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Peer Corrective Feedback: Research Implications and Teachers' Complications

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Abstract

Although the results of studies have confirmed the beneficial effects of peer corrective feedback (PCF) and even its superior effects compared to teacher feedback, the results of some studies reveal that teachers are hesitant or cautious in their use of peer correction. It is not clear, however, what factors and conditions negatively influence the teachers' willingness to embrace its potentials in learning. Accordingly, the present study was conducted to investigate the teachers' attitudes and beliefs in this regard as well as the factors they take into account in their decision to advocate activities that involve the use of PCF. For this purpose, in-depth interviews were conducted with 63 Iranian EFL teachers using questions developed based on the related literature. Content analysis of the interviews revealed five major themes including effectiveness of PCF, concern about learners' negative emotional response to PCF, the role of learners' age in being receptive to PCF, the role of learners' proficiency level in PCF effectiveness, and teachers' perception of their learners' preferences for and attitude toward PF. Generally, the majority teachers seemed to be doubtful in their tendency to use peer correction primarily because they thought their learners are not receptive to peer comments on their linguistic performance. The results carry significant implications for language teachers and teacher education programs.

Keywords: Oral corrective feedback, peer corrective feedback, attitude, preferences, EFL teachers

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1. Introduction

The role of oral corrective feedback (OCF) in learners' interlanguage development has been the subject of recent studies. The results seem to support its beneficial effects if appropriate conditions are provided for learners' use of the corrections. The majority studies have been either experimental involving treatment or descriptive-observational. A large number of studies have also examined learners' and teachers' preferences for different types of OCF, immediate and delayed feedback as well as teacher and peer feedback. One of the under-researched areas in this respect, however, is the teachers' attitude toward peer error correction and their awareness of the learners' attitude. Most of the studies on preferences for peer corrective feedback (PCF) have been focused on the learners' perspective and the factors influencing their orientation toward corrections coming from their classmates. Based on the findings, learners do not trust peer feedback as much as teacher feedback (Kaivanpanah, et al., 2015; Zaccaron & Xhafaj, 2024) despite their positive attitude to PCF. Teachers' beliefs, cognition and practice have been ignored in this respect.

The teachers also need to be aware of the factors discovered to affect their students' attitude to correction from peers. As pointed out by Zuniga and Simard (2022, p. 2), "As learners strive to express themselves in an error-prone and developing linguistic system, they are conditioned through prior experience to anticipate communication problems and potential negative evaluation from interlocutors, which can give rise to a situation-specific foreign language anxiety". The results of a study by McConlogue (2015) showed that learners on the receiving side of written PCF were particularly sensitive to peer correction viewing it negatively in contrast with those on the providing side. This may be more serious in the case of OCF where learners are more subject to peer evaluation in the whole class in contrast with the written CF where normally two learners are involved. As pointed out by Bodnar, et al. (2017), "in oral L2 practice anxiety tends to be high" (p.4). Considering the importance of paying attention to the students' emotions caused by correction especially peer correction, there is a need to understand the factors that need to be taken into account by the teachers to avoid creation of negative feelings, which have been found to make the correction ineffective (Rassaei, 2013; Sheen, 2008).

On the other hand, considering the fact that the effectiveness of PCF is mediated by various social and contextual factors (Iwashita & Dao, 2021), as the major practitioners of language teaching dealing

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directly with the learners, the teachers are the main source of information and experience about these factors. Furthermore, there is a need to find out if the teachers' beliefs and attitudes in this respect reflect the research findings in relation to the effectiveness of PCF. Given the fact that they have been found to be more cautious about practicing oral peer correction (Kaivanpanah, et al., 2015), there seems to be a need to delve into teachers' views about and belief in peer-provided correction to find the factors that seem to curb their willingness to implement peer correction and compare them with the research findings to find the possible areas of mismatch, which can help to find whether the teachers' preferences for peer correction are informed by misconceived beliefs. Previous studies have not also addressed the possible reasons behind the teachers' beliefs about PCF. This is particularly significant given the determining role of L2 teachers in engaging the learners with PCF 'affectively, behaviorally, and cognitively' and preparing them to benefit from peer comments (Cheng & Zhang, 2024).

2. Review of the related literature

Peer interaction and corrective feedback have become integral to contemporary language learning theories, highlighting the importance of social interaction in the acquisition process. These concepts encourage collaborative learning, enhance language awareness, and facilitate the negotiation of meaning and form among learners. The role of peer corrective feedback (PCF) in language acquisition has been supported by different theories. For instance, drawing on Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis, Swain's (1998) Output Hypothesis, and Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis, researchers have focused on the role of peer interaction and peer correction. It is believed that through providing opportunities for learner-learner interaction, peer interaction and feedback can offer opportunities for effective interaction as well as modified output opportunities preparing the ground for improved linguistic performance. In the framework of the Skill Acquisition Theory, peer interaction and PCF are believed to help in proceduralization of declarative or explicit knowledge (Iwashita & Dao, 2021). Accordingly, the significance of interaction and creating interaction and modified output opportunities in language learning classes has received the attention of researchers.

Peer interaction undoubtedly provides a good avenue for effective real-life interaction between the learners (Adams & Oliver, 2023). In their survey on the teachers' beliefs about the advantages of peer interaction, Adams and Oliver discovered several merits associated with peer interaction including providing the opportunity for learning new language (e.g., vocabulary), receiving peer feedback,

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applying the instructed language rules, using grammar in context, authentic language use, developing fluency, stimulating social situations, building confidence in language use, and increasing motivation. However, they did not specifically focus on teachers' more specific views on any of these advantages related to peer interaction.

