

Understanding Learners' Perspectives On Oral Corrective Feedback In English As A Second Language Classrooms: A Critical Review And Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

Oral corrective feedback (OCF) remains one of the most extensively researched yet contested aspects of second language acquisition (SLA). While considerable evidence suggests that corrective feedback facilitates learners' language development by drawing attention to linguistic form and promoting self-repair, questions persist regarding which feedback strategies are most effective, how learners perceive different forms of correction, and the extent to which contextual factors influence feedback effectiveness. Although a substantial body of research has examined teachers' corrective practices and the linguistic outcomes of OCF, comparatively less attention has been devoted to learners' perspectives, particularly within English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa. Understanding learners' beliefs and preferences is critical because mismatches between teacher practices and learner expectations may reduce the effectiveness of classroom interaction and language development.

This review synthesizes theoretical and empirical scholarship on oral corrective feedback by examining its conceptual foundations, classifications, learner uptake, and learners' perceptions of corrective practices. Drawing on Ellis' Weak Interface Position, Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis, Long's Interaction Hypothesis, Swain's Output Hypothesis, and sociocultural perspectives on language learning, the review analyses how oral corrective feedback contributes to second language development through increased noticing, interaction, reflection, and opportunities for modified output. It further evaluates major feedback strategies—including explicit correction, recasts, elicitation, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, and repetition—and discusses their relative effectiveness in promoting learner engagement and language acquisition.

The review highlights growing evidence that learners generally value corrective feedback but differ considerably in their preferences regarding the timing, frequency, source, and type of correction they receive. These preferences are shaped by instructional goals, proficiency level, classroom culture, teacher–student relationships, and broader sociocultural contexts. Recent studies also demonstrate that learner-generated repair and active engagement with feedback often contribute more substantially to long-term language development than teacher-provided reformulations alone. However, findings remain inconsistent across educational settings, suggesting that the effectiveness of OCF is highly context dependent.

A critical analysis of the literature reveals several important gaps. Most existing studies have been conducted in Asian, European, and North American contexts, leaving African ESL classrooms substantially underrepresented. Furthermore, relatively few investigations integrate learners' perceptions with classroom interaction patterns and actual corrective feedback practices. The review therefore argues for context-sensitive research that recognises learners as active participants in the feedback process rather than passive recipients of teacher correction. It proposes a conceptual framework linking learners' perceptions, teachers' corrective feedback practices, learner uptake, and second language development to guide future empirical investigations.

Overall, this review contributes to the growing body of scholarship on oral corrective feedback by providing a comprehensive synthesis of contemporary research while identifying theoretical, methodological, and contextual directions for future inquiry. The review offers implications for language teachers, teacher educators, curriculum developers, and researchers seeking to design learner-centred corrective feedback practices that enhance communicative competence and promote sustainable second language learning, particularly in multilingual ESL contexts.

Keywords: *oral corrective feedback; second language acquisition; learner perceptions; learner uptake; form-focused instruction; English as a Second Language; interlanguage; communicative language teaching.*

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I. Introduction

The ability to communicate effectively in a second language extends beyond knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical rules to include the capacity to produce accurate, fluent, and contextually appropriate language

during authentic interaction. Consequently, the correction of learner errors has remained one of the most debated topics in second language acquisition (SLA) research for more than five decades. At the centre of this debate is oral corrective feedback (OCF), which refers to the responses teachers or interlocutors provide to learners' erroneous oral production with the intention of facilitating language development (Ellis, 2009; Lyster et al., 2013). Despite sustained scholarly attention, questions concerning whether, when, how, and by whom learner errors should be corrected continue to generate theoretical and pedagogical discussion.

Historically, attitudes towards error correction have evolved alongside changing perspectives on language learning. Behaviourist theories regarded errors as undesirable habits requiring immediate correction to prevent reinforcement of incorrect linguistic forms (Skinner, 1957). The emergence of communicative language teaching (CLT), however, shifted instructional priorities from grammatical accuracy to meaningful communication, leading some scholars to question whether frequent correction might inhibit learner confidence, reduce communicative fluency, and increase language anxiety (Krashen, 1982). In contrast, cognitive and interactionist theories argue that learner errors represent natural stages in interlanguage development and that appropriately delivered corrective feedback assists learners in noticing discrepancies between their existing linguistic knowledge and target language norms, thereby facilitating acquisition (Long, 1996; Schmidt, 1990; Swain, 1985). Contemporary SLA research increasingly recognises learner errors not as failures but as valuable opportunities for learning and cognitive development.

Within this theoretical landscape, oral corrective feedback has emerged as one of the principal mechanisms through which teachers support language development in communicative classrooms. Rather than interrupting communication solely to eliminate errors, OCF serves multiple instructional purposes, including directing learners' attention to linguistic form, encouraging reflection, promoting self-repair, and fostering greater awareness of language use during interaction (Ellis, 2009; Lyster & Saito, 2010). Research conducted across diverse educational contexts demonstrates that appropriately implemented corrective feedback contributes positively to grammatical accuracy, vocabulary development, pronunciation, and communicative competence (Li, 2018; Nassaji, 2022). Meta-analytic evidence further indicates that corrective feedback generally produces moderate to large positive effects on second language learning, although the magnitude of these effects varies according to learner characteristics, instructional context, feedback type, and outcome measures (Lyster & Saito, 2010; Li, 2010; Brown & Lee, 2023).

The growing interest in OCF has also generated extensive research into the relative effectiveness of different feedback strategies. Building on the influential taxonomy developed by Lyster and Ranta (1997), scholars have examined explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition as alternative approaches to responding to learner errors. While recasts remain among the most frequently employed strategies in classroom interaction because they preserve communicative flow, evidence regarding their effectiveness has been mixed. Studies suggest that learners do not always recognise recasts as corrective feedback, potentially limiting their instructional value (Loewen & Sato, 2018). Conversely, feedback techniques that require learners to actively retrieve and produce correct forms—such as elicitation and metalinguistic prompts—have often been associated with higher levels of learner uptake, self-repair, and longer-term retention (Lyster et al., 2013; Nassaji, 2016). Nevertheless, no single feedback strategy consistently outperforms others across all learning environments, reinforcing the importance of contextual factors in determining instructional effectiveness.

Increasingly, researchers have argued that evaluating corrective feedback solely in terms of linguistic outcomes provides an incomplete understanding of its pedagogical value. Language learning is fundamentally a social and psychological process in which learners actively interpret instructional practices according to their beliefs, motivations, expectations, and previous educational experiences. Consequently, learners' perceptions of oral corrective feedback have become an important area of investigation. Research consistently demonstrates that learners generally expect and appreciate teacher correction, although considerable variation exists regarding preferences for timing, explicitness, frequency, source, and methods of feedback (Schulz, 2001; Brown, 2009; Kamiya, 2016). These preferences are influenced by proficiency level, classroom culture, age, educational traditions, affective factors, and individual learning goals. When teachers' corrective practices differ substantially from learners' expectations, classroom interaction and learning opportunities may be compromised (Schulz, 2001).

The significance of learner perspectives has become even more apparent with the increasing emphasis on learner-centred pedagogy. Contemporary educational approaches position learners as active participants who construct knowledge through interaction rather than passive recipients of teacher instruction. Within this perspective, effective corrective feedback requires consideration not only of linguistic accuracy but also of learners' cognitive engagement, emotional responses, willingness to communicate, and readiness to modify their interlanguage. Recent studies indicate that feedback encouraging learners to identify and repair their own errors often promotes deeper processing and greater learner autonomy than feedback that simply provides correct answers (Nassaji, 2022; Sato & Ballinger, 2016). Consequently, understanding how learners perceive and respond

to different forms of corrective feedback has become essential for designing pedagogically effective language instruction.

Despite substantial international research, important gaps remain within the literature. Much of the empirical evidence concerning learners' perceptions of OCF originates from East Asian, European, Middle Eastern, and North American educational contexts. Comparatively little research has examined learner perspectives in Sub-Saharan African ESL classrooms, where multilingualism, large class sizes, examination-oriented curricula, and sociolinguistic diversity present distinctive instructional challenges. In countries such as Kenya, English functions simultaneously as an official language, the principal language of instruction, and a lingua franca among speakers of diverse indigenous languages. These contextual characteristics may influence both teachers' corrective practices and learners' expectations regarding oral error correction. Consequently, findings from other educational contexts cannot automatically be generalised to East African classrooms.

