedback on learner errors in lessons. Uptake is considered successful when it demonstrates that a learner has understood the linguistic form or has corrected the error. On the other hand, uptake is considered unsuccessful when a learner fails to demonstrate the command of the feature (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Successful uptake is also known as repair, referring to "the correct reformulation of an error as uttered in a single turn and not to the sequence of turns resulting in the correct reformulation; nor does it refer to self-initiated repair" (Lyster & Ranta, 1997, p. 49); unsuccessful uptake is also known as needs-repair (Ellis *et al.,* 2001; Lyster & Ranta, 1997), referring to uptake that results in an utterance that is

still in need of repair.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Questions

1. What are the types of corrective feedback? What is the distribution of each corrective feedback type?
2. What is learner's production of learner uptake?
3. To what extent are corrective feedback related to learner uptake?

### Methods

Within a case study framework, I employed two specific data collection methods: non-participant observation and semi-structured interview. To record the whole class interaction, a digital audio-recorder was used in each class. Teachers were informed that the purpose of the study was to examine classroom interaction during EFL lessons. However, they were not made known of the precise focus of the study. Teachers were asked to act as they normally did during their lessons. I did not instruct the two teachers to use any particular types of corrective feedback nor to focus on any particular kinds of error. I asked them to continue with their usual way of teaching as I observed and audio-taped; they knew only that I was interested in recording classroom interaction. The students knew that they were being recorded, but in order to minimize any anxiety they were not asked to hold a microphone or to speak deliberately in the direction of the tape recorder. It was hoped that the recordings would thereby capture the most 'normal' classroom interaction. I audio-recorded lessons and made handwritten field notes of my observations whilst the tape was recording. This enabled me to record visual data that might otherwise be lost if I relied on the audiotape alone.

In addition, I interviewed both teachers and pupils individually to gain

understanding of the practice of focus-on-form in their English lessons. Two interviews with teachers were carried out in their offices; the remaining four were undertaken in some restaurants, where I invited them individually for a meal to establish a rapport. There were in total six interviews from both teachers, each of which lasted from 40-60 minutes. The first time interview was based on an interview guide, which was developed from my research questions and teacher educational and teaching background. The remaining interviews were based on the observation data that I collected, aiming to explore the teachers' perception of a particular situation in depth. Interviews with individual pupils were carried out during a short playground break, each of which lasted about 10 minutes. Due to constraint of time, I only chose eight pupils from each class. Two or three pupils were selected from each level (i.e. top, average, and below average, as suggested by the teachers). I interviewed them in Chinese, since I speculated speaking in English might make them frustrated in the course of interviewing. I routinely began by getting out my tape-recorder, re-asking their permission to record and re-explaining issues of confidentiality and anonymity. Views from interviews with the participating teachers were used to corroborate observational data.

## Participants

This study was carried out in China, where English as a foreign language instruction was provided to all school children from Grade 3 (some school starts from Grade 1) to the end of secondary school. This instruction, in accordance with guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education of China, tends not to focus on formal aspects of language other than vocabulary. A primary school in Zhejiang, China, was selected as a site for data collection. All the teachers and learners shared the same first language (L1) – Chinese. Two female teachers and 71 pupils participated in the study. Both teachers were selected on the basis of their willingness to have their lessons observed and audio-recorded. One of these classes was Grade 5 (class one), and the other was Grade 6 (class two). Each class has 36 and 35 pupils respectively.

All pupils from each class shared the amount and type of prior exposure to English (start from Grade 1). Participant pupils aged 11-13. Teacher one, who was in charge of Grade 5, had been teaching full-time at the primary school for 2.5 years. She had a college degree. Teacher two, who was currently pursuing her master's degree, had been teaching English full-time in that school for 12.5 years.

## Database

Transcripts of observation data; field notes of lesson observation made during the process; transcripts of interviews with individual teachers, conducted on each of three occasions- near the beginning, in the middle of and near the end of the fieldwork; recordings of interviews with individual pupils about their perceptions of focus-on-form instruction in their classes constituted the database of the study. For both data sets (i.e. the two classes) audio-recordings were made during normal class times and under normal class conditions. Table 1 summarizes the data sources.