2.1. Experimental studies on PCF

Concerning receiving peer feedback, based on the studies, whether peer learners can be the source of error correction has been the source of controversy. The findings of a study by Yüksel et al. (2021) revealed that peer feedback was the least favored feedback source for Turkish teachers. Nevertheless, the results of some experimental studies on peer correction point to its effective role in producing learning (Lynch, 2007; Sato & Lyster, 2012; Sato & Viveros, 2016; Sippel & Jackson, 2015). Sippel and Jackson even found higher effectiveness for peer feedback compared to teacher feedback in the acquisition of German present perfect tense and past participle formation by intermediate learners with the peer feedback producing larger long-term gains; they attributed this effect to its higher effectiveness in increasing learners' attention to form and creating more engagement as well as the fact that learners can benefit from both providing and receiving PF. Sato and Lyster (2012) also discovered that peer interaction and peer correction using both recast and prompts led to L2 development and proceduralization of their L2 explicit knowledge of different target forms as well as improved speech rate and fluency. Research on written PCF (Yu & Lee, 2016) also shows that low proficiency is not, in fact, a debilitating factor in less proficient learners' ability to provide PCF; The comments provided by Chinese low proficiency students on their peers' writing drafts during group-based activities not only were perceived as useful by the peers but positively influenced the quality of the peers' writing; in 88.1% of the cases, the revisions following the low proficiency peers' corrections were found to be better than the original drafts. Lundstrom and Baker (2009) found that learners benefited more from providing rather than receiving PCF on their peers' performance.

2.2. Attitudinal studies on PCF

Despite the fact that its beneficial effects have been confirmed in the experimental studies, the lower frequency of PCF, compared to teacher feedback, has been attributed to its lower quality; in other words, learners may not trust PF as much as teacher feedback. Accordingly, most of the studies point to learners'

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higher preference for teacher feedback considering teachers as a more reliable source of knowledge required for correction (Brown, 2009; Yoshida, 2008).

The results of observational and survey-based studies indicate that PCF is normally associated with lower quality and frequency as well as lower explicitness, respectively, compared to teacher and native speaker correction. Concerning the quality of peer feedback, the classmates have been found to provide only input-providing types of feedback such as recast rather than output-prompting ones, which have been found to be more beneficial to interlanguage development (Tan et al., 2022). In addition, Bruton and Samuda (1980) found that learners did not always notice communication breakdown in interaction with their peers and, accordingly, did not provide correction on the non-target-like forms used by their peers. Some (e.g., Adams et al., 2011) question the effectiveness and quality of PCF in L2 development stating that it is less beneficial than teacher feedback (Toth, 2008). Adams (2007) found that the feedback provided by learners was inaccurate in some cases due to the learners' limited knowledge. McDonough (2004) pointed out that peer correction and interaction was beneficial to the development of oral communication skills but less effective for grammar learning.

Concerning the explicitness of peer feedback, some (e.g., Philp et al., 2013) believe that since learners correct each other's errors when they are deeply engaged in communication and striving to transfer their meaning, their attention to form decreases as against the case in teacher error correction. In contrast, as pointed out by Lee (2014), students may focus on the product rather than the process following teacher feedback as the result of a perfunctory engagement.

As a matter of fact, due the concerns about the learners' negative attitude toward feedback from the classmates, the studies on peer feedback have been primarily focused on the learners' attitude toward PCF. Sato (2013) for instance, examined Japanese second language learners' beliefs about peer interaction and correction using a questionnaire. The intervention involved an interactive learning activity to raise learners' awareness of the benefits of peer interaction. A Learning Styles Checklist was also administered to learn about the students' learning styles and behavior, which were likely to explain the learners' willingness to actively participate in group-based activities. The learners could also understand the collaborative activities' potential to help learners foster their language skills. Then, they discussed the reasons behind their answers to the checklist in small groups. Subsequently, the instructors explained the behaviors beneficial for the development of communicative skills. Finally, the learners became involved in a role play practice in which they provided feedback to each other. The results

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showed that the learners already held positive views about peer correction though they did not completely trust their friends' comments. A collaborative learning environment and positive social relationships among the learners were found to mediate the learners' attitude to PCF. One of the limitations associated with the design of Sato's study, as also pointed out by Sato, was that the interviews were conducted following the PCF treatment, which is likely to have influenced the learners' beliefs about peer correction.

The results of some studies (Sato & Lyster, 2012), however, show that under certain circumstances, learners appreciate their peers' comments and feedback on their performance. Sato and Lyster examined the effect of teaching learners how to provide PCF and effects of peer interaction and CF on their interlanguage development in four university-level English classes as control, peer-interaction-only, peer interaction and recast and peer interaction and prompt groups. The treatment involved 10 60-minute sessions involving peer interaction (40 mins) and PF training, in which the learner participants were taught how to provide corrective feedback in the form of recast and prompt. The learners' interlanguage development as the result of the treatment was measured by examining the interactional moves used and the learners' speech rate as a representation of their speed of processing and fluency on a picture description and a decision-making task. Sato and Lyster divided speech rate into unpruned and pruned; pruned speech rate was measures by "a) subtracting the sum of filled (e.g., mm, ah) and unfilled pauses (the cutoff was 200 ms) from the delivery time and (b) excluding repetitions and hesitation markers from the word count" (p. 604). The interactional moves were also claimed to be related to L2 development. The results showed higher performance of the feedback groups compared to peer-interaction-only and control groups while the peer interaction group only outperformed the control group on fluency measures; the feedback training groups produced more self-initiated output modification. The findings revealed no significant difference between the groups in the unpruned speech rate; in the pruned speech rate measure, however, the feedback groups outperformed the other two groups.