Furthermore, previous research has tended to investigate isolated dimensions of corrective feedback, such as feedback effectiveness, teacher practices, learner uptake, or student preferences, rather than examining the relationships among these constructs within a comprehensive conceptual framework. Limited attention has also been given to understanding how learners' beliefs interact with classroom practices to influence engagement with corrective feedback and subsequent language development. Addressing these gaps is particularly important because learners' interpretations of corrective feedback mediate whether feedback is noticed, accepted, and incorporated into their developing interlanguage.

Against this background, the present review critically synthesises theoretical and empirical literature on oral corrective feedback with particular emphasis on learners' perspectives. Specifically, the review examines the conceptualisation of learner errors, the theoretical foundations of form-focused instruction and corrective feedback, major types of oral corrective feedback, learner uptake, and existing evidence concerning learners' beliefs and preferences. By integrating classical SLA theories with recent empirical findings, the review identifies areas of consensus, ongoing debate, and underexplored contexts within contemporary research. Particular attention is given to the limited body of evidence emerging from Sub-Saharan African ESL classrooms, thereby highlighting the need for contextually grounded investigations of learner perceptions.

Ultimately, this review argues that understanding learners' perspectives on oral corrective feedback is essential for developing learner-centred pedagogical practices that promote meaningful interaction, sustained engagement, and long-term second language development. By identifying theoretical, methodological, and contextual gaps in existing scholarship, the review provides the conceptual foundation for future empirical research examining how learners interpret, respond to, and benefit from oral corrective feedback in multilingual ESL learning environments.

II. Theoretical Framework

The effectiveness of oral corrective feedback (OCF) has been explained through several complementary theories of second language acquisition (SLA). Although these theories differ in their assumptions regarding how second languages are acquired, they collectively suggest that learning is enhanced when learners notice discrepancies between their interlanguage and the target language, actively participate in communicative interaction, and receive opportunities to modify their linguistic output. Consequently, this review adopts an integrated theoretical framework comprising Ellis' Weak Interface Position, Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis, Long's Interaction Hypothesis, Swain's Output Hypothesis, and Sociocultural Theory. Together, these perspectives provide a comprehensive explanation of how oral corrective feedback contributes to language learning and why learners' perceptions of corrective practices are central to successful language development.

Ellis' weak interface position

The primary theoretical lens underpinning this review is Ellis' Weak Interface Position (Ellis, 1994, 2005). The theory occupies a middle ground between two contrasting perspectives on second language learning. On one hand, the non-interface position, strongly associated with Krashen's (1982) Monitor Model, argues that explicit grammatical knowledge does not become implicit knowledge and therefore has limited influence on spontaneous language use. On the other hand, the strong interface position proposes that explicit knowledge can gradually become implicit through repeated practice and proceduralisation.

Ellis' Weak Interface Position argues that explicit knowledge contributes to second language acquisition indirectly by facilitating learners' awareness of linguistic features during communication. Rather than transforming directly into implicit competence, explicit instruction helps learners notice target language forms and identify discrepancies between their own production and target language norms. This process increases opportunities for restructuring learners' developing interlanguage.

Within this framework, oral corrective feedback functions as a form-focused instructional strategy that draws learners' attention to linguistic inaccuracies while communication is taking place. Feedback encourages learners to compare their erroneous utterances with target forms, thereby promoting cognitive processing that

may eventually lead to acquisition. Consequently, corrective feedback is viewed not merely as error correction but as a pedagogical mechanism that enhances noticing, reflection, and interlanguage development (Ellis, 2009).

The Weak Interface Position is particularly appropriate for the present study because it recognises that corrective feedback alone does not guarantee learning. Rather, its effectiveness depends on learners actively attending to, interpreting, and incorporating the feedback into their developing linguistic system. This emphasis places learners' perceptions and engagement at the centre of the feedback process.

Schmidt's noticing hypothesis

Schmidt's (1990, 2001) Noticing Hypothesis provides one of the most influential explanations for why corrective feedback facilitates language acquisition. According to the hypothesis, linguistic input cannot contribute to learning unless learners consciously notice relevant language features. Simply being exposed to correct language forms is insufficient; learners must become aware of the gap between their existing interlanguage and the target language.

Corrective feedback promotes noticing by increasing the salience of learners' errors during communicative interaction. When teachers reformulate an utterance, provide metalinguistic explanations, request clarification, or prompt learners to self-correct, learners are encouraged to focus simultaneously on meaning and linguistic form. This heightened attention enables them to recognise errors that might otherwise remain unnoticed.

The concept of "noticing the gap" is particularly relevant to oral corrective feedback. Learners compare their own production with the corrected version and identify discrepancies requiring modification. Such cognitive comparison encourages deeper processing of linguistic information and increases the likelihood that new language forms will be retained for future use.

Recent empirical research continues to support the central role of noticing in corrective feedback, demonstrating that learners who recognise feedback as corrective are significantly more likely to modify their subsequent language production than learners who fail to identify corrective intent (Nassaji, 2016; Sato & Ballinger, 2016). Thus, learners' perceptions of feedback directly influence whether noticing occurs and whether learning opportunities are realised.

Long's interaction hypothesis

Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis emphasises the importance of conversational interaction in second language development. The theory argues that language acquisition is promoted when learners engage in meaningful communication that requires negotiation of meaning and attention to linguistic form.

During communicative interaction, learners frequently encounter communication breakdowns caused by linguistic inaccuracies. These breakdowns trigger negotiation sequences in which interlocutors request clarification, seek confirmation, or reformulate utterances. Such interaction provides learners with comprehensible input while simultaneously encouraging them to modify their own output.

Within classroom settings, oral corrective feedback constitutes an important form of interactional negotiation. Clarification requests, elicitation, repetition, and metalinguistic feedback require learners to reconsider their utterances and actively participate in repairing communication. Rather than interrupting interaction, appropriately delivered corrective feedback enriches classroom discourse by creating opportunities for collaborative meaning-making and language development.

The Interaction Hypothesis therefore explains why feedback strategies that require learner participation frequently produce greater learning gains than strategies in which teachers simply provide correct answers. Learning emerges through interaction itself rather than through passive reception of linguistic information.

Swain's output hypothesis

While comprehensible input plays an important role in language learning, Swain (1985, 2005) argues that learners also need opportunities to produce language. The Output Hypothesis proposes that language production enables learners to recognise limitations in their linguistic knowledge, test hypotheses about language, and reflect on grammatical structures.

According to Swain, producing language serves three major functions. First, output promotes noticing by revealing gaps in learners' linguistic competence. Second, producing language encourages hypothesis testing as learners experiment with alternative linguistic forms. Third, language production stimulates metalinguistic reflection during which learners consciously analyse their own language use.

Oral corrective feedback complements these functions by encouraging learners to modify their spoken output. Feedback strategies such as elicitation, clarification requests, and metalinguistic prompts require learners to generate corrected forms themselves rather than merely repeating teacher-provided answers. This learner-generated repair has consistently been associated with deeper cognitive engagement and improved long-term retention.

Consequently, the Output Hypothesis suggests that the effectiveness of corrective feedback depends not simply on receiving correction but on learners actively producing revised language forms. Learners' willingness to engage with corrective feedback therefore becomes an important determinant of successful language acquisition.

Sociocultural theory

Sociocultural Theory (SCT), derived from the work of Vygotsky (1978), conceptualises language learning as a socially mediated process that occurs through interaction with more knowledgeable others. Rather than viewing learning solely as an individual cognitive activity, SCT emphasises collaboration, dialogue, and scaffolding within learners' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

Within this perspective, oral corrective feedback represents a form of instructional scaffolding that supports learners in accomplishing linguistic tasks beyond their independent capabilities. Teachers adapt the amount and type of assistance according to learners' developmental needs, gradually reducing support as learners gain greater proficiency.

Importantly, Sociocultural Theory highlights the role of learners' emotional and interpersonal experiences during feedback interactions. Learners are more likely to benefit from corrective feedback when classroom relationships are characterised by trust, encouragement, and mutual respect. Conversely, corrective practices perceived as threatening or embarrassing may reduce participation and willingness to communicate.

This perspective reinforces the importance of investigating learners' perceptions of corrective feedback because identical feedback techniques may be interpreted differently depending on classroom culture, teacher–student relationships, and learners' previous educational experiences. Thus, the effectiveness of oral corrective feedback cannot be understood independently of its social context.