**TABLE 1**
**Overview of Database**

| Data sources for analysis |
| --- |
| Classroom observation: approximately 15 hours |
| C1: field notes & transcripts of 13 class observations |
| C2: field notes & transcripts of 13 class observations |
| Teacher interviews: approximately 4 hours |
| CT1: field notes & transcripts of 3 interviews |
| CT2: field notes & transcripts of 3 interviews |
| Student interviews: approximately 4 hours |
| C1 Pupils: field notes & transcripts of 8 interviews from 8 pupils |
| C2 Pupils: field notes & transcripts of 8 interviews from 8 pupils |

*Note: CT1=class teacher one; CT2=class teacher two; C1=Class one; C2=Class two

A total of 34 lessons (16 and 18 respectively) were observed over 10-week period for each of the two classes. I was present during all observations as a non-participant observer, and the lessons were audio-recorded. A total of

database comprised approximately 20 hours of audio-recorded classroom talk. However, within these lessons, there were some that did not focus on instruction delivery, which did not involve teacher-student interaction. As a result, 4.8 hours of data was excluded from the analysis, leaving a total of 15.2 hours (26 lessons) of communicative activities that were evenly divided between the two classes (13 lessons each class). All six (three each) interviews with two teachers and 16 interviews with individual pupils, were transcribed verbatim.

### Data Analysis

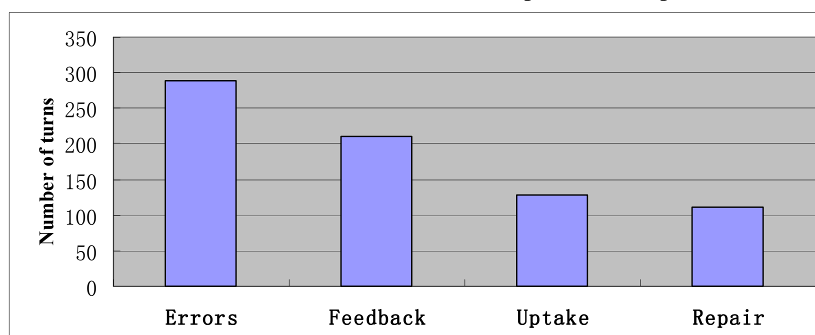
The study examined classroom discourse between the teacher and learners, focusing on corrective feedback in relation to learner uptake. When an error occurred, the next turn after the error was examined to determine whether the error was responded, or whether it was ignored; if the former, the turn was examined and coded according to corrective feedback category; then, the turn after teacher feedback was identified and coded according to whether or not the learner made use of the feedback (i.e. uptake); learner uptake includes either (a) utterances still in need of repair (needs-repair) or (b) utterances with repair (repair). One point I need to reiterate here, learner uptake in this study refers to the response of corrective feedback in a single student turn. The coding process consisted of first identifying which of the learner's utterances containing errors. Teacher responses to learner errors were then coded according to whether or not they provided corrective feedback. Finally, learner responses to corrective feedback with opportunity to uptake were coded based on whether or not such reformulation was correct.

## RESULTS

The analysis of classroom observation data from 26 lessons (13 lessons from each class) yielded a total of 2,690 student turns and 2,112 teacher turns respectively. The database was composed of a total of 288 of all students

turns contained at least one error (n=270) or were still in need of repair (n=18). Of these, 210 immediately received some kinds of corrective feedback from the teachers, with the remaining errors (n=78) being ignored. Of all teacher feedback in response to learner errors, 129 resulted in learner uptake; 111 of which were repaired within the error treatment sequence. The totals for the database from each classroom are illustrated by Figure 1: the number of pupil turns containing errors, the number of teacher turns with corrective feedback, the number of pupil turns with uptake and the number of pupil turns with repair. Figure 1 illustrates learner errors, corrective feedback, uptake and repair that occurred.

