ADULT LEARNERS' PERSPECTIVES ON ORAL ERROR CORRECTION IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

Ena Stević, mag. philol. angl.; mag. paed.; mag. iur.

Tehnička škola Rijeka (EFL teacher)

estevovic@gmail.com

Abstract

The focus of this research paper are adult learners' preferences regarding oral error correction techniques in the EFL classroom. The purpose was to determine when and by who the participants prefer to be corrected, as well as which techniques teachers should use while correcting their oral production. The study examines which aspects of language are corrected the most, as well as possible obstacles adult learners face while being corrected.

The study was conducted among 32 adult learners in various adult education institutions in Rijeka, Croatia. The instrument for collecting data was a questionnaire, which was analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods.

The findings suggest that adult learners prefer metalinguistic feedback and dislike recast. Moreover, they prefer to be corrected by their teachers, preferably after they've finished talking. Pointing out the positive aspects of their oral production, preferably by nodding and focused feedback is of an utmost importance. Adult learners believe their teachers should be patient, as well as provide specific examples, individual approach and explanation in Croatian language if needed.

Key words: *lifelong learning, EFL, English as a Foreign Language, adult learners, oral error correction.*

Introduction

There is a significant element of pedagogy in the oral error correction (also called *corrective feedback*), since the way the EFL teachers address students during their verbal production sets the tone for the student-teacher relationship in whole. The results of this study aim to prove the importance these processes carry, as well as elicit the particular ways in which adult learners prefer to be corrected whilst speaking and carrying a conversation in English. Since mistakes[1] are bound to happen – „errors are a part of language learning" (James, 2013), even to the "best" of students, the focus is more on correcting those errors properly

---

[1] Penny Ur (2014) explains that the terms „error" and „mistake" can be used interchangeably, because they are almost impossible to distinguish when they occur in the classroom, even though the theoretical approach provides a certain difference among the two

and in students' best interest for the continuance of receiving knowledge, than it is on how to "stop" those mistakes and control their reappearance, since the latter cannot be easily (if at all) achieved.

Theoretical background hasn't provided clear message as to whether error correction is necessary at all. Interestingly, Truscott (1996) believes that not only error correction is unnecessary, but it can also have "harmful effects". However, there are more authors that tend to agree on the importance of correcting students' mistakes, saying that it can help with the fossilization of the error (Ur, 2014), and that mistakes show how much a student is willing to think outside of the box and take risks while experimenting with the language (Scrivener, 2005). Almost sixty years ago, Corder (1967) noted that the answer to what drives second language acquisition could be found by studying learners themselves and the errors they make.

The study by Park (2010) found that the need for error correction seems to be perceived more strongly by the students than by the teachers. The students tend to believe they *always* need to receive corrective feedback and that all mistakes need to be treated (also Baz, Balçıkanlı & Cephe, 2016). Consequently, Alamri & Fawzi (2016) findings have also revealed that students generally have a positive attitude towards error correction, i.e., they see it as "necessary and helpful" which is in line with the studies by Alhaysony (2016) and Calsiyao (2015). In the same study, it was found that most students prefer to be corrected immediately after the mistake had been made.

This research paper will not get into the reasons as to *why* adult learners make mistakes while talking in a foreign language[2] and what could be possible *reasons* for doing so in the EFL adult education classroom. Nevertheless, it is very important to mention that correcting students' verbal mistakes takes practice, time and empathy provided by the teacher, since, as previously mentioned, it carries a significant andragogical value. Having this in mind, it is of an utmost importance that the teacher indicates the positive aspects of student's verbal production *before* moving on to the negative ones. While correcting errors, teachers must consider that every student has a different preference as to *when* they want to be corrected (during or after they've finished talking) (Ur, 2014), while at the same time taking into consideration student's level of knowledge, confidence, our goals for the lesson in question and how often does a particular error occur. Furthermore, there are notably different types of errors, and the teacher must be aware as to *which* errors *must* be corrected and which ones can be *overlooked*. Burt and Kiparsky (1972) divide errors into two groups (global and local), with the former leading to a lack of understanding in a way that they affect a whole sentence structure, and the latter which do not significantly slow down communication.

Often times in class the other student can, on purpose or accidentally, blur out the correct answer before the teacher or the student in question gets the chance to do so. Occasionally, peer corrective feedback can be planned and executed with purpose. However, it was found by (Pica et al., 1996) that students tend to plainly *acknowledge* the modification or the correction made by their peers, but nothing further.