Integrating the Theoretical Perspectives

Although each theory emphasises different mechanisms of language learning, they are complementary rather than contradictory. Ellis' Weak Interface Position explains how explicit instruction facilitates acquisition through awareness. Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis describes the cognitive process by which learners attend to linguistic form. Long's Interaction Hypothesis highlights the importance of communicative interaction and negotiation. Swain's Output Hypothesis explains why opportunities to modify language production strengthen learning, while Sociocultural Theory situates these processes within collaborative classroom interaction.

Collectively, these theories suggest that oral corrective feedback is most effective when learners (a) notice linguistic discrepancies, (b) understand the corrective intent of the feedback, (c) actively participate in repairing their errors, (d) engage in meaningful interaction with teachers and peers, and (e) perceive corrective feedback as supportive rather than punitive. Learners' perceptions therefore influence every stage of the corrective feedback process, from recognising feedback as correction to deciding whether to incorporate it into their developing interlanguage.

Conceptual Implications for the Present Study

Drawing upon these complementary theoretical perspectives, the present review conceptualises oral corrective feedback as an interactive, learner-centred process rather than a unidirectional teacher behaviour. Learners are viewed as active participants who interpret, evaluate, and respond to corrective feedback according to their beliefs, experiences, motivation, and classroom context.

The integrated framework proposes that teachers' corrective feedback practices influence learners' perceptions of feedback, which in turn affect noticing, learner uptake, self-repair, and subsequent second language development. Classroom context—including instructional practices, learner characteristics, and sociocultural factors—acts as an important mediator throughout this process. Accordingly, investigating learners' perspectives provides essential insight into why identical corrective feedback strategies may produce different learning outcomes across educational settings, particularly within multilingual ESL classrooms in Sub-Saharan Africa.

III. Literature Review

Conceptualising learner errors

The concept of learner error occupies a central position in second language acquisition (SLA) theory and research because it provides valuable insight into the cognitive processes underlying language development. Rather than representing simple failures in learning, learner errors are now widely recognised as evidence of an evolving linguistic system through which learners construct, test, and refine hypotheses about the target language (Ellis, 1994; Gass et al., 2020). Consequently, understanding the nature, causes, and pedagogical significance of learner errors is fundamental to the design and implementation of effective oral corrective feedback (OCF).

Errors and Mistakes in Second Language Learning

One of the earliest distinctions in error analysis differentiates between errors and mistakes. Although the terms are frequently used interchangeably in everyday educational practice, they represent distinct phenomena within SLA. According to Corder (1967), errors are systematic deviations that reflect incomplete knowledge of the target language, whereas mistakes are unsystematic performance lapses resulting from fatigue, distraction, anxiety, or momentary inattention. Ellis (1994) similarly argues that learners are generally unable to self-correct genuine errors because these reveal gaps in their underlying linguistic competence. Mistakes, in contrast, are usually recognised and corrected by learners once their attention is drawn to them.

The distinction has important pedagogical implications because not every deviation from target language norms requires identical instructional responses. Correcting performance mistakes may simply restore learners' attention to forms they already know, whereas addressing systematic errors requires instructional support that facilitates conceptual restructuring of learners' developing language system. Nevertheless, distinguishing between errors and mistakes during spontaneous classroom interaction remains challenging because teachers often have limited opportunities to determine whether an inaccurate utterance reflects temporary inattention or incomplete linguistic knowledge (Ellis & Shintani, 2014). Consequently, many contemporary studies adopt a broader operational definition of learner error as any non-target-like linguistic production that becomes the focus of instructional attention during classroom interaction (Lyster et al., 2013).

Learner Errors and Interlanguage Development

Contemporary understandings of learner errors are closely linked to the concept of interlanguage, first proposed by Selinker (1972). Interlanguage refers to the dynamic linguistic system constructed by second language learners as they progress towards greater proficiency. Rather than representing random collections of incorrect forms, learner errors reflect internally consistent linguistic rules that differ systematically from both the learners' first language (L1) and the target language.

Interlanguage is characterised by continuous development through exposure, interaction, and feedback. As learners encounter new linguistic input and communicative experiences, they modify existing hypotheses and gradually approximate target language norms. Within this developmental process, errors provide observable evidence of learners' evolving linguistic competence and reveal the strategies they employ when processing unfamiliar language structures (Gass et al., 2020). Consequently, learner errors are increasingly viewed as indispensable sources of information rather than obstacles to language learning.

Research further demonstrates that interlanguage development is influenced by multiple cognitive and environmental factors, including learners' first language, instructional experiences, communicative opportunities, motivation, and corrective feedback (Han, 2014). Because learners construct individual interlanguage systems, identical instructional approaches may produce different learning outcomes among learners with varying linguistic backgrounds and proficiency levels. This variability underscores the importance of understanding learners' perceptions of corrective feedback as an integral component of interlanguage development.

Error analysis and its pedagogical value

The recognition that learner errors possess diagnostic value gave rise to Error Analysis (EA), a research tradition pioneered by Corder (1967). Unlike the earlier Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, which attributed most learner errors to interference from the first language, Error Analysis emphasised that many errors arise from learners' active attempts to formulate grammatical rules in the target language.

Error Analysis identifies several important functions of learner errors. First, errors provide teachers with valuable information about learners' current stage of language development and therefore inform instructional planning. Second, they enable researchers to investigate developmental sequences in second language acquisition. Third, errors provide learners themselves with opportunities for reflection, self-monitoring, and language awareness (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005).

Although Error Analysis significantly advanced understanding of learner language, it has also attracted criticism. One limitation is its focus on observable errors while overlooking correct language production and communication strategies that learners successfully employ. Furthermore, Error Analysis does not always explain why particular errors occur or how learners ultimately overcome them. These limitations have encouraged researchers to integrate Error Analysis with broader cognitive, interactionist, and sociocultural perspectives that consider learner cognition, classroom interaction, and contextual influences simultaneously (Gass et al., 2020).

Despite these criticisms, Error Analysis remains highly relevant to contemporary research on OCF because corrective feedback necessarily begins with teachers' identification and interpretation of learner errors. Understanding the nature of learner errors therefore provides an essential foundation for examining the effectiveness of different feedback strategies.

Sources of Learner Errors

Research has consistently demonstrated that learner errors originate from multiple interacting sources rather than a single cause. One important source is cross-linguistic influence, whereby learners transfer linguistic features from their first language into the second language. Such transfer may involve pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, or discourse patterns and may either facilitate or hinder second language development depending on similarities between the two languages (Odlin, 1989).

Equally important are developmental errors, which emerge as learners formulate hypotheses about target language rules independently of their first language. These errors often resemble those made by children acquiring their first language and reflect normal cognitive processes associated with language learning (Ellis & Shintani, 2014). Examples include overgeneralisation of grammatical rules, simplification of complex structures, and incomplete application of linguistic rules.

Additional sources of learner errors include communication strategies, limited exposure to authentic language input, classroom instruction, and sociolinguistic influences. In multilingual settings such as Kenya, learners frequently draw upon several linguistic resources simultaneously, creating complex patterns of language transfer that extend beyond simple first-language interference. Such multilingual realities highlight the importance of investigating learner errors within their specific educational and sociocultural contexts rather than relying exclusively on universal explanations.

English as an International Language and Implications for Error Conceptualisation

The increasing global use of English has prompted renewed debate regarding what should be considered an error in contemporary ESL classrooms. Traditional approaches have generally evaluated learner language against native-speaker norms, particularly British or American English. However, the emergence of English as an International Language (EIL) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) challenges the assumption that native-speaker standards represent the only appropriate benchmark for evaluating learner performance (Jenkins, 2015; Rose & Galloway, 2019).

From an ELF perspective, many linguistic variations traditionally classified as errors may not impede communication among multilingual English users. Instead, communicative effectiveness, intelligibility, and pragmatic appropriateness become more important than strict adherence to native-speaker grammatical conventions. This perspective is especially relevant in multilingual African contexts, where English frequently serves as a shared medium of communication among speakers of different indigenous languages.

Nevertheless, educational systems in many Commonwealth countries, including Kenya, continue to assess learners according to standardised varieties of English that closely reflect British English norms. Consequently, classroom teachers must negotiate the tension between preparing learners for national examinations and recognising the global diversity of English use. This dual responsibility complicates decisions regarding which learner errors warrant correction and which variations may reasonably be tolerated in communicative interaction.

Learner Errors in African ESL Contexts

The conceptualisation of learner errors acquires additional significance within Sub-Saharan African ESL classrooms characterised by multilingualism, large class sizes, and diverse linguistic ecologies. Studies conducted in Kenya have documented persistent grammatical, lexical, and phonological errors influenced by first-language transfer, limited exposure to English outside school, and examination-oriented instructional practices (Nyamasyo, 1992; Njoroge, 1996). Similar patterns have been reported across other African ESL contexts, where learners often navigate multiple indigenous languages alongside English in both formal and informal communication.