In their examination of the teachers' attitude to OCF and their corrective practice inside the classroom, Hernandez and Reyes-Cruz (2012) found a generally positive attitude in the teachers. However, students' feelings and emotions led some of the teachers to consider it as optional. In practice, unfocused OCF and implicit correction were more prevalent. Teacher feedback was preferred over PF. The instructors did not favor self-correction. The teachers associated OCF with grammar and focus on form and their focus was mainly on fluency and meaning instruction. Méndez and Cruz attributed this to

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the teachers' teaching experience, academic profile, and their educational background, but provided no details as to how these might have affected the teachers' attitude. The teachers, further, believed that too much correction may be frustrating and demotivating. Most of the teachers (73.3%) believed that correction is inhibitive to learners' participation in classroom activities. With regard to PCF, the teachers in this study believed that it was more appropriate for advanced students but not for beginners as they do not trust their classmates' knowledge. However, the authors attributed this attitude to the social representations and the less friendly relationships of the beginner learners, who have just become classmates as language learners. The trusting environment in the advanced classes, in contrast, make peer correction more acceptable. Metalinguistic feedback was more appropriate for advanced learners, according to the teachers. Most of the teachers showed a preference for delayed CF directed at the whole class at the end of each session. There was a higher tendency to correct morphosyntactic errors followed by phonological errors. Most of the teachers (86.7%) did not consider peer correction as a positive activity; the rest partially agreed with using it, but none of the teachers thought it was a positive activity. More than half of the teachers (53%), however, did not regard teacher correction as more effective than peer correction. The authors attributed this to the traditional and paternalistic educational background of the teachers in Mexico. The teachers reported clarification request and recast as their most highly preferred feedback type. Overall, "inconsistency; ambiguity of teachers' corrections; random and unsystematic feedback on errors by teachers; acceptance of errors for fear of interrupting the communication; and a wide range of learner error types addressed as corrective feedback" (p. 74) were reported to the problems in teachers' corrective beliefs and behavior.

Martin and Sippel (2021) examined the effect of training on peer interaction and PCF along with focus on form instruction and peer correction on learners' beliefs about peer interaction and PCF. The participants included Chinese EFL learners. The study involved the provision of PCF by one group and receiving PCF by another. There was also another group that received only teacher corrective feedback and a control group. The peer feedback group became also engaged in peer interaction, PCF and training on how to provide PCF. Based on the results, training on PCF following focus on form instruction made the collaborative learning and peer feedback experience more enjoyable to the learners. The training intervention did not have any effect on their beliefs about the effectiveness of peer interaction because they already had positive views about its effect at the beginning of the study. With regard to PCF, the training seemed to have made learners keener to correct their classmates' errors; it also had given them more confidence in doing so. In other words, the intervention had a positive psychological effect on the

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learners' motivation and confidence to interact and provide correction the peers' errors. Martin and Sippel found a differential effect for focus on form instruction and peer feedback training on two different target structures, i.e., past participle formation as an item-based structures and auxiliary verb selection as a rule-based structure; PCF training produced significantly better results compared to teacher feedback group. The group receiving teacher feedback believed that their feedback was more beneficial than that of the peer feedback receivers. Furthermore, the providers of PCF believed it was beneficial for their linguistic development; however, they felt uncomfortable correcting their classmates despite the fact that the receivers of PCF did not feel uncomfortable at all.

Zaccaron and Xhafaj (2024) found that learners' perceptions about the validity and quality of peer feedback rather than the feedback itself influences their ability to benefit from their peers' comments. A group of the learners were corrected by their teacher, which was disguised as peer feedback and another group were corrected by their peers. Data were collected through drafts of two essays, feedback, and a questionnaire. Based on the findings, "The trust, or rather the lack of it, in the source of feedback seemed to lead to a more critical analysis of feedback when participants thought it came from an anonymous peer" (p. 58). In other words, the participants became as critically engaged with the feedback provided by their teachers when they assumed it was coming from a peer showing that it is their perception rather than the actual feedback that determines their degree of trusting and engagement with the provided feedback.

2.3. The present study

As pointed out by Soruc et al. (2024, p. 3), "a synthesis of these studies indicates considerable divergence among teachers in their decisions on whether or not to offer OCF". In explanation for the divergent findings, Soruc et al. mentioned that teachers' distinct cognitive perspectives in different contexts in relation to the provision of OCF might have influenced their attitude to peer correction. Few studies, as also mentioned by Soruc et al., have examined the influential factors in teachers' corrective decisions; more research in this domain is needed (Nassaji and Kartchava 2019; Ha and Murray 2021).

Despite the fact that its beneficial effects have been proved in the studies, no study has examined teachers' attitude toward PCF and whether teachers, as the main arbiters of relevance (Widdowson, 1990), believe in and allow the use of peer feedback in their classes. The factors believed to be important

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from the teachers' perspective have not also been investigated. The reason is that peer correction has the potential to cause such negative emotional feelings if not practiced appropriately taking into account the learners' attitude and preference. Concerning their attitude, Kaivanpanah et al. (2015) found that teachers are hesitant to allow their students to correct their classmates' errors. Teachers' willingness to allow and plan for peer interaction and correction might also be attributable to the social and contextual factors they take into account when deciding on their corrective practice. There is limited knowledge in this regard, however. Few studies (Kaivanpanah et al., 2015) have focused on the teachers' beliefs and preferences in this regard. Kaivanpanah et al. discovered that teachers are hesitant to use PCF in their classes. The reasons behind this doubtful attitude have not been investigated, however, and the teachers' preferences and cognition have been ignored in the studies. Given the fact that PF can increase the learning opportunities in the class to a large extent, the first step in preparing the ground for its effective use in the classrooms is to identify the influential and the possibly inhibitive factors that affect the teachers' willingness to adopt it in their classes. On this basis, the following research questions were addressed in the present study.