There are numerous researchers interested in error correction both in written *and* oral production. However, there is scarce research regarding this topic which encompasses adult EFL learners. While researching literature, the conclusion was reached that adult EFL

---

[2] see Stević, E. (2017). Students' Perspectives on Oral Error Correction (Master thesis, University of Rijeka. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Department of English Language and Literature).

learners and their preferences regarding something as important as error correction is almost non-existent. (Raja et al., n.d.) executed one of the very few studies in recent years, however, the cultural difference (Saudi Arabia) must be taken into consideration. The means of gathering data were similar (questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale), even though authors used interviews instead of open-ended question for the qualitative part of the study. Instead of the actual learners, this study revolved around 50 EFL adult learners' teachers. Having this is mind, this study had no other option than to rely on the questionnaire provided by Stevović (2017), which included mixed methodology and was focused on high school students. Moreover, this study plans on comparing the participants' answers throughout discussion, since it should be interesting to see how much of a difference does age and language level pose in regards to oral error correction.

This study will be the first one, to the best of the author's knowledge, that will dive into adult EFL learners and their preferred error correction technique in Croatia.

Error correction techniques

The question of *how* is the focus of this study, since there are several methods that can be used to correct adult learners' mistakes:

1. *Recast* – the method that doesn't really explain to the student *where* the mistake was, in fact, it doesn't even imply that there was a mistake at all.

If the student says „Women are kind than men", the teacher's reply can be „*Indeed, women are kinder than men*"**³**.

2. *Elicitation* – while using this method the teacher provides a clear notion that the mistake has been made, however, he/she does not correct the student, per se.

For example, if the student says, "Once upon a time, there is a girl" the teacher can just pinpoint to the place in a sentence where the mistake had been made and give the student the opportunity to correct himself. "*Once upon a time, there…*" is enough for the student to realize he has made a mistake (Stevović, 2017). Furthermore, Lyster & Ranta (1997) suggest there are three elicitation techniques; the teacher can ask a student to fill in the blank, he/she can ask the student a question, such as "How do we say….?" or, the student can simply try to reformulate the utterance to suit their level better.

3. *Clarification request* – this method is considered to be the most polite. The teacher merely asks the student for a clarification if the mistake has been made. Some of those questions might be: *"Excuse me?; I don't understand; What do you mean?".*

4. *Metalinguistic feedback* – the grammar method which uses grammatical rules to explain the mistake by either plainly providing the tense which needs to be used or by sometimes even providing the complete answer.

³ all the examples are the ones used in the questionnaire; the anticipated teacher's corrections are in *italics*

For example, if the student's sentence was "I eat yesterday", the teacher's comment could be *"If you use the adverb yesterday, you must use past simple, in this particular matter, past simple of the verb eat)."*

5.   *Explicit correction* – the most straight-forward of all, which simply provides the student with a right answer. The student is not instructed with an explanation.

In the previous example, the teacher's response could just easily be: *"You should've said „I ate yesterday."*

6.   *Repetition* – the method that uses intonation as a way of showing the mistake has been made. The teacher can just simply repeat the whole sentence or the mistake itself with a different (often higher) intonation, giving the student a clue that a mistake has been made.

Regarding these methods, the study conducted by Ur (2014) has shown that the students (500 primary and secondary school students) prefer *recast* as their method of choice for correcting oral mistakes in the EFL classroom. Alamri & Fawzi (2016) found that both *recast and explicit correction* are the methods students prefer, where Alhaysony (2016) in the same year found that *clarification request* is the most popular method among students. Finally, in Lyster & Ranta's (1997) "hands-on" research where the actual usage of the methods was observed, was found that, *recast* was used the most (55%) even though their findings have also revealed that recast as a technique was the least effective and that it did not lead to reparation of the students' mistakes. Because the answer is already bluntly provided by the teacher, students have no need to think about proper utterance and control their errors. Since this research was and still is the most cited corrective feedback research paper, these findings are perceived as a foundation for theoretical background of this important topic.

Adult learners in Croatia

The research conducted by the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education in Croatia (2017) presented how much Croatian people take part in lifelong learning and what are their main motives for doing so. The results have shown that 34% of Croatian citizens between the ages of 25 and 64 have participated in some sort of either formal or informal adult education courses throughout their lives. When it comes to the period of 2016/2017, the research has shown that only 6,4% of people have participated in adult education, with seminars and practical training related to work being the most common (42%).