**FIGURE 1**
**Total Turns with Errors, Feedback, Uptake and Repair**




## Types and Distribution of Corrective Feedback

Evidence indicates that both teachers extensively employed corrective feedback to attend to learner errors in EFL lessons. The evidence shows that 210 out of a total of 288 errors were responded with corrective feedback. The examples from the transcribed data illustrate clearly that the two teachers attended to learner errors in their classrooms with various corrective feedback strategies. As mentioned previously, Lyster and Ranta (1997) have identified six different types of feedback that French immersion teachers employed when attending to learner errors in French immersion classes. In this study,

participant teachers' responses to learner errors were coded in accordance with Lyster and Ranta's (1997) categories. The analysis of observation data has identified five corrective feedback types (i.e. explicit correction, recasts, elicitation, clarification requests and repetition) other than metalinguistic feedback that were defined by Lyster and Ranta (1997). Meanwhile, the analysis yielded some other strategies that did not fit Lyster and Ranta's categories, including invitation to other learners; repetition requests; use of L1. In attempt to demonstrate the coding system that is used, eight (i.e., one example from each feedback category) illustrative extracts from classroom observation data are provided below.

1) Recasts: teacher implicitly reformulates all or part of the learner's utterance; e.g.,

| Line | TRANSCRIPT | Annotation |
|---|---|---|
| 348. | P1: … *On the afternoon** | A learner error |
| 349. | T: In the afternoon. | Recasts |
| 350. | P1: In the afternoon, xx played football with his friends. | Uptake (repair) |

Source: [B5:348-350]

2) Repetition: teacher repeats an error, adjusting intonation to highlight it; e.g.,

| Line | Transcripts | Annotation |
|---|---|---|
| 205. | P6: *I was very grateful to the him* | A learner error |
| 206. | T: To the HIM? | Repetition |
| 207. | P6: The dog. | Uptake (repair) |

Source: [B6:205-207]

3) Elicitation: teacher directly elicits a reformulation from students by asking questions or by pausing to allow students to complete teacher's utterance, or by asking students to reformulate their utterance; e.g.,

| Line | Transcripts | Annotation |
|---|---|---|
| 25. | P24: … *I go to school at by car* | A learner error |
| 26. | T: Say it again. | Elicitation |
| 27. | I go to school at 07:30. I by car. | Uptake (needs-repair) |

Source: [A7: 25-28]

4) Explicit correction: teacher supplies the correct form and clearly indicates that what the student had said was incorrect; e.g.,

| Line | Transcription | Annotation |
|---|---|---|
| 354. | P18: *On the Sunday, Wuyifan** | A learner error |
| 355. | T: Not on the Sunday, on Sunday | Explicit correction |
| 356. | P18: On Sunday, wuyifan played football with his friends. | Uptake (repair) |

Source: [A5: 354-356]

5) Clarification requests: teacher uses phrases such as 'pardon'? e.g.,

| Line | Transcripts | Annotation |
|---|---|---|
| 136. | P5: *You go camping last weekend.* | A learner error |
| 137. | T: Pardon? | Clarification requests |
| 138. | P5: Go camping? | Uptake (needs-repair) |

Source: [B4: 136-138]

6) Invitation to other learners: teacher invites another pupil to correct the nominated pupil's error, such as *"who will try?"* e.g.,

| Line | Transcripts | Annotation |
|---|---|---|
| 35. | P24: *… I read a books at ** | A learner error |
| 36. | T: Stop, who will try? | Invitation to other learners |
| 37. | P10: I read books… | Uptake (repair) |

Source: [B7:35-37]

7) Repetition requests: teacher ask pupils to read after her when an error (generally a phonological error) occur, such as *"read after me"* e.g.,

| Line | Transcripts | Annotation |
|---|---|---|
| 137. | Ps: *Tongue twisters** | A learner error (students did not pronounce correctly) |
| 138. | T: Tongue twisters. Read after me. Tongue twisters… | Repetition requests |
| 139. | Ps: Tongue twisters… | Uptake (repair) |

Source: [B6:137-139]