Despite these contextual realities, African research examining learner errors has remained relatively limited compared with studies conducted in Asia and Europe. Moreover, much of the existing literature focuses primarily on identifying error types rather than exploring how learners themselves perceive corrective practices or how such perceptions influence engagement with feedback. As learner-centred approaches become increasingly prominent within language education, understanding learners' interpretations of oral corrective feedback becomes essential for designing pedagogical practices that respond to local educational needs while remaining informed by contemporary SLA theory.

Synthesis

Contemporary SLA research conceptualises learner errors not as indicators of failure but as natural manifestations of interlanguage development. Errors reveal learners' evolving linguistic knowledge, provide opportunities for instructional intervention, and contribute to language acquisition when appropriately addressed through corrective feedback.

Distinguishing between errors and mistakes, understanding the developmental nature of interlanguage, recognising multiple sources of learner errors, and appreciating the changing status of English in global

communication collectively provide the conceptual foundation for examining oral corrective feedback. These perspectives also reinforce the importance of investigating learners' perceptions of corrective practices, since learners' interpretations of feedback determine whether instructional interventions are noticed, understood, and incorporated into their developing linguistic systems. The following section therefore examines oral corrective feedback as the principal pedagogical mechanism through which teachers respond to learner errors in second language classrooms.

Oral Corrective Feedback in Second Language Acquisition

As communicative language teaching shifted pedagogical attention from explicit grammar instruction to meaningful communication, scholars questioned whether correcting learners' oral errors promoted or hindered language development. While early debates were characterised by contrasting theoretical positions regarding the role of error correction, contemporary research has reached broad consensus that appropriately delivered corrective feedback constitutes an essential component of effective language instruction. Rather than interrupting communication, OCF is now understood as an instructional strategy that simultaneously promotes communicative competence and linguistic accuracy by directing learners' attention to problematic language forms during authentic interaction (Ellis, 2009; Lyster et al., 2013; Nassaji, 2022).

Form-Focused Instruction and Oral Corrective Feedback

The theoretical foundations of OCF are closely associated with the broader concept of Form-Focused Instruction (FFI). Ellis (2001) defines FFI as any planned or incidental instructional activity designed to draw learners' attention to linguistic forms within meaningful communication. Unlike traditional grammar instruction, which often isolates grammatical structures from authentic language use, FFI integrates attention to form into communicative activities, thereby maintaining the primary focus on meaning while creating opportunities for language development.

Within FFI, researchers distinguish between Focus on Forms (FonFs) and Focus on Form (FonF) (Long, 1991). Focus on Forms refers to the systematic teaching of discrete grammatical structures through explicit instruction and controlled practice. In contrast, Focus on Form involves briefly redirecting learners' attention to linguistic features that emerge naturally during communicative interaction. Oral corrective feedback represents one of the most common forms of reactive Focus on Form because it occurs when teachers respond to learners' spontaneous oral errors without abandoning the communicative purpose of classroom discourse.

This distinction has important pedagogical implications. Contemporary SLA research increasingly supports instructional approaches that integrate grammar within meaningful communication rather than teaching language structures in isolation (Ellis & Shintani, 2014). OCF therefore functions not simply as a mechanism for correcting inaccurate language but also as a means of promoting noticing, interaction, hypothesis testing, and learner reflection, all of which are central processes in second language development.

Defining oral corrective feedback

Corrective feedback generally refers to responses indicating that a learner's language production deviates from target language norms. In classroom interaction, OCF specifically concerns teachers' or interlocutors' responses to oral language errors with the intention of facilitating learning (Lyster et al., 2013). Such responses may explicitly identify errors, implicitly reformulate learner utterances, or encourage learners to repair their own production.

Although definitions vary across studies, most scholars agree that effective corrective feedback possesses three defining characteristics. First, feedback identifies or signals the presence of a linguistic problem. Second, it provides learners with information that assists them in recognising or resolving the problem. Third, it creates opportunities for learners to modify their interlanguage through reflection, self-correction, or repeated language production (Ellis, 2009).

Importantly, contemporary perspectives emphasise that corrective feedback extends beyond error elimination. Feedback serves cognitive, interactional, and motivational functions simultaneously. Cognitively, it promotes noticing and language awareness; interactionally, it sustains negotiation of meaning during communication; and affectively, it shapes learners' confidence, motivation, and willingness to communicate. Consequently, understanding learners' perceptions of OCF is essential because learners' interpretations determine whether feedback is recognised, accepted, and incorporated into subsequent language use.

Explicit and Implicit Corrective Feedback

One of the principal distinctions within OCF research concerns explicit and implicit feedback. Explicit feedback overtly indicates that a learner has produced an incorrect utterance while often providing the correct linguistic form. Teachers may directly identify errors through statements such as "*You should say...*" or "*That is*

incorrect because...". Because the corrective intent is transparent, explicit feedback generally reduces ambiguity and facilitates immediate recognition of linguistic inaccuracies (Ellis, 2009).

Implicit feedback, in contrast, signals the presence of an error without directly identifying it. Teachers may reformulate learner utterances, request clarification, repeat erroneous forms using questioning intonation, or employ conversational prompts that encourage learners to reconsider their language production. Implicit feedback maintains the flow of communication and often reduces learners' embarrassment because correction occurs naturally within ongoing interaction (Nassaji, 2016).

Research comparing explicit and implicit feedback has produced mixed findings. Meta-analytic studies indicate that both forms contribute positively to language learning, although their effectiveness varies according to learners' proficiency, linguistic targets, instructional context, and assessment methods (Li, 2010; Lyster & Saito, 2010). Explicit feedback frequently facilitates immediate recognition of grammatical rules, whereas implicit feedback may encourage deeper cognitive processing by requiring learners to infer corrective intent. Consequently, recent scholarship increasingly argues against identifying a universally superior feedback strategy, instead advocating context-sensitive instructional decisions that consider learners' needs and classroom objectives (Nassaji, 2022).

Taxonomies of Oral Corrective Feedback

The most influential framework for classifying OCF remains the taxonomy proposed by Lyster and Ranta (1997), later refined by Lyster et al. (2013). The framework identifies six principal feedback strategies commonly observed in classroom interaction.

Explicit correction involves directly informing learners that their utterance is incorrect while supplying the target form. This strategy leaves little ambiguity regarding corrective intent but may reduce opportunities for learner-generated repair.

Recasts involve reformulating learners' erroneous utterances without explicitly indicating that an error has occurred. Because recasts preserve communicative flow and minimise interruption, they are among the most frequently observed forms of classroom feedback. However, learners do not always recognise recasts as correction, limiting their effectiveness in some instructional contexts.

Clarification requests signal communication difficulty by prompting learners to repeat or reformulate their utterances. Teachers may use expressions such as "*Pardon?*" or "*Could you say that again?*" to encourage learners to reconsider their language production.

Metalinguistic feedback provides comments, questions, or clues concerning grammatical rules without directly supplying the correct answer. Such feedback encourages learners to analyse language structures and engage in conscious reflection.

Elicitation directly prompts learners to produce the correct linguistic form by pausing, asking completion questions, or requesting reformulation. Because learners actively retrieve target language forms, elicitation has consistently been associated with high levels of learner engagement and self-repair.

Repetition involves repeating learners' erroneous utterances with altered intonation to highlight problematic language forms. This strategy encourages learners to identify and repair their own errors while maintaining conversational continuity.

Although these six feedback types remain widely employed in SLA research, contemporary scholars increasingly emphasise that classroom feedback rarely occurs in discrete categories. Teachers frequently combine multiple strategies within a single interaction, suggesting that corrective feedback should be understood as a flexible continuum rather than a collection of isolated techniques (Nassaji, 2016).

Effectiveness of Different Feedback Strategies

Determining which feedback strategy most effectively promotes language acquisition has remained one of the central questions in SLA research. Earlier classroom studies frequently reported that recasts constituted the most common feedback technique because they allowed teachers to maintain lesson momentum while correcting learner errors (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). However, subsequent research questioned whether recasts consistently produced substantial learning gains because learners often interpreted them as conversational responses rather than corrective interventions.