Classes, such as foreign language classes, both in groups in adult education institutions and privately with a tutor, comprised only 21% of people who participated in lifelong-learning courses. When asked to provide the reasons for taking interest in such courses, participants noted "work" as the most common reason, followed with "gaining additional knowledge", "personal interests" and "intellectual development". In terms of a more general view, after reviewing 41 study related to adult English language learners (ELLs), Mathews-Aydinli (2008)

found that adult learners generally range from 16 to 90 years old, with distinctively different education level (no formal schooling to PhD), as well as native language level (pre-literate to advanced).

The present study

Aim and research questions

The aim of the study in question is to explore adult learners' perspectives on oral error correction, specifically their preferences on *when* they should be corrected (during the presentation or after), *by who* they should be corrected (teacher-initiated error correction, peer corrective feedback) and *which techniques* should teachers use while correcting their oral production. Also, the study examines which specific aspects of language are corrected the most, as well as possible obstacles adult learners face while being corrected. Finally, we will explore adult learners' possible suggestions to their teachers regarding oral error correction.

Research questions have been adopted from Stevović (2017) where the exact study has been conducted among 95 high school students by a means of a questionnaire.

The overall research question which guides this study is:

What are adult learners' perspectives on oral error correction in the EFL classroom?

Follow-up research questions are:

a) What type of oral errors do teachers usually correct?
b) How are errors corrected in the classroom?
c) Which error correction techniques do adult learners find the most useful and why?
d) Which error correction techniques do adult learners find the least useful and why?
e) What challenges does error correction pose to the student?

Methodology

Sample

The sample of this study consisted of 23 female and 9 male adult learners of English as a foreign language in adult education institutions in Croatia[4] (N=32). The participants varied in age, starting from 19 to 61 years old (M=38), all falling under the category of "adult learners", which means they have graduated high school and were taking English lessons for personal or business purposes. Narodno Učilište as the main adult education institution in

---

[4] More foreign language schools and adult education institutions throughout Croatia have been contacted, but they either haven't responded (1), declined the participation (2) or (mostly) simply didn't have adult English learners at the present moment. A generally small number of adult learners taking English lessons in Croatia has to be taken into consideration.

Rijeka provided 50% of the participants (N=16), with three different teachers teaching each group (A2 for personal purposes, N=6; A2 for business purposes, N=6; B2 for personal purposes, N=4). Klub mladih, financed by the city of Rijeka, which holds language lessons for adult learners, had 21,85% (N=7) out of 11 adult learners participating in the study (B1=5, A1=2). Two of the most famous and oldest language schools in Rijeka participated in their capacity of adult learners (Milton – N=2 (6,25%), Linguae – N=7 (21,85%)). All of the participants are native Croatian speakers.

Instruments and data analysis

The questionnaire (Google Forms) was distributed online in February of 2022 and was acquired from the same research by Stevović (2017). It was sent via e-mail after the institutions agreed to participate in the research, together with the information that participation was voluntary and that participants' personal information as well as their answers were confidential. In addition, the subjects were informed that they could receive results of the study upon request.

The questionnaire was comprised of 31 questions divided into three parts. The first part contained questions which inquired into the demographics of the participants: gender, age, institution, and English level[5]. In part two, the participants were asked to rate 24 statements on a five-point Likert scale (1 - I highly disagree, 2 – I mostly disagree, 3 – I neither agree nor disagree, 4 – I mostly agree, 5 - I highly agree). Those statements tried to gain insight into adult learners' preferences on *when* they like to be corrected, *what aspects of language* they think are the most useful to correct, *how often* they make mistakes etc. Techniques were not named in the questionnaire but rather presented by examples of how they occur in the classroom. The remaining 5 open-ended questions in part three elicited information on participants' experience in error correction, specifically on aspects of language that were corrected the most and in what way this was usually done. Also, it examined participants' possible problems and suggestions they had for their teachers regarding oral error correction. Questions 1 to 26 were analyzed quantitatively. The answers were entered into JASP where the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of each question were elicited. Questions 27 to 31 were analyzed qualitatively.

Results[6]

The results of the present study will be presented tabularly and by the means of diagrams, corresponding to question type, with comments after each section. It will first look into adult learners' self-perception and perspectives regarding making mistakes (table 1), after which preferences in correcting mistakes are presented (table 2). Table 3 consists of general information about correcting oral mistakes and areas of correction, while Table 4 delves into preferences regarding error correction techniques, explained in more detail with pie charts. Lastly, adult learners' suggestions and comments are presented narratively.