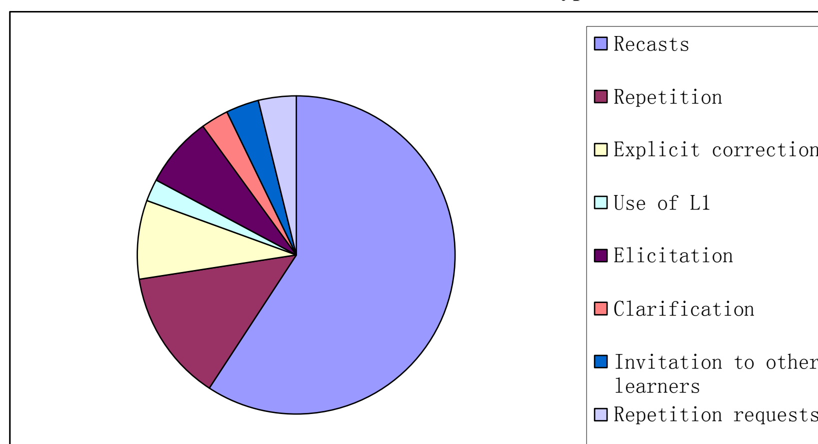
8) Use of L1: teacher use pupils' L1 (Chinese) to explain the error; e.g.,

| Line | Transcripts | Annotation |
|---|---|---|
| 35. | P32: … *I eat breakfast at 6:30 o'clock* * | A learner error |
| 36. | T: 注意，这里不能用O'CLOCK. 大家记住，我们可以说6 o'clock, 或者7 o'clock, 但是我们不可以说 half past six o'clock，明白吗? | Use of L1 |
| 37. | P32: I go to school at 7 o'clock. I eat lunch at half past eleven… | Uptake (repair) |

Source: [A6:35-37]

Participant teacher's turns with corrective feedback in response to learner errors were coded in accordance with the above coding categories. The distribution of different feedback types are displayed for each teacher in Figure 2.

**FIGURE 2**
**The Distribution of Feedback Types**




Note: Recasts=124 (59%); Repetition=28 (13.3%); Explicit correction= 17 (8%); Use of L1=5 (2.4%); Elicitation=15 (7.1%); Clarification=6 (2.9%); Invitation to other learners=7 (3.3%); Repetition requests=8 (3.8%).

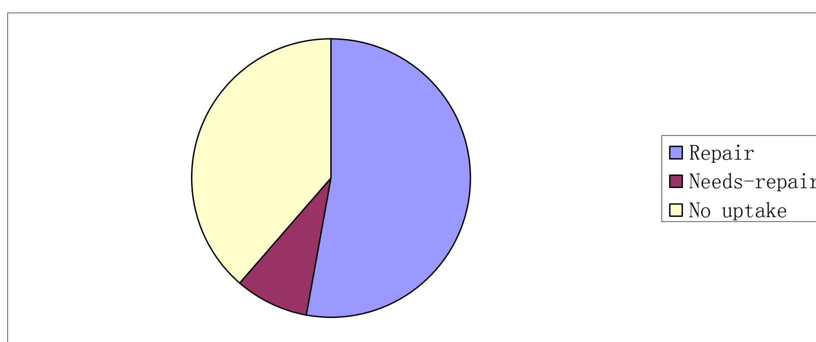
As shown in Figure 2, both teachers utilized a variety of corrective feedback strategies to attend to learner's errors in their EFL lessons.

Evidence showed that participant teachers were engaged with feedback to attend to learner errors in their lessons. The results indicate that participant teachers clearly displayed a preference for recasts over other feedback strategies to respond to learner errors; however, neither of them frequently used clarification requests, repetition requests or use of L1 as a feedback strategy (see Figure 2 for details).

## The Distribution of Learner Uptake

The second research question was therefore concerned with learner's responses following corrective feedback. An interesting finding regarding learner's use of corrective feedback suggested that more than 50% of teachers' corrective feedback were followed by learner's responses (see Figure 3 for details), implying that learners were often capable of modifying their output when they were given a chance to do so.

**FIGURE 3**
**Learner's Responses to Feedback**




Note: Repair=111 (53%); Needs-repair=18 (9%); No uptake=81 (38%).

## Teacher's Corrective Feedback and Learner's Uptake

Table 2 tabulated to show corrective feedback in relation to learner uptake

summarises the frequency of corrective feedback and of which is followed by repair, needs-repair or no uptake. Table 2 indicates that corrective feedback in the form of repetition requests, invitation to other learners and clarification requests appeared to be the most successful techniques for eliciting learner uptake. All corrective feedback turns containing repetition requests or invitation to other learners led to learner repair. As for clarification requests, even though uptake was high at 100%, learner repair occurred in 50% of the students' responses to clarification requests. However, this finding should be interpreted with caution due to their rarity.