Meta-analytic evidence demonstrates that feedback requiring learners to generate their own corrections—particularly elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, and clarification requests—often produces stronger long-term learning outcomes than teacher-provided reformulations alone (Li, 2010; Lyster & Saito, 2010). These strategies stimulate deeper cognitive engagement by encouraging learners to retrieve linguistic knowledge, test hypotheses, and modify their own output, processes predicted by Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis and Swain's Output Hypothesis.

Nevertheless, recent scholarship cautions against interpreting these findings as evidence that recasts are ineffective. Their effectiveness depends on several contextual factors, including learner proficiency, instructional

focus, teacher delivery, and learners' ability to recognise corrective intent (Loewen & Sato, 2018). For beginning learners, recasts may provide valuable linguistic models without disrupting communication, whereas more advanced learners often benefit from prompts requiring greater cognitive involvement. Consequently, effective language teaching requires strategic selection of feedback according to instructional goals and learner characteristics rather than exclusive reliance on any single technique.

Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Oral Corrective Feedback

Growing evidence suggests that the effectiveness of OCF is mediated by numerous contextual variables extending beyond the feedback strategy itself. Learner-related factors include proficiency level, age, motivation, language anxiety, beliefs about language learning, and previous educational experiences. Teacher-related factors include pedagogical beliefs, professional expertise, classroom management skills, and sensitivity to learners' emotional responses. Classroom factors such as class size, lesson objectives, available instructional time, and opportunities for interaction also shape feedback practices.

Recent studies further highlight the importance of sociocultural context. Learners from educational systems emphasising teacher authority and examination performance may expect frequent explicit correction, whereas learners accustomed to communicative approaches may prefer opportunities for self-correction and collaborative negotiation. These findings reinforce the need for culturally responsive corrective feedback practices that acknowledge local educational traditions while promoting learner autonomy.

Within multilingual African classrooms, additional contextual influences—including language policy, linguistic diversity, limited instructional resources, and examination-driven curricula—may further affect both teachers' corrective practices and learners' perceptions of feedback. Despite these distinctive characteristics, relatively little empirical research has examined OCF within Sub-Saharan African ESL contexts, representing a significant gap in contemporary SLA literature.

Oral corrective feedback and learner-centred language teaching

The increasing adoption of learner-centred pedagogies has transformed understandings of corrective feedback from teacher-controlled error correction to collaborative learning support. Contemporary language education emphasises learner agency, reflection, and active participation in knowledge construction. Consequently, feedback is most effective when learners understand its purpose, recognise its instructional value, and participate actively in responding to it.

Research increasingly demonstrates that learner engagement mediates the relationship between corrective feedback and language development. Feedback that promotes noticing, self-repair, metalinguistic reflection, and interaction encourages learners to become active participants in their own learning rather than passive recipients of teacher evaluation. These findings shift scholarly attention beyond identifying effective feedback techniques toward understanding how learners interpret and respond to corrective interventions.

Accordingly, examining learners' perspectives has become essential for explaining why identical feedback practices may produce different learning outcomes across instructional contexts. The effectiveness of oral corrective feedback therefore depends not only on teachers' instructional decisions but also on learners' beliefs, expectations, emotional responses, and willingness to engage with correction.

Synthesis

The literature demonstrates that oral corrective feedback represents a fundamental component of communicative language teaching and an important mechanism for promoting second language acquisition. Grounded in form-focused instruction and supported by cognitive, interactionist, and sociocultural theories of language learning, OCF facilitates noticing, interaction, modified output, and interlanguage development. Although numerous feedback strategies have been identified, contemporary scholarship suggests that their effectiveness depends largely on contextual factors, learner engagement, and opportunities for learner-generated repair rather than on the feedback technique alone. This growing recognition has shifted research attention toward learners' experiences of corrective feedback, highlighting the importance of understanding learners' beliefs, preferences, and perceptions. The following section therefore critically examines empirical research on learners' perspectives regarding oral corrective feedback and their implications for language teaching.

Learners' Perspectives on Oral Corrective Feedback

Increasing recognition of learners as active participants in the language learning process has shifted scholarly attention from examining teachers' corrective practices alone to understanding how learners perceive, interpret, and respond to oral corrective feedback (OCF). Contemporary second language acquisition (SLA) research acknowledges that the effectiveness of corrective feedback depends not only on the linguistic accuracy of teachers' interventions but also on learners' beliefs, expectations, emotional responses, and willingness to engage with feedback (Nassaji, 2022). Consequently, learners' perspectives have become an essential dimension

of corrective feedback research because they mediate whether feedback is noticed, accepted, processed, and ultimately incorporated into learners' developing interlanguage.

Learner Beliefs and the Role of Corrective Feedback

Learner beliefs are generally understood as the assumptions, expectations, and attitudes that learners hold regarding language learning and effective instructional practices. These beliefs influence how learners interpret classroom experiences, regulate their own learning, and respond to teacher interventions (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011). Within the context of oral corrective feedback, learner beliefs shape perceptions of the necessity, timing, frequency, and effectiveness of different feedback strategies.

Research conducted across diverse educational contexts consistently indicates that learners generally value corrective feedback and regard it as an indispensable component of successful language learning (Schulz, 2001; Brown, 2009). Most learners expect teachers to identify and correct oral errors because they perceive correction as evidence of teacher support and professional competence. From learners' perspectives, failure to provide corrective feedback may be interpreted as indifference toward their language development or as implicit approval of inaccurate language use.

However, learners do not necessarily favour identical forms of correction. Instead, their beliefs reflect a complex interaction among previous educational experiences, proficiency level, learning objectives, cultural expectations, and classroom context. Consequently, understanding learner beliefs has become increasingly important for designing instructional practices that are both pedagogically effective and responsive to learners' expectations.

Learner Preferences for Different Types of Corrective Feedback

One of the most extensively investigated areas within OCF research concerns learners' preferences for different feedback strategies. While teachers often employ recasts because they preserve communicative flow and minimise classroom disruption, learners frequently express preferences for feedback that explicitly identifies errors or encourages opportunities for self-correction (Lyster et al., 2013).

Several studies have shown that learners value feedback techniques requiring active cognitive engagement, including elicitation, clarification requests, and metalinguistic feedback. These strategies allow learners to reflect upon their own language production, retrieve linguistic knowledge, and generate corrected forms independently. From learners' perspectives, such participation promotes deeper understanding of grammatical rules and enhances confidence in subsequent communication (Sato & Ballinger, 2016).

By contrast, recasts have generated more mixed learner responses. Although learners often appreciate their unobtrusive nature and reduced potential for embarrassment, many fail to recognise recasts as corrective interventions because teachers frequently integrate them seamlessly into ongoing conversation. As a result, learners may interpret recasts simply as conversational continuations rather than opportunities for linguistic improvement (Loewen & Sato, 2018). These findings illustrate that the instructional value of a feedback strategy depends not only on teachers' intentions but also on learners' ability to recognise corrective intent.

Recent scholarship therefore argues that no universally preferred feedback strategy exists. Instead, learner preferences vary according to age, proficiency level, instructional objectives, and individual learning styles. Effective classroom practice consequently requires flexibility rather than exclusive reliance on a single corrective technique.

Timing and Frequency of Oral Corrective Feedback

Learners' perspectives also extend to questions concerning when and how frequently oral errors should be corrected. Although teachers often delay correction to preserve communicative fluency, many learners express preferences for immediate feedback because they believe errors are easier to understand and remember while communicative contexts remain fresh (Kamiya, 2016).

Nevertheless, learner preferences regarding timing are far from uniform. Some learners report that frequent interruption reduces confidence and disrupts communication, particularly during fluency-oriented activities. Others distinguish between communicative tasks and grammar-focused lessons, preferring delayed correction during discussions but immediate correction during activities emphasising linguistic accuracy.

Similarly, preferences concerning feedback frequency differ considerably. While many learners desire correction of all errors, others favour selective correction focusing primarily on errors that impede communication or involve important grammatical structures. These findings suggest that learners appreciate instructional approaches balancing communicative fluency with opportunities for language accuracy rather than adopting exclusively corrective or exclusively communicative orientations.

Emotional Responses to Oral Corrective Feedback

Corrective feedback is not solely a cognitive process; it is also an affective experience that influences learners' confidence, motivation, and willingness to communicate. Research increasingly demonstrates that learners' emotional responses significantly mediate the effectiveness of corrective feedback (Nassaji, 2022).

Constructive feedback delivered respectfully within supportive classroom environments is generally perceived positively. Learners frequently interpret such feedback as evidence that teachers are invested in their academic progress, thereby increasing motivation and engagement with learning. Conversely, corrective practices perceived as humiliating, excessively critical, or inconsistent may heighten anxiety, reduce classroom participation, and discourage learners from speaking the target language.