2.4. Research questions

1) What is the Iranian EFL teachers' attitude to peer error correction?
2) What factors do Iranian EFL teachers take into consideration in peer error correction?
3) Is there any consistency between teachers' beliefs and research findings?

3. Method

A qualitative cross-sectional survey-based design was used to find the answer to the research questions. In this way, the preferences that language teachers hold for peer error correction, the teachers' perception and attitudes in this regard as well as the factors they believe are effective in forming their preferences and attitude were investigated using in-depth semi-structured interviews.

3.1. Participants

The participants included 63 Iranian male and female EFL teachers aged 21-54 from schools and private language institutes. They were selected by availability sampling method. The participating teachers had

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at least two years of teaching experience in conversation-based classes in private language institutes and schools. They had either a BA (*no* = 43) or an MA (*no* = 20) in applied linguistics, English literature, and Translation studies. All the teachers had at least two years of teaching experience in speaking-based classes. Their learners (n = 319) were reportedly elementary (*no* =51/16%), intermediate (*no* = 193/60.5%) and advanced learners (*no* = 75/23.5%).

3.2. Instrument

For a comprehensive investigation of the factors teachers take into consideration in using peer correction in their classes, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participating teachers. The researchers attended the language institutes in Hamedan and Gorgan, Iran, to conduct face-to-face interviews. To enable a comparison with the research findings in this regard, the interview questions were developed based on the related literature (see Appendix), which also functioned as the framework for coding the obtained data. The interviews lasted from 15 to 30 minutes.

3.3. Data Analysis

To interpret the interview data, this study employed thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The first two research questions, which explored the Iranian EFL teachers' attitude towards and the factors they take into consideration in peer error correction guided this process. At first, the authors conducted multiple readings of the transcripts to identify possible themes. In the second phase, both authors collaboratively examined these initial codes. They focused on preserving the diversity of the original codes while constructing broader components and more advanced sub-themes. During the third stage, both authors selected quotes that corresponded with the main themes. Subsequently, they refined and named the themes. Once the themes were finalized, the researchers proceeded with writing the report.

3.4.Procedure

The study involved developing the interview questions based on the literature. The issues addressed in the interviews concerned the effectiveness of peer error correction, the factors believed to mediate its effectiveness (e.g., learners' proficiency level) as well as the factors related to the beliefs and attitudes in this regard. Following that, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teacher participants. The

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interviews and the teachers' responses were analyzed and coded by the authors and the related themes and subthemes were extracted. The coding was guided by the coding framework developed based on the first two research questions. The identified themes were then analyzed, reported, and discussed based on the existing literature.

4. Results and discussion

The interviews were submitted to content analysis by two experts in the field. After checking coding consistency by the two coders, the cases of discrepancy were identified, discussed with the two coders and resolved. To find the answer to the first two research questions, which concerned the teachers' attitude to OCF and the factors they consider in allowing its use, the major themes and subthemes were extracted from the interview data by content analysis (see Table 1 for details). For the third research questions, which concerned the consistency between teachers' complications and research implications, the interview findings were juxtaposed with the research findings for comparison (see Table 2). The results revealed five major themes in relation to different dimensions of PCF from the teachers' perspective. The major themes concerned the issues touched upon in the literature such as learners' emotional reactions and the role of learners' proficiency level in the quality of PCF as well as issues that have not been considered in the literature. The major themes included teachers' beliefs about the effectiveness of PCF, their concerns about learners' negative emotional response to PCF, the role of learners' age in being receptive to PCF, the role of learners' proficiency level in PCF effectiveness, and teachers' perception of their learners' preferences for and attitude toward PCF (see Table 1).

4.1. Effectiveness of PCF

The majority of teachers (*no*=48) believed that teacher feedback is more effective and accurate than PCF given the teachers' higher knowledge of the language. "To be able to provide effective correction, you need to know technically and exactly what is wrong with the learners' utterance." Learners were believed to trust teacher feedback more than PCF because of this fact. However, some of the interviewed teachers (*no*=11) believed that under emotionally comfortable learning conditions, peer correction can produce even more effective learning compared to teacher feedback. The reasons mentioned by the teachers was that because learners are at the same level and because "a friend rather than a power like teacher is telling them what is wrong with their utterance," they can better understand the corrective intention of the

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provided feedback, as against the case in teacher feedback in which case the learner may not even figure out what is wrong with his/her utterance and if any correction has been made at all. This suggests that learners may have a higher level of uptake following PCF than teacher feedback, which, however, requires an independent study to test by comparing learners' rate of uptake following teacher and peer feedback.

Table 1

The Major Themes and Subthemes Extracted from the Interviews

Major themes	Subthemes
Effectiveness of PCF	Teacher feedback is more effective and accurate.
	Under emotionally comfortable learning conditions, peer correction can produce even more effective learning
	Peer correction is more easily comprehensible
	Learners expect teachers to confirm PCF.
	PCF is less anxiety-provoking and more conducive to learning.
Learners' emotional response to PCF	PCF is likely to create negative emotional reactions.
	Degree of intimacy between the classmates is a determining factor.
	Type of activity matters in how learners react to peer correction.
	PCF is less inhibitive than teacher feedback.
	Personal characteristics of learners need to be seriously considered.
The role of learners' age	Younger learners are more sensitive.
	Adult learners are more sensitive.
	peer correction should be approached with caution for both younger and older age groups.
The role of learners' proficiency level	More proficient learners are able to provide more reliable feedback.
	Lower proficiency is associated with limited knowledge and less reliable feedback.
	Quality of feedback may not be important but learners' expectations are.
	Low-proficiency learners expect the teacher to have the final word.
	Being almost at the same level has an advantage over teacher correction; classmates can provide correction in a simpler language
Teachers' perception of their learners' preferences	Learners are likely to show a negative reaction to PCF.
	The teachers stated that they were aware of their learners' attitude to PCF.
	None of the teachers had explicitly asked the learners' attitude.
	The teachers' previous learning experience seemed to influence their perception of learners' attitude.