Looking at Table 2, we can see that repetition, elicitation and use of L1 appeared to achieve learner's uptake of errors and were generally successful at encouraging learners to repair. Approximately 80% of the feedback turns with repetition, elicitation and use of L1 led to learner successful uptake (i.e. repair). In terms of the feedback strategy used in L1, learners corrected all errors that were responded by feedback in L1, when they were given an opportunity to uptake. Again, this finding should also be interpreted with caution due to the low occurrence of use of L1 as a strategy in the database.

**TABLE 2**
**Distribution of Learner Responses across Feedback Types**

Count

| | | learner responses | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | repair | needs-repair | no uptake |
| feedback types | recasts (n=124) | 50 (40%) | 7 (6%) | 67 (54%) |
| | repetition (n=28) | 22 (79%) | 5 (18%) | 1 (4%) |
| | explicit correction (n=17) | 5 (29%) | 1 (6%) | 11 (65%) |
| | elicitation (n=15) | 12 (80%) | 2 (13%) | 1 (7%) |
| | repetition requests (n=8) | 8 (100%) | 0 (.0%) | 0 (.0%) |
| | invitation to other learners (n=7) | 7 (100%) | 0 (.0%) | 0 (.0%) |
| | Clarification requests (n=6) | 3 (50%) | 3 (50%) | 0 (.0%) |
| | use of L1 (n=5) | 4 (80%) | 0 (.0%) | 1 (20%) |
| Total | N=210 | 111 (53%) | 18 (9%) | 81 (38%) |

Table 2 also indicates that the rates of repair following explicit correction and recasts were the lowest, at 29% and 40% respectively. Meanwhile, it also reveals that as many as 65% of explicit corrections as well as 54% of recasts eventually led to no uptake from learners. The analysis of classroom recording data indicates that on the 11 occasions when teachers provided explicit correction but then continued their turns without affording the learner an opportunity to correct the error. This may be one of the reasons that explicit correction achieved a low uptake rate. Similar to explicit correction, the low rate of repair following recasts can result from the relatively low number of opportunities that allowed for modification. Teachers do not give an opportunity for learners to modify their production in part because the function of recasts is to reformulate learner errors by implicitly providing the correct form, they do not necessarily require learner's reaction to it (Lyster, 1998a).

## DISCUSSION

### Teacher's Provision of Corrective Feedback

The results implied that the participant teachers strongly preferred to use corrective feedback with recasts. One possible reason for the fact may relate to time pressure, a point claimed by them during interviews. Both teachers explained the time was tight, during which they had to cover all pedagogical requirements, which also concurred with the classroom observations and field notes. The other reason for high use of recasts may relate to embarrassment issue which was in effect inconsistent with their positive viewpoint of learner errors during interview. Neither of them viewed committing errors as face-threatening when participant teachers were asked about their views on learner errors in the interview. For example, CT1 explained she expected learners to make linguistics errors because they gave her signal as whether or not to re-explain the language feature. Nevertheless, when asked about why they

extensively used recasts as feedback, both teachers claimed to be concerned with avoiding embarrassing their learners when giving feedback to learner errors. They considered recasts to be a non-face-threatening corrective feedback technique. Interestingly, all pupils who were interviewed individually revealed that they wished to be corrected when they made an error in class. They considered error correction unproblematic and non-face-losing situation in L2 classroom irrespective of what language proficiency level that individuals possessed. This is not surprising, because some previous studies also reported that majority of second and foreign language learners regarded corrections as essential and want to be corrected regularly (e.g., Havranek, 2002).

Additionally, the students' low proficiency level may account for the high occurrence of recasts in the database. Learner's low proficiency level may not have allowed the teacher to use other corrective feedback types (e.g., clarification requests) that invite greater student participation in negotiating meaning or form. That is, the students' limited linguistic resources may have predisposed the teacher to extensively rely on reformulation techniques, such as recasts. As claimed by Panova and Lyster (2002), learner's low proficiency may contribute to the high predominance of recasts in the classrooms. Evidence that proficiency level may affect teachers' choice of feedback can be also found in Lyster and Ranta's (1997) study. From the perspective of teachers themselves, both of them perhaps are more confident in using recasts when attending to form due to the constraint of language proficiency. As a foreign language learner of English, teachers who may not fully master the target language perhaps have viewed recasts as a suitable strategy for providing exemplars of the target language. Given the constraint of language ability, it is not very surprising to find both teachers frequently used feedback with recasts in the observed lessons.