The emotional impact of feedback is particularly important in oral communication because speaking publicly exposes learners to potential embarrassment before peers. Consequently, many learners express preferences for corrective strategies that preserve dignity while simultaneously facilitating learning. Teachers therefore face the pedagogical challenge of balancing linguistic accuracy with learners' emotional well-being.

These findings reinforce the principles of Sociocultural Theory, which emphasises that learning occurs most effectively within supportive social environments characterised by trust, collaboration, and mutual respect.

Teacher-Learner Congruence in Corrective Feedback

An important theme emerging from the literature concerns the alignment between teachers' corrective practices and learners' expectations. Numerous studies have reported significant mismatches between teacher beliefs and learner preferences regarding oral corrective feedback (Schulz, 2001; Brown, 2009).

Teachers frequently justify corrective decisions according to pedagogical principles, classroom management considerations, or concerns about maintaining communicative interaction. Learners, however, often evaluate corrective feedback primarily according to perceived usefulness for improving language accuracy. Consequently, teachers may intentionally avoid correcting particular errors to preserve communicative fluency, whereas learners interpret such omissions as missed learning opportunities.

Research suggests that these mismatches may reduce instructional effectiveness by limiting learner engagement with corrective feedback. Conversely, greater congruence between teacher practices and learner expectations has been associated with increased learner satisfaction, stronger classroom relationships, and improved language learning outcomes.

Contemporary learner-centred pedagogies therefore advocate dialogue between teachers and learners regarding corrective practices, enabling instructional decisions to reflect both pedagogical expertise and learner preferences.

Sociocultural Influences on Learners' Perspectives

Learners' perceptions of oral corrective feedback are shaped not only by individual differences but also by broader sociocultural contexts. Educational traditions influence expectations regarding teacher authority, classroom participation, learner autonomy, and acceptable instructional practices.

Studies conducted in East Asian contexts frequently report learner preferences for explicit teacher correction because educational systems traditionally emphasise teacher expertise, examination performance, and grammatical accuracy. Conversely, learners educated within communicative pedagogies may express stronger preferences for collaborative learning, peer interaction, and opportunities for self-correction.

Similarly, multilingual educational environments influence learners' interpretations of feedback. Learners studying English alongside multiple indigenous languages often navigate complex linguistic identities and communicative practices that differ substantially from monolingual educational settings. Consequently, cultural and linguistic diversity should be considered when interpreting learner perspectives on corrective feedback.

These findings caution against assuming that learner preferences identified in one educational context can be generalised universally. Instead, corrective feedback should be understood as a contextually situated instructional practice whose effectiveness depends upon local educational cultures and learner experiences.

Learners' Perspectives in African ESL Contexts

Despite extensive international research on oral corrective feedback, empirical investigations conducted within African ESL contexts remain comparatively limited. Existing studies have primarily focused on learners' written errors, teacher practices, or language policy, while relatively little attention has been devoted to learners' perceptions of oral corrective feedback.

This represents a significant gap because African classrooms often differ substantially from those in which most OCF research has been conducted. Large class sizes, multilingual learner populations, examination-oriented curricula, limited instructional resources, and the coexistence of English with numerous indigenous

languages create distinctive educational conditions that may influence both teachers' corrective practices and learners' expectations.

In Kenya, for example, English functions simultaneously as an official language, the principal language of instruction, and a lingua franca among speakers of diverse mother tongues. Learners therefore experience English in both formal educational settings and multilingual everyday communication. These contextual realities may shape perceptions regarding which oral errors require correction, how correction should be delivered, and the extent to which communicative effectiveness should take precedence over grammatical accuracy.

The limited empirical evidence available from Sub-Saharan Africa underscores the need for context-specific investigations that recognise learners as active contributors to the corrective feedback process rather than passive recipients of teacher evaluation. Such research is essential for developing pedagogical practices that respond to local educational realities while remaining informed by contemporary SLA theory.

Synthesis

The literature demonstrates that learners' perspectives constitute a critical component of effective oral corrective feedback. Rather than passively receiving correction, learners actively interpret feedback according to their beliefs, previous educational experiences, emotional responses, and sociocultural contexts. Most learners value corrective feedback and recognise its contribution to language development; however, considerable variation exists regarding preferences for feedback type, timing, frequency, and delivery. Evidence also indicates that alignment between teachers' corrective practices and learners' expectations enhances learner engagement and promotes more meaningful language learning.

Despite substantial international scholarship, important gaps remain regarding learners' perspectives in multilingual African ESL classrooms. Addressing these gaps is essential for developing learner-centred corrective feedback practices that reflect both contemporary SLA theory and the realities of diverse educational contexts. The next section therefore examines learner uptake and language development, focusing on how learners respond to corrective feedback and the extent to which these responses contribute to second language acquisition.

Learner Uptake and Language Development

Learner uptake occupies a central position in oral corrective feedback (OCF) research because it represents the immediate observable response learners make following corrective intervention. Since the influential work of Lyster and Ranta (1997), learner uptake has been widely used as an indicator of learners' engagement with corrective feedback and as a potential precursor to second language acquisition. Although uptake alone cannot demonstrate permanent language learning, it provides important evidence that learners have noticed corrective feedback, processed its linguistic content, and attempted to modify their developing interlanguage. Consequently, understanding learner uptake is essential for explaining how corrective feedback contributes to second language development.

Conceptualising learner uptake

Learner uptake refers to learners' immediate verbal responses following corrective feedback during classroom interaction (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). These responses may involve successful self-repair, partial modification of the original utterance, acknowledgement of the feedback without correction, or failure to respond altogether. Uptake therefore reflects learners' initial engagement with the feedback rather than definitive evidence of language acquisition.

Lyster and Ranta (1997) distinguish between two broad categories of uptake: repair and needs-repair. Repair occurs when learners successfully modify their utterance to produce the correct linguistic form following feedback. Needs-repair refers to responses that indicate learner engagement but fail to achieve accurate language production, including repeated errors, hesitation, partial correction, or unsuccessful attempts at self-repair.

This distinction is pedagogically important because it recognises that learning is developmental rather than instantaneous. Even unsuccessful attempts to repair language demonstrate that learners have recognised the existence of a linguistic problem and are actively attempting to resolve it. Such engagement represents an important stage in interlanguage development.

Corrective Feedback and Learner Uptake

Research consistently demonstrates that different forms of corrective feedback generate different patterns of learner uptake. Feedback strategies requiring learners to actively participate in correcting their own errors generally produce higher levels of learner-generated repair than strategies in which teachers provide the correct form directly.

Lyster and Ranta's (1997) classroom observations showed that elicitation, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, and repetition produced substantially higher levels of learner-generated repair

than recasts and explicit correction. Because prompts require learners to retrieve and produce the correct linguistic form independently, they stimulate deeper cognitive processing and greater learner involvement.

Subsequent research has largely supported these findings while recognising that the effectiveness of particular feedback strategies depends on instructional context, learner proficiency, and linguistic targets (Lyster et al., 2013). Meta-analytic evidence indicates that prompts encouraging learner-generated repair often produce stronger long-term learning outcomes than teacher-provided corrections because they require learners to engage in retrieval, hypothesis testing, and metalinguistic reflection (Li, 2010; Lyster & Saito, 2010).

Nevertheless, contemporary research cautions against interpreting learner uptake as the sole measure of feedback effectiveness. Recasts, for example, frequently produce lower rates of immediate uptake because teachers provide the correct form directly. However, learners may still notice, internalise, and subsequently use corrected forms without producing immediate verbal responses during classroom interaction (Nassaji, 2016). Thus, immediate uptake represents only one dimension of learning.

Uptake, Noticing, and Cognitive Processing

The relationship between learner uptake and language development is explained by several complementary theories of second language acquisition. Schmidt's (1990, 2001) Noticing Hypothesis argues that learners must consciously notice linguistic features before acquisition can occur. Learner uptake therefore provides observable evidence that corrective feedback has successfully attracted learners' attention to problematic language forms.

Similarly, Swain's (1985, 2005) Output Hypothesis proposes that producing modified language encourages learners to identify gaps in their linguistic knowledge, test hypotheses, and refine grammatical representations. When learners successfully repair their errors following corrective feedback, they engage in precisely these cognitive processes.

Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis further explains learner uptake as part of negotiated interaction. Clarification requests, confirmation checks, and other interactional moves require learners to modify their language while maintaining communication. Through such interaction, learners receive comprehensible input, produce modified output, and negotiate linguistic meaning simultaneously.