Another major advantage for PCF mentioned by the teachers was that because learners understand each other better given the fact that they are almost at the same level of proficiency, they can better understand each other's point in correction. As one of the teachers commented,

> "I may have to repeat an error two or three times for some of my students to understand the gap in their utterance, but a simple recasting by the classmates makes the learners

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> understand that they have made an error; it's interesting that I have never seen, not even a single time, a learner repeat their friend's error to make them notice their error."

Furthermore, learners tend to be more intimate with their classmates than their teacher; this intimacy helps learners to better notice the gap in their utterance becoming more concentrated. "Teacher feedback might be distractive", another teacher pointed out; "As soon as you interrupt a learner for correction, the learner loses the track of what s/he was trying to say." The results of a recent study by Wang, Patterson and Peng (2024) on the factors affecting learners' willingness to communicate indicated that the classroom social climate including the type of relationship learners have with their peers and teachers and the feeling of emotional support and encouragement by peers promote willingness to communicate in class. A positive and supportive learning environment is more conducive to learners' willingness to communicate in class.

An important point referred to by the interviewed teachers concerned learners' expectations. The teachers believed their learners expect them to confirm their classmates' correction. In other words, not only did the teachers believe peer correction might not be as effective and efficient as teacher feedback, they also believed that the learners themselves do not trust each other's comments as perfectly reliable; The teacher, as the more reliable source of knowledge, needs to control and confirm the accuracy of the learners' comments. "Most of the time, my learners look into my eyes waiting for me to nod my head in confirmation of the feedback their classmates has just provided", one of the teachers stated. The results of a study by Sadoughi and Hejazi (2023) also confirmed the significance of perceived teacher support in learners' achievement. This suggests that they do not completely trust the validity of their peers' comments. The teachers need to play their supportive and controlling role in this respect. These doubtful attitudes shown by the learners as well as concern about negative emotional reactions might explain why teachers are not as open to PF as their learners are, as also suggested by the results of the study by Kaivanpanah et al. (2015).

Finally, according to the teachers, teachers address the learners' errors in front of the classmates, which might prove anxiety-provoking inhibiting their willingness to speak in the class, as against the case in peer correction, which normally occurs in cooperative learning activities in much smaller groups. As noted by one of the interviewed teachers,

> "I assign my students to small groups of two or three and try to include at least one student with higher proficiency to help their friends; the thing is that in small groups, my students tend to speak more and cooperate to complete the task I have assigned to them; I see how

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> they comment and discuss grammatical matters in doing the task. Actually, I don't see this much of activity when we are doing activities that involve the whole class. I don't know, but I think maybe they tend to become anxious when they are exposed to the whole class. This is particularly the case when the students are not intimate or the number of students is more than 10."

In fact, quasi-experimental studies (e.g., Luquin and Roothooft, 2019; Rassaei, 2013; Sheen, 2008) have confirmed the role of anxiety in learners' ability to notice and learn from correction. The results of a recent study by Akhtari and Azad (2023) also pointed to the anxiety-provoking effect of immediate as against delayed correction, which led to reduced fluency in the learners. This is particularly the case during oral activities "since in oral L2 practice anxiety tends to be high (Bodnar et al., 2017, p.4).

4.2. Learners' emotional reaction

Nevertheless, the teachers warned that negative emotional response caused by PCF may render it ineffective and even detrimental. This was, in fact, the most important concern expressed by the teachers. The major precondition for making learners involved in cooperative language learning activities and peer correction was a degree of intimacy between them otherwise they may not even pay attention to their error being only focused on their classmates' disruption of the supposedly comfortable language learning atmosphere. Even the teachers who believed peer correction is more effective mentioned intimacy between the learners as the reason behind this belief. As one of the teachers stated:

> "I do believe in peer correction. And I think it's better to be corrected by a friend than a teacher because there's a sense of cordiality between friends and classmates and it feels less embarrassing. The correction will also stick to our minds better. In my opinion, studying in groups always works better than studying alone. Therefore, peer correction can help students improve more."

The teachers' comments suggested the need to pay attention to an important consideration in allowing the learners to correct one another; the type of activity learners are involved in. One of the teachers asserted that, to observe leaners' emotional comfort, he does not allow learners to correct one another during conversational activities due to the negative reaction shown by the learners when interrupted in the middle of their attempt to convey their meaning. According to him, "learners are more likely to become upset with their friends' correction during speaking-based activities than when they are practicing grammar." "Students are normally ok with correcting grammatical errors. I have noticed that

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they show negative reaction to correction of their errors in pronunciation, I don't know why. Maybe, because they consider pronunciation errors as trivial and don't like to be corrected in trivial errors." In the case of communicative activities, this is particularly important because, according to him, a major type of feedback used by the learners to correct one another is explicit correction, which is an obtrusive and sensitive form of correction as it is more likely to lead to embarrassment. "Explicit correction by a classmate in the middle of classroom discussion?! Very inhibitive", another teacher commented. The teachers believed learners may not have this negative attitude toward the explicit corrections when they are used by the teacher. Shirkhani and Tajeddin (2016), for instance, found that Iranian EFL teachers used explicit correction quite often. Maftoon and Rezaie (2013) also found explicit correction to be the second most frequently used feedback types by Iranian teachers. This suggests that the source of feedback (i.e., teacher or peers), according to the teachers, determines the quality of learners' reaction to different feedback types. During grammar-based activities, however, learners are more receptive to PCF and, in fact, "they want and expect to be corrected; they provide even more effective feedback compared to the teacher".