## Learner's Production of Uptake

As indicated the previous section, when an error occurs, the teacher may provide corrective feedback in response to it, and the feedback may offer the

learner an opportunity to modify the error. Alternatively, the teacher may provide corrective feedback and then continue her turn without offering the learner an opportunity to modify their initial errors. When learners are given an opportunity to modify their errors, corrective feedback may lead to learner uptake. Learner uptake can be considered as successful or unsuccessful. Feedback would lead to learner uptake when learners are given an opportunity to do so; learner uptake can be either repair or needs-repair. On the other hand, feedback would lead to no uptake when the teacher does not provide learners with an opportunity to modify their errors. Results implied that learners were often capable of modifying their output when they were given a chance to do so.

**TABLE 3**
**Phonological Errors Followed By Repetition Requests**

| Line | Transcripts | Annotation |
|---|---|---|
| 15. | P13: …*Your neck is too long*… | Learner errors (neck here sounds like /lek/) |
| 21. | T: Ok, neck | recasts |
| | Neck, read after me. | Repetition requests |
| 22. | Ps: Neck… | Repetition-repair (choral repetition) |

Source: [B12:21]

An interesting finding of the current study related to pupils' choral repetition (see above Example 1) as a response to teacher's corrective feedback. This was a distinctive feature in comparison with others where feedback studies have been undertaken. Given the fact that choral responses were not done on individual basis, it seemed reasonable to claim that choral responses did not suggest that everybody had acquired the particular linguistics feature. It would be argued here, although choral responses were incapable of demonstrating that individuals had produced a correct form, they somewhat demonstrated that the majority of learners had acknowledged and attended to form after a teacher's prompt. As discussed earlier in the literature review chapter (e.g., Lyster & Ranta, 1997), uptake is defined as a learner's utterance that immediately followed the teacher's corrective feedback. In this respect, choral responses were consistent with this

definition; they thus were considered as an evidence of learner uptake in the current study (see the next section for further discussion).

## Corrective Feedback and Learner Uptake

The last research question addressed the issue about to what extent corrective feedback was related to learner uptake. A major finding of this study was, in general, recasts and explicit correction were less effective at inducing learners to uptake than others. The results revealed that explicit correction received the lowest rate of learner uptake, including the lowest rate of learner repair (i.e. successful uptake). Next to explicit correction, recasts received the second lowest rate of learner uptake, even though it was the overwhelmingly preferred feedback in the database. Results from qualitative data analysis suggested both teachers were more likely to immediately continue their turns with another topic when providing corrective feedback with recasts or explicit correction than others (see Table 4).

**TABLE 4**
**Recasts Achieved No Uptake**

| Line | Transcripts | Annotation |
|---|---|---|
| 364. | *P26: Wu yifan visit his grandma on Saturday morning.* | Learner errors |
| 365. | T: Visited. P30, continue, no.2. | Recasts (No opportunity to uptake) |
| 366. | P30: Sunday morning, he played… | Topic continuation |

Source: [B5: 364-366]

By contrast, when providing corrective feedback with other techniques, such as elicitation, teachers often provided an opportunity for an uptake to take place (see Table 5). Panova and Lyster (2002) argue that explicit correction or recasts have provided learners a correction and do not necessarily require learner response. In this study, the teachers who have a tight control over classroom activities in effect determine whether or not provide learners with an opportunity to uptake after attending to form, even

though the nature of explicit correction and recasts may also play a part in the low rate of uptake that results in.