Collectively, these theoretical perspectives suggest that learner uptake represents more than an observable classroom behaviour; it reflects underlying cognitive processes associated with second language learning. The extent to which learners engage with corrective feedback therefore influences opportunities for language development.

Learner Uptake and Long-Term Language Development

Although learner uptake is widely recognised as an important indicator of engagement with corrective feedback, researchers increasingly distinguish between immediate repair and long-term acquisition. Producing a corrected utterance immediately after feedback does not necessarily indicate that learners have permanently incorporated the target structure into their interlanguage.

Several longitudinal studies demonstrate that second language acquisition is gradual, cumulative, and nonlinear rather than instantaneous (Doughty & Williams, 1998; Ohta, 2001). Learners frequently require repeated exposure to similar feedback across multiple communicative contexts before linguistic restructuring becomes stable. Consequently, immediate learner uptake should be interpreted as creating favourable conditions for acquisition rather than serving as conclusive evidence that learning has occurred.

Conversely, the absence of observable uptake does not necessarily indicate that corrective feedback has been ineffective. Learners may process feedback internally, reflect upon corrected forms after classroom interaction, or demonstrate learning during subsequent communicative tasks rather than immediately following teacher intervention (Nassaji, 2016). This distinction reinforces the importance of examining both classroom interaction and delayed learning outcomes when evaluating corrective feedback.

Individual Differences and Learner Uptake

Recent research has increasingly recognised that learner uptake is influenced by numerous individual learner characteristics. Factors including language proficiency, motivation, working memory, language anxiety, willingness to communicate, and metalinguistic awareness affect learners' ability to recognise, interpret, and respond to corrective feedback (Mackey, 2012).

Learners with higher proficiency often possess sufficient linguistic knowledge to benefit from indirect prompts requiring self-repair, whereas beginning learners may depend more heavily on explicit correction and teacher modelling. Similarly, highly motivated learners frequently demonstrate greater willingness to engage with corrective feedback, while learners experiencing communication anxiety may avoid responding publicly even when they recognise their errors.

Learners' beliefs concerning corrective feedback also influence uptake. Students who perceive feedback as supportive learning assistance are generally more willing to attempt self-correction than those who associate correction with criticism or public embarrassment. These findings reinforce the importance of investigating learners' perceptions alongside observable classroom behaviours.

Sociocultural Perspectives on Learner Uptake

From a sociocultural perspective, learner uptake represents collaborative knowledge construction rather than merely individual cognitive processing. Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) suggests that learners achieve higher levels of linguistic performance when supported by teachers or peers during interaction.

Corrective feedback functions as instructional scaffolding by providing graduated assistance that enables learners to accomplish tasks beyond their independent capabilities. As learners become increasingly competent, instructional support is gradually reduced until accurate language production becomes autonomous.

This perspective highlights the importance of classroom relationships in facilitating learner uptake. Feedback delivered within supportive environments encourages learners to experiment with language, take communicative risks, and participate actively in negotiated interaction. Conversely, classroom climates characterised by fear of criticism or excessive emphasis on error avoidance may reduce learners' willingness to respond to corrective feedback.

Consequently, learner uptake should be understood as a socially situated phenomenon shaped by interpersonal relationships, classroom culture, and opportunities for collaborative learning as well as by individual cognitive processes.

Learner Uptake in Multilingual ESL Classrooms

Despite extensive international scholarship, relatively little research has examined learner uptake within multilingual ESL classrooms in Sub-Saharan Africa. Existing studies have largely concentrated on identifying teacher feedback practices while paying comparatively less attention to learners' responses and engagement with corrective feedback.

This represents a significant gap because multilingual classrooms present distinctive interactional conditions. Learners often possess diverse linguistic backgrounds, varying proficiency levels, and different experiences of English as both an instructional language and a lingua franca. These characteristics may influence not only how teachers provide corrective feedback but also how learners interpret, negotiate, and respond to correction.

In Kenyan secondary schools, where English serves both academic and communicative functions, learner uptake may be influenced by examination-oriented teaching, large class sizes, multilingual interaction, and limited opportunities for extended oral communication. Understanding learner uptake within this context therefore contributes to more contextually responsive pedagogical practices and extends the predominantly Asian and European evidence base that currently dominates OCF research.

Synthesis

The literature demonstrates that learner uptake constitutes an important intermediary process linking oral corrective feedback to second language development. Although immediate repair cannot be equated with permanent acquisition, learner uptake provides valuable evidence of learners' cognitive engagement with corrective feedback and their willingness to modify their developing interlanguage. Contemporary research suggests that feedback encouraging learner-generated repair, metalinguistic reflection, and negotiated interaction often creates richer opportunities for language development than feedback requiring passive repetition alone. However, uptake is influenced by numerous learner, teacher, and contextual factors, including proficiency, motivation, classroom relationships, and sociocultural context. Furthermore, the limited evidence available from multilingual African ESL classrooms highlights the need for context-specific investigations examining how learners perceive, interpret, and respond to oral corrective feedback. These unresolved issues provide the basis for identifying the research gaps addressed by the present study and for developing the conceptual framework presented in the following section.

Research gaps and conceptual framework

Research gaps

The literature on oral corrective feedback (OCF) has expanded considerably over the past three decades, generating substantial theoretical and empirical knowledge regarding the role of corrective feedback in second language acquisition (SLA). Research has consistently demonstrated that OCF facilitates learners' attention to linguistic form, promotes learner uptake, and contributes to the gradual development of second language proficiency (Ellis, 2009; Lyster et al., 2013; Nassaji, 2022). Nevertheless, a critical review of the literature reveals

several conceptual, methodological, and contextual gaps that continue to limit understanding of how corrective feedback functions in diverse educational settings.

The first gap concerns the overemphasis on teachers' practices relative to learners' perspectives. Much of the existing research has examined the frequency, timing, and effectiveness of different corrective feedback strategies from the teacher's perspective. Studies have extensively documented teachers' preferences for recasts, explicit correction, elicitation, and other feedback techniques while comparing their relative effectiveness in promoting learner uptake (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Li, 2010). Comparatively fewer studies have investigated how learners themselves interpret, value, and respond to these feedback practices. Yet learner-centred theories of language learning emphasise that learners are active participants whose beliefs, expectations, and emotional responses mediate the effectiveness of instructional interventions (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011). Consequently, understanding learners' perspectives remains essential for explaining why identical corrective strategies may produce different outcomes across classrooms.

A second gap relates to the predominance of cognitive approaches over sociocultural perspectives. Research on corrective feedback has traditionally focused on cognitive constructs such as noticing, interaction, input processing, and modified output. Although these perspectives have significantly advanced understanding of language learning, they frequently overlook the broader classroom environment within which feedback occurs. Learners' perceptions are shaped not only by cognitive processes but also by classroom relationships, teacher credibility, cultural expectations, learner identities, and emotional experiences. Greater integration of cognitive and sociocultural perspectives is therefore required to explain how contextual factors influence learners' engagement with corrective feedback.

A third gap concerns the limited contextual diversity of existing empirical research. Most influential studies have been conducted in East Asia, Europe, North America, and, to a lesser extent, the Middle East. These educational contexts often differ substantially from multilingual ESL classrooms in Sub-Saharan Africa with respect to language policy, teacher preparation, class size, linguistic diversity, instructional resources, and communicative opportunities. Consequently, findings from these contexts cannot automatically be generalised to African classrooms without empirical verification.

The fourth gap relates specifically to multilingual African educational contexts. Although English functions as both an official language and the principal language of instruction in many African countries, relatively little research has examined learners' perceptions of oral corrective feedback within these multilingual environments. Existing African studies have largely concentrated on error analysis, language policy, or teachers' instructional practices while giving comparatively limited attention to learners' experiences of classroom interaction and corrective feedback. This imbalance restricts understanding of how multilingual learners interpret correction, negotiate meaning, and participate in language learning within culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms.

A fifth gap concerns the relationship between learner perceptions and learner uptake. Many studies examine learner beliefs and corrective feedback effectiveness as separate research strands. Comparatively few investigations explore how learners' perceptions influence their willingness to engage with corrective feedback, attempt self-repair, or incorporate corrected forms into their developing interlanguage. This represents an important omission because learner uptake constitutes the immediate behavioural manifestation of cognitive engagement with corrective feedback. Investigating the relationship between learner perceptions and learner uptake therefore contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the corrective feedback process.