On the other side of the extreme, five teachers mentioned that peer feedback is less inhibitive than teacher feedback. One of the teachers commented,

> "Yes, I do believe in peer correction. And I think it's better to be corrected by a friend than a teacher. Because there's a sense of cordiality between friends and classmates and it feels less embarrassing. The correction will also stick to our minds better. In my opinion, studying in groups always works better than studying alone. Therefore, peer correction can help students improve more."

Most of the teachers mentioned individual differences in whether and how feedback from peers may have an effect on their emotional feelings. According to them, some learners are shy and become easily embarrassed being corrected by their classmates. Some tend to become easily anxious about making an error that would be responded to by the classmates on fear of losing face in front of their classmates. Therefore, they lose their willingness to contribute to the classroom discussions. "Peer correction makes these types of learners further reserved", one of the teachers commented. The teachers pointed out that creating an emotionally comfortable learning atmosphere may alleviate the situation, but, generally, these types of learners are intimidated by the prospect of making an error and being corrected by the classmates.

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4.3. The role of learners' age

The teachers had conflicting views on the role of age in how learners may react to peer correction. Some believed peer correction is more sensitive for younger age groups and the comments from peers are emotionally motivated. This is not the case for adults as they are more emotionally stable. Others had an opposite view believing that adult learners, because of their higher self-esteem and since they do not like to lose face in front of their classmates, are more easily moved emotionally by peer comments. The latter view is in line with the findings of a study by Yoshida (2008), who found that teachers preferred to use recast to avoid embarrassing their adult students. The majority teachers (*no* = 49), however, believed younger learners are more receptive to peer correction. The results of a study by Li and Li (2022) also showed that with an increase in learners' age, their willingness to communicate in meaning-based activities is reduced. The teachers who believed younger learners are more receptive to peer correction (*no* = 8), in contrast, believed that learners of the same age are more likely to accept correction by peers. According to them, lower age groups consider teacher as the only reliable source of knowledge because of their lower learning experience. According to the teachers, there is an association between age and proficiency level. As pointed out by one of the teachers who believed younger learners are more likely to develop negative feelings by PCF, "what makes age important is their proficiency level. If they are young and homogeneous in terms of proficiency level, they may have a favorable attitude to peer correction." We were not very specific on the interviews about the difference between younger learners compared to teenagers or younger and older adults. Teaching experience might have a role to play in this respect. In other words, the reason for teachers' belief that younger learners are more negatively influenced by peer correction might have stemmed from their experience with teenagers or their positive attitudes might be attributable to their teaching experience with younger children.

Some teachers believed that peer correction should be approached with caution for both teenagers and adults. According to them, teenagers like to show off their knowledge and to show others that they know more than others; that is why peer correction happens more frequently among these learners. "The one who is giving feedback feels happy and proud, right against the feedback receiver who has exactly opposite feelings, upset and humiliated", one of the teachers said using a funny tone. Another teacher mentioned, "In my teenager classrooms, learners correct one another even if I ask them not to, you know, right in the middle of their classmates' speech." The only reaction shown by the learners at whom the corrections are targeted is to ignore their friends' comment. "They do not care to see what their classmate's point was", a teacher stated. "Maybe this is a punitive reaction for their intrusive classmate!",

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a teacher joked. These comments suggested that in competitive and less friendly classroom atmospheres, the effectiveness of PCF is undermined. In other words, the affective filter may inhibit learners' implementation of feedback.

4.4. The role of learners' proficiency level in PCF effectiveness

The teachers were also divided in their views on the role of learners' proficiency level in whether they are receptive to PF or not. A large number of teachers (41 out of 55) confirmed the role of learners' proficiency level in the quality of feedback they provide to each other. The majority of them believed that more proficient learners are able to provide more reliable feedback and that more proficient learners trust their classmates' feedback more. In contrast, limited knowledge associated with lower levels of proficiency prevents learners from trusting and accepting their peers' comments. Some (no=3) believed that the quality of feedback may not be a matter but that learners' expectations will be. In other words, low-proficiency learners are less likely to accept the validity of their peers' comments on their linguistic performance. In fact, the results of a study by Aben, Timmermans, Dingiloudi, Strijbos (2023) confirm the role of proficiency level in the learners' perception of the classmates' linguistic abilities; They found that perceptions about the peers' proficiency affects their judgment and evaluation of their performance; the learners assigned different scores to similar writings illusioned to have higher and lower capabilities; they assigned higher grades to the writings of the learners they illusioned to have higher proficiency. Xu and Fan (2024) also found a different level of L1 use by high-proficiency and low-proficiency learners during peer interaction. The reason for this, as pointed out by Xu and Fan, was the low-proficiency learners' limited knowledge of form. In other words, they were not aware of different forms to discuss for use during task completion and they used L1, Chinese, only for vocabulary search. More proficient learners, nevertheless, discussed the use of grammatical forms for conveying their meaning in the form of metacognitive and grammar talk leading to higher use of L1. In other words, less proficient learners did not have much knowledge to share or discuss for use in completing the assigned tasks.