**TABLE 5**
**Elicitation Followed By Repair**

| Line | Transcripts | Annotation |
|---|---|---|
| 117. | *P7: Rowed (/red/)* * | Learner errors |
| 118. | Ps: Rowed a boat | Peer-scaffolding |
| 119. | T: Together | Elicitation |
| 120. | Ps: Rowed a boat | Peer-repair |

Source: [B6:117-120]

In spite of the highest frequency, recasts resulted in a low rate of uptake, occurring with the second lowest next to explicit correction. More specifically, the evidence indicates 54% of recasts received no uptake from learners. This finding can be explained by the evidence that teachers always continued with their turns after reformulating a learner error in lessons. The analysis suggests that corrective feedback in the form of explicit correction was the least likely to receive responses from learners, with 65% of which resulting in no uptake. It is probably because explicit correction, by definition, explicitly supplying the correct form and clearly indicating what the learner has said was incorrect, did not expect learners to provide a reaction to the feedback. Alternatively, this is probably because teachers had a tight control of time that did not allow learners to correct their errors.

The findings that explicit correction and recasts most of time either led to repair or to no uptake at all parallel the findings that were reported in other studies (e.g., Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Apart from recasts, participant teachers tended to use repetition to prompt pupils to correct their errors. Repetition that occurred with the second predominance resulted in a high level of learner uptake, approximately 79% of teacher turns with repetition feedback result in learner successful uptake. This can be explained by the evidence that participant teachers always provided learners an opportunity to correct the error after repeating the error with a rising intonation. This may be teacher’s rising tone, which in some way suggests an utterance containing an error, and

draws learners' attention to it. In addition to repetition, repetition requests, invitation to other learners and clarification requests received a high rate of learner uptake, probably because, these three feedback strategies, by definition, provide learners with an opportunity to attend to feedback.

The analysis of data indicates that some corrective feedback resulted in choral responses. Those choral responses were attributed to the fact that the two participant teachers sometimes chose to draw attention from the whole class rather than individuals. Therefore, in some cases, the whole class rather than individuals were encouraged to produce an uptake. When CT2 was asked in the interview why she sometimes chose to address questions to the individuals, sometimes to the whole class, she revealed that she did it consciously. She would question the whole class when she realized other learners may also make the same error as the nominated pupil did; on the other hand, if her knowledge told her most others may have acquired the form, she would then paid attention to the error initiator rather than the whole class (TB3: 139). The culture in the current study is different from other studies where feedback studies have been undertaken. This study took place in China where English teachers have a tight control over lessons. The teacher who is perceived as both a guide and a language expert manages the process of learning. The teacher has a tight control over learner's production and behaviour in the classroom, the students who come to the lesson as subordinates, do whatever their teachers require them to do.

## IMPLICATION AND FUTURE INQUIRY

This section provides comments about the implications of the results for pedagogical significance and professional training, in the hope that it may provide evidence, which incorporates the findings into the existing framework.

### Pedagogical Significance

The current study confirms that it is possible to incorporate error correction

into meaning-focused instruction and provides a clear support for focus-on-form as an instruction option in China EFL context. One suggestion is that teachers may be better advised to think of focus-on-form as part of their pedagogy, and to identify what constitutes effective pedagogic practice. There is a need to consider how to take advantage of corrective feedback that can potentially benefit learner's L2 learning. A potential tool for understanding may enable teachers to maximize their potential of classroom instruction to improve students' learning. Another suggestion relates to the teacher's management of attention towards form-meaning relationship in focus-on-form instructions contexts.

The results from this study revealed a clear preference for implicit corrective feedback such as recasts, leaving little space for explicit feedback, such as explicit correction or metalinguistic feedback. Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest just as Ellis (2003) did a balanced diet of both types of feedback. Hence it is reasonable to recommend that the two observed Chinese teachers should use more explicit feedback because they used so little of this type of feedback. Thus, there is a need to provide a wider range of feedback strategies to ensure a richer feedback environment, so that teachers can selectively use different types of corrective feedback on the basis of who makes the error and depending on their judgement of a learner's ability and characteristics.

## Professional Development

Another significance of the study relates to teacher pre-service training course, particularly Chinese EFL teachers; focus-on-form as an instruction option may need to be put into teacher training course. van Lier (1988) claims that correction is an important variable in language learning. Despite this, Truscott (1996) argues that language correction is often ineffective as teachers often lack the skills to analyze and explain students' problems; and the students lack the skills to understand and use the feedback. Given this, it may be demanding for language teachers to effectively provide corrective

feedback when attending to form in communicative lessons. The results from the current study indicate that teachers lacked theoretical knowledge about focus-on-form instruction, in part because they had not received any systematic training on it. During the course of the study, when teacher training was mentioned, it was in relation to faculty meeting or peer-monitoring programme rather than their professional training relating to instruction methodologies. Arguably, there is then a need to give teachers more formal training on focus-on-form instruction so as to raise their awareness of it: what corrective feedback is, the important role that pupils can play, why corrective feedback is important and how it can be effectively incorporated into teaching.