Methodologically, much of the existing literature relies on quantitative surveys, experimental designs, or classroom observations conducted independently of one another. While these approaches provide valuable evidence concerning feedback effectiveness, they often fail to capture the complexity of learners' lived experiences and classroom interactions. More contextually grounded research that combines learners' perspectives with observations of classroom practice has the potential to generate richer explanations of how corrective feedback functions in authentic educational settings.

Collectively, these gaps justify the need for the present study. By investigating learners' perspectives on oral corrective feedback within Kenyan secondary school ESL classrooms, the study contributes context-specific evidence to an area of research that has been dominated by evidence from other world regions. Furthermore, by examining the relationships among learners' perceptions, teachers' corrective feedback practices, learner uptake, and language development, the study provides a more integrated understanding of corrective feedback than has typically been offered in previous research.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study is derived from the integrated theoretical perspectives discussed earlier, including Ellis' Weak Interface Position, Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis, Long's Interaction Hypothesis, Swain's Output Hypothesis, and Sociocultural Theory. These complementary perspectives

collectively suggest that oral corrective feedback contributes to language development through a sequence of interconnected cognitive, interactional, and social processes.

The framework conceptualises teachers' oral corrective feedback practices as the principal instructional input. These practices include the selection of corrective feedback strategies such as explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, and repetition. Teachers' decisions regarding the timing, frequency, and delivery of feedback establish the instructional conditions under which learners experience corrective intervention.

Learners do not respond uniformly to these instructional practices. Instead, corrective feedback is filtered through learners' perceptions, including their beliefs about the usefulness of feedback, preferences for different corrective strategies, emotional responses to correction, previous educational experiences, motivation, and expectations concerning language learning. These learner perceptions determine whether feedback is recognised as corrective, accepted as useful, and processed sufficiently to promote learning.

Positive learner perceptions facilitate noticing, encourage active participation in classroom interaction, and increase learners' willingness to engage in self-correction. This engagement is reflected through learner uptake, including successful repair, modified output, metalinguistic reflection, and continued participation in communicative interaction. Learner uptake therefore functions as an intermediary mechanism connecting corrective feedback to language development.

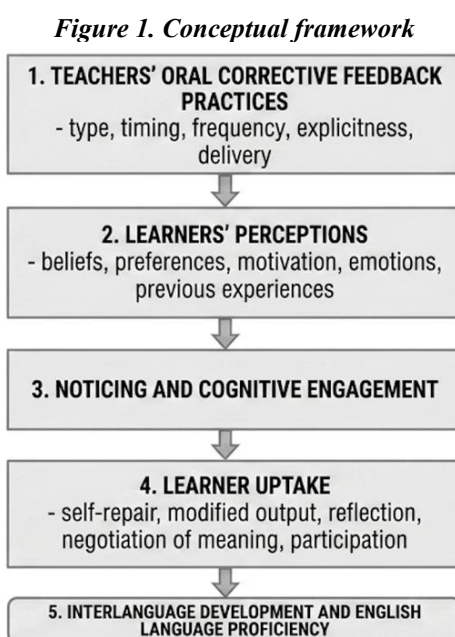
Repeated opportunities for noticing, interaction, uptake, and self-repair contribute to the gradual restructuring of learners' interlanguage, resulting in improved grammatical accuracy, communicative competence, and overall English language proficiency. Importantly, this developmental process is iterative rather than linear. As learners' proficiency increases, their perceptions of corrective feedback may also change, influencing subsequent classroom interaction and future learning.

The framework further recognises that these relationships are influenced by broader contextual factors, including classroom climate, teacher–learner relationships, class size, instructional objectives, school culture, multilingualism, and national language policy. These contextual variables shape both teachers' corrective practices and learners' interpretations of feedback, thereby moderating the effectiveness of oral corrective feedback.

Accordingly, the conceptual framework proposes that:

- Teachers' oral corrective feedback practices directly influence learners' perceptions of corrective feedback.
- Learners' perceptions influence the extent to which corrective feedback is noticed, accepted, and acted upon.
- Positive learner perceptions promote greater learner uptake through self-repair, reflection, and interaction.
- Learner uptake contributes to the gradual development of learners' interlanguage and English language proficiency.
- Contextual factors moderate each stage of this process by shaping both instructional practices and learner responses.

Figure 1 summarises the proposed conceptual framework.



Contextual Factors (Classroom climate, teacher–student relationships, multilingualism, class size, instructional objectives, school culture, language policy) influence all stages of the process.

The proposed conceptual framework positions learners as active participants in the corrective feedback process rather than passive recipients of teacher correction. It acknowledges that successful language learning depends not only on the quality of teachers' feedback but also on learners' interpretations, engagement, and opportunities to apply corrective information within meaningful communicative contexts. Consequently, the framework provides a coherent basis for investigating learners' perspectives on oral corrective feedback and their relationship with learner uptake and second language development in Kenyan secondary school ESL classrooms.

Summary of the Literature Review

This literature review has critically examined the theoretical and empirical scholarship relating to oral corrective feedback (OCF) and learners' perspectives in second language acquisition (SLA). The review demonstrates that contemporary understandings of learner errors have evolved considerably from viewing errors as indicators of failure to recognising them as natural manifestations of interlanguage development. Grounded in Error Analysis and Interlanguage Theory, learner errors are now widely understood as valuable evidence of learners' evolving linguistic competence and as essential opportunities for instructional intervention.

The review further established that oral corrective feedback constitutes one of the principal mechanisms through which teachers respond to learner errors in communicative language classrooms. Contemporary research supports the integration of corrective feedback within form-focused instruction, emphasising that feedback facilitates noticing, interaction, modified output, and language awareness without necessarily disrupting meaningful communication. Although several corrective feedback strategies—including explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, and repetition—have been shown to contribute positively to language learning, their effectiveness depends largely on instructional context, learner characteristics, and opportunities for learner engagement rather than on the feedback strategy alone.

A central finding emerging from the literature is the increasing importance of learners' perspectives in explaining the effectiveness of corrective feedback. Learners are not passive recipients of teacher correction; rather, they actively interpret feedback through the lens of their beliefs, expectations, previous learning experiences, emotional responses, motivation, and sociocultural backgrounds. Consequently, identical corrective practices may produce different learning outcomes depending on how learners perceive and engage with them. The review also highlighted evidence indicating that alignment between teachers' corrective practices and learners' expectations enhances learner engagement, classroom interaction, and overall language development.

The discussion of learner uptake further demonstrated that the relationship between corrective feedback and language acquisition is mediated by learners' responses to instructional intervention. Immediate self-repair, modified output, and metalinguistic reflection provide evidence that learners have noticed corrective feedback and are actively restructuring their developing interlanguage. However, the review also recognised that learner uptake should not be equated with permanent language acquisition, as second language development is cumulative, iterative, and influenced by repeated opportunities for interaction and reflection.

The theoretical framework integrated Ellis' Weak Interface Position, Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis, Long's Interaction Hypothesis, Swain's Output Hypothesis, and Sociocultural Theory to provide a comprehensive explanation of how oral corrective feedback contributes to second language learning. Collectively, these perspectives conceptualise language acquisition as a dynamic process involving cognitive awareness, negotiated interaction, learner-generated output, and socially mediated learning. The conceptual framework developed from these theories positions learners' perceptions as a central mediating factor linking teachers' corrective feedback practices to learner uptake and ultimately to interlanguage development and English language proficiency.

Despite substantial advances in oral corrective feedback research, the review identified several important gaps that justify the present study. Existing scholarship has predominantly focused on teachers' corrective practices, while comparatively limited attention has been devoted to learners' perspectives, particularly within multilingual English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts. Furthermore, much of the empirical evidence originates from Asia, Europe, and North America, with relatively few studies conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa. The distinctive linguistic, educational, and sociocultural characteristics of African multilingual classrooms therefore remain underrepresented in the international literature. In addition, relatively little research has examined the relationship between learners' perceptions of oral corrective feedback and learner uptake within authentic classroom settings.

Taken together, the reviewed literature demonstrates that understanding learners' perspectives is essential for developing effective, learner-centred corrective feedback practices. It also establishes a strong theoretical and empirical foundation for investigating learners' perceptions of oral corrective feedback in Kenyan secondary school ESL classrooms. By addressing the identified conceptual, contextual, and methodological gaps, the present study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how learners interpret, engage with, and benefit from oral corrective feedback in multilingual educational environments. In doing so, it extends the international

literature on corrective feedback while providing contextually relevant evidence to inform English language teaching policy, classroom practice, and future research in Kenya and other multilingual African contexts.

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