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Table 2

Research Findings Versus Teachers' Beliefs

Point of comparison		Research findings	Teachers' views
Effectiveness		-PCF is effective and can be even more effective than teacher feedback (Lynch, 2007; Sato & Lyster, 2012; Sato & Viveros, 2016; Sippel and Jackson, 2015).	-Majority teachers: TF is less anxiety-provoking, more effective and accurate. -In emotionally comfortable conditions, PCF can be more effective. -PCF is more easily comprehensible.
Influential factors	Proficiency	-Low proficiency is not a debilitating factor in provision of PCF (Yu & Lee, 2016). -Teachers consider PCF as more appropriate for advanced students but not for beginners as they do not trust their classmates' knowledge (Hernandez and Reyes-Cruz, 2012).	-Proficient learners provide more reliable feedback. -Lower proficiency is associated with limited knowledge and less reliable. -Quality of feedback may not be important but learners' expectations are. -Low-proficiency learners expect the teacher to have the final word. -Being from the same level is an advantage; peers can provide correction in a simpler language.
	Age	-No studies, to the best of our knowledge, have examined this issue.	-Teachers had conflicting views; some believed younger and some believed older learners are less sensitive.
	Gender	-No studies, to the best of our knowledge, have examined this issue.	-Girls are more sensitive to PCF than boys.
	Activity type	-PCF is beneficial to oral communication skills development but less effective for grammar learning (McDonough, 2004). -PCF is less explicit and less likely to be noticed in meaning-based activities (Philp et al., 2013).	-Type of activity matters in how learners react to PCF. Learners are less likely to favor interruption by peers in oral activities.
Attitude	Teachers	-Teachers have a higher preference for teacher over PCF (Hernandez & Reyes-Cruz, 2012). -PCF is associated with lower quality, frequency and lower explicitness (Tan, Reynolds, & Ha, 2022; Bruton & Samuda, 1980; Toth, 2008; Adams, 2007).	-Majority teachers have a higher preference for teacher over PCF. -PCF is less inhibitive than teacher feedback.
	Learners	-Learners have a higher preference for teacher feedback (Brown, 2009; Yoshida, 2008). -Learners hold positive views about PCF, but do not completely trust it (Sato, 2013; Zaccaron & Xhafaj, 2024). -Learners' perception rather than the PCF itself affects their degree of trust and engagement with PCF (Zaccaron & Xhafaj, 2024). -Learners appreciate their peers' comments and feedback if trained on how to provide it (Sato & Lyster, 2012). -Training on provision of PCF has a positive psychological effect and can help produce significantly better results than teacher feedback (Martin and Sippel, 2021).	-Majority teachers: care to be practiced in allowing PCF as it may create negative emotional reactions. -Learners expect teachers to confirm PCF. -Degree of intimacy between the classmates is a determining factor. -Personal characteristics of learners need to be taken into account. -Teachers had not explicitly asked about the learners' attitude to PCF.

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In the best possible conditions, low-proficiency learners expect the teacher to have the final word or confirm the accuracy of their friends' correction. As one of the teachers commented, "Most of the time, my learners look into my eyes waiting for me to nod my head in confirmation of the feedback their classmates has just provided". Two of the teachers believed that if the learners are from the same proficiency level, then they will be better able to provide understandable feedback to each other. One of them asserted interestingly that "classmates can provide correction in a simpler language" that is more understandable than teacher feedback. Four teachers referred to the complexity of the grammatical structure on which correction is provided as a determining factor in whether learners can clearly realize why their friends corrected them.

Overall, there seems to be low consistency between the research findings and teachers' beliefs and views with regard to the effectiveness of PCF and the role of proficiency level in this respect (see Table 2). While the majority teachers believe teacher correction to be more effective and reliable, the results of empirical findings, as presented in Table 2, point to even higher effectiveness for PCF compared to teacher feedback. With regard to the role of proficiency level, while the teachers believed advanced learners provide more effective PCF and low proficient learners' feedback is not reliable due to their limited knowledge, the research findings suggest that low proficiency is not a debilitating factor in this respect.

4.5. Teachers' perception of their learners' preferences for and attitude toward CF

As it was already mentioned, the majority of teachers held a negative attitude toward the use of PCF unless under the teachers' supervision and control. One of the reasons they mentioned as to why they think it is not appropriate in the Iranian context was that they believed the major obstacle is the learners' negative reaction to comments from classmates. One of the interview questions was specifically related to the teachers' awareness of learners' preferences asking them whether they had ever asked their learners whether they prefer correction from peers or not. An interesting point about the teachers was that they believed they were aware of their learners' attitude to PCF; nevertheless, none mentioned that they had asked the learners about their attitude. One of the teachers stated: "I understand from their facial expression whether they liked or disliked their friends' correction."

The teachers' previous personal experiences whether as teachers or learners may also be a determining factor in their attitude to PF. The comments made by some of the teachers on the interviews

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suggested their learning background and previous learning and emotional experiences as learners in their beliefs and corrective preferences. "They do not welcome peer feedback as much as teacher feedback, you know… For me, personally, teacher feedback was more effective and I remembered the feedback for a much longer time and learned better," one of the teachers commented. Soruç et al. (2024) also found that the teachers' corrective decisions were influenced by the teachers' previous experience as language learners.

Despite the teachers' assertion that they were aware of their students' attitudes and reactions, the results of many attitudinal studies (e.g., Ha, 2023; Kaivanpanah et al., 2015; Lee, 2013; Roothooft & Breeze, 2016) point to clear mismatches between the teachers' and learners' preferences toward oral error correction. According to Lasagabaster and Sierra (2014), one of the possible reasons for turning correction into one of the most discouraging experiences for teachers is the mismatch between teachers' and learners' attitude to feedback.