In addition to training for teachers, there is a need to consider how to help teachers to find the balance between theory and practice when attending to form in English lessons. Teachers use the findings of this study to become more aware of focus-on-form instruction and make better use of corrective feedback when attending to form in EFL lessons. Arguably, individual teachers may expect to vary their use of corrective feedback according to contexts but need to do so in more systematically planned way. Walz (1982) claims that good teachers need to know their students and to learn who are the most sensitive to correction, as it could be the case that some students wish to be corrected all the time, while others are more easily inhibited. Accordingly, one suggestion is teachers need to acquire the ability to vary their choice of feedback option depending on their knowledge of the student’s ability to attend to the form being corrected. Teachers may need to take into account factors such as learner’s proficiency level or other instructional factors when reacting to form occurs in lessons and to drive learner’s inter-language development forward. Chaudron (1988) suggests that emphasized self-repair is more likely to improve learner’s ability to monitor their own target language. So there might be a need for teachers to prioritize those feedback techniques that are more likely to result in learner repair when attending to form. I also hope the findings can serve as a kind of scaffolding tool for teachers to promote effective teaching and learning and ultimately

help the students realize their learning targets.

## Future Research

This study has suggested that learners in the present study often actively modified their output when they were allowed to do so. As indicated earlier, the learners in the current study were children at a low level of proficiency. Other learners such as adolescents, young adults or adults, with different proficiency levels might behave in different ways. Teachers and learners, who use different instructional materials, may behave differently. Further research is required to demonstrate the occurrence and effectiveness of correction feedback in other instructional contexts.

The results of this study are compatible with the results of other studies concerning teachers' tendency to use extensive recasts at the expense of other feedback strategies when reacting to learner errors. Another interesting finding of the current study is the low rate of recasts resulted from infrequent opportunities that recasts entailed but rather its ambiguousness by nature. To date, a number of studies have investigated recasts as a corrective feedback strategy, despite this, there is a dearth of empirical studies undertook in China's EFL contexts. Further research is demanded to specifically look into recasts across a variety of instructional and naturalistic contexts in China to determine if the findings of the current study also apply to other contexts. Studies regarding other subject areas in China are also required to examine whether or not the recasts preference is a cultural thing.

While the current study has provided some insights into focus-on-form instruction by examining corrective feedback and learner uptake in an L2 context, it did not demonstrate experimentally the effects on L2 learning of focus-on-form as instruction option in china's EFL context. Additional experimental studies are needed to investigate the impact of corrective feedback on learner L2 learning across instructional contexts in China.

## CONCLUSION

One main objective of the study is to understand the role of corrective feedback in L2 learning by examining the provision and use of corrective feedback in focus-on-form instruction contexts in China. I looked into classroom discourse in the hope to gain some special insights into how specific corrective feedback correlated with learner uptake in a child EFL context. Having completed this study, I speculate I can say that I have gained some special insights. I now see error correction can be incorporated into meaning-focused instruction in China's EFL context. Both teachers were often willing to take time out from communicative activities to attend to form occurred in lessons without impeding the flow of communication; learners who were actively engaged with communicative activities, were capable of responding to such feedback when they were allowed to do so. However, the study has also shown such instruction will always have an impact on L2 learning, but that this impact is complex, multifaceted, and is not necessarily always as positive as some advocates of corrective feedback would have us believe. Teachers need not be afraid to correct errors when they arise. Of course, it does not necessarily mean it is beneficial to correct every error in the classroom. Good teachers may need to know what corrective feedback options are available and incorporate them into their classroom as they see fit. Teachers may also need to take into account their learners' level of L2 proficiency when making decision about corrective feedback. It is my hope that other educators, especially teachers, can use the findings of this study to take advantage of corrective feedback and consequently improve their instructional practices and ultimately help their learners reach their learning goals.

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