Generally, the teachers' comments suggest the need to practice care in peer correction. The practice should be under the teachers' control or it may create negative feelings such as a sense of humiliation, embarrassment, anger and, in most extreme cases, hatred among the learners. The high extreme of negative emotions, going as far as anger and hatred, might explain the majority teachers' concern and caution in the use of PCF.

The findings of the present study revealed that generally the majority of teachers do not have a highly favorable attitude toward practicing PCF in their classes. The findings further point to inconsistencies between the teachers' beliefs and attitudes and the research findings on PCF. The teachers were not aware of the recent research implications in this regard. Based on the findings, there are many other practical issues and factors in relation to PCF in relation to the learners' preference and attitude. These factors were also related to the potential negative emotional reactions being mediated by these factors. For instance, some teachers referred to the role of age and gender in how learners react to peer correction. This was interesting given the fact that none of the interview questions was related to the role of age and gender. With regard to gender, they held that female students are emotionally more sensitive to peer correction. According to the teachers, this is because they have higher self-esteem and do not want to lose face in front of their classmates particularly because peer feedback happens during classroom activities in which the whole class might be involved and peer correction is noticed by the whole class. This is partially supported by Li and Li's (2022) finding; they found a difference between male and

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female learners of English in China in their willingness to communicate in class. Female learners were more willing to communicate in form-focused activities, which, according to Li and Li, involve a willingness to communicate with a limited audience such a peer rather than the whole class. Male learners, however, were more willing to communicate in meaning-based activities, which highlight interpersonal interactions. The number of students in class was another factor; small and, consequently, more friendly classroom atmospheres are more appropriate for practicing peer correction.

5. Conclusion

The findings of the present study revealed that there are many other practical issues in relation to PCF that need to be taken into considerations, besides the learners' preference and attitude. The role of these factors has not been the focus of the studies in the literature. On the other hand, the findings pointed to the teachers' unawareness of all the advantages associated with PCF based on the empirical findings. Although they believed peer feedback can benefit the learners, most of them believed that peer correction may not be as beneficial as teacher feedback. There is a need to raise the teachers' awareness in this regard in the framework of teacher education programs. Although based on the studies, learners trust teacher feedback more than peer feedback (e.g., Kainvanpanah et al., 2015), as long as the teachers, as the final arbiters of relevance (Widdowson, 1990), have the same belief as against the research findings, no change is expected to happen in the learners' views and attitude. Nonetheless, Nikouyi and Ranta (2020) pointed out that the texts dealing with teacher education poorly reflect the research findings; "due to the recency of this research, the pedagogical advice the textbook authors have imparted is, presumably, based on "received wisdom" or their personal practical knowledge (p. 145). As implied by Lyster, Saito, and Sato (2013), PF can be a good source of learning in a friendly and collaborative learning atmosphere without creating a sense of humiliation and stigmatization in the learners.

Being aware of the advantages of PCF, the teacher can somehow prepare the learners for being more receptive to peer comments by explaining to them the benefits and advantages of peers' comments lowering their affective filter and increasing the learning opportunities in the class. The results of a recent study by Sippel (2024) also showed that form-focused instruction coupled with PF training proved more effective than form-focused instruction without PF training. As discovered by Papi, Abdi Tabari and Sato (2024), when the students seek feedback, they are better able to process and benefit from the provided feedback. With respect to the focus of the present study, if the learners seek and favor peer correction,

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they will be able to benefit from its various advantages over teacher feedback. On the other hand, the effects of a teacher development program on the teachers' attitude to peer correction was confirmed in a recent study by Ha and Murray (2021). Following the program, the teachers believed that peer correction could be equally effective and that it made learners more involved in learning. "They claimed to have more trust in their students' ability to perform peer correction" (p. 8). The teachers' concerns about learners' negative reaction to correction was also moderated following the teacher development program.

Furthermore, to be able to use PCF as an effective alternative to teacher feedback, there is a need to remove the barriers to its use and practice in language classes and one of the big barriers is teachers' overconcern about the creation of negative feelings among the students. This requires teachers' awareness of the learners' preferences as well as the need as ask and become informed about these preferences and the factors believed to influence their emotions and preferences. Given the mismatches discovered between the teachers' and learners' preferences, it seems that teachers have misconceptions about the learners' preferences. They need to explicitly ask their learners about their preferences rather than rely on their own perception.

6. Suggestions for further research

Researchers need to pay more attention to the practical issues teachers have to deal with in practicing peer error correction. For instance, the teachers mentioned the role of gender in learners' emotional response and attitude to peer correction. The role of gender and the differences between different gender groups can be examined in the future studies to see if it really is a determining factor in forming learners' corrective preferences. Given the cross-cultural differences between the teachers in their beliefs about oral CF (Mahalingappa, Polat & Wang, 2021), future studies could examine and compare the attitudes and preferences of teachers from different contexts toward PCF. The teacher participants in the present study also mentioned learners' unfavorable attitude to peer correction as the major reason for their doubtful attitude toward its use; future studies could make a comparison between teachers and their learners' preferences to find out whether teachers' perceptions about their learners' preferences hold true.

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Appendix: Interview questions

1) Do you allow your students to correct each other's errors? Why?

2) Which one are they more comfortable with, teacher or peer feedback?

3) Does peer feedback produce effective learning?

4) Do you think learners' proficiency level is effective in the quality of feedback they provide to each other?

5) What other factors do you take into account in allowing for peer error correction?

6) Which one do you think is more effective, teacher or peer feedback?

7) Who do learners expect to provide the correction, teachers or peers?

8) Have you ever asked your learners whether they like to be corrected by their peers?

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