---

[5] Common European Framework of Reference for Language

[6] The results will be interpreted in relation to the same research by Stevović (2017), conducted among 95 grammar high school students

Table 1: Making mistakes

	%						
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**M**	**SD**
Question 1 - "I often make mistakes while speaking."	/	12.50	28.12	40.62	18.75	3.65	0.937
Question 2 – "I could identify the mistake I make even if the teacher does not point it out."	6.25	40.62	15.62	37.50	/	2.84	1.019
Questions 3 – "When the teacher corrects me during presentation , I often forget where I was and I lose my train of thought."	28.12	50.00	9.375	12.500	/	2.06	0.948
Question 4 - "When the teacher corrects me during presentation , I continue without any problems."	3.12	3.12	18.75	53.12	21.87	3.87	0.907
Question 5 – "I hesitate to talk so that I do not make a mistake."	6.25	37.50	12.50	18.75	25.00	3.18	1.355
Question 6 – "I do not care about mistakes; the most important thing is to get the message across."	15.62	40.62	15.62	25.00	3.12	2.59	1.132

The majority of the participants (N=13) believes they make mistakes quite *often*, while none of the participants highly disagreed with the statement. Relating it to the same research conducted by Stevović (2017) among high school students, we can provide a firm disproportion of perspectives between the groups, since most of the high school students highly disagreed with the statement, showing they believe they *rarely* make mistakes.

Interestingly, participants almost equally agree (N=12) and disagree (N=13) regarding being able to identify their verbal errors without the teacher's intervention. Consequently, not even participants on C1 level perceive their knowledge to be on such high levels to be able to completely agree with the statement (N=0).

It is extremely important for an adult learners' teacher to be mindful of learners' hindrances when conducting themselves in a foreign language. Will the student be able to finish their sentence without hesitation and losing their focus is a crucial question teachers must ask themselves before deciding to correct the student during presentation. However, similarly to the previous research, the majority of the participants mostly disagrees with the statement in question (N=16), meaning they believe they can continue speaking English without encountering major blows. Moreover, none of the participants highly agrees with this statement, while 3.15% of high school students always lose their train of thought if corrected during presentation. In accordance to question 3, question 4 elicits this even more, with the majority of participants (N=17) saying they believe they can continue their sentences without a problem. What is more, 21,87% of adult learners highly agrees with the

statement, which can be seen as a fairly large percentage considering the participants being adult learners of English.

Hesitation to speak can come from many sources, mostly the student's character and general social skills, so the diversity of answers is to be expected. Specifically, most of the adult learners disagree (N=12), saying they don't seem to hesitate for the pure fear of not making a mistake while talking. Nevertheless, the second most common answer is on the other side of the spectrum (N=8), where the learners admit hesitation to speak English. Both is in accordance with the previous research among high school students.

One of the biggest controversies in foreign language teaching is whether we should strive for our students to achieve "perfect" sentence structure, grammar and vocabulary use, or is it enough to just be "understood". The theory is not uniformed regarding this question, nor should we perceive English and other languages the same. English is the most commonly spoken language in the world (1.132 million speakers as of June, 2021)[7] and over the past decade it has definitely become more important than ever to speak *proper* English. It seems the participants – adult learners of English share the notion, as the majority (N=13) disagrees with not caring about the mistakes and only focusing on getting the message across.

Table 2: Correcting mistakes

	%						
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**M**	**SD**
Question 7 – "I remember the right word/ correction immediately and the next time I use it right away."	3.12	50.00	25.00	18.75	3.12	2.68	0.931
Question 8 – "The teacher needs to correct me multiple times so that I do not make the same mistake repeatedly."	/	21.87	18.75	53.12	6.25	3.43	0.914
Question 9 – "I find it useful when the teacher nods to point to the positive parts of my presentation."	3.12	/	/	21.87	75.00	4.65	0.787
Question 10 - "I find it useful when the teacher points to the positive parts of my presentation by saying short motivational words."	/	/	3.12	28.12	68.75	4.65	0.545
Question 11 – "I prefer when the teacher mentions all of my mistakes after I have finished talking."	9.37	15.62	15.62	28.12	31.25	3.56	1.343
Question 12 – "When the teacher mentions all my mistakes after I have finished talking, I cannot remember in what part of my presentation the mistake was and therefore, I forget the correct version."	6.25	40.62	28.12	18.75	6.25	2.78	1.039

---

[7] The most-spoken languages in the world, https://www.berlitz.com/en-uy/blog/most-spoken-languages-world (visited on March 1, 2022)

On one hand, adult learners (N=16) do not seem to think they can remember the correct phrase/word after being corrected only once. On the extreme sides of the spectrum, only one participant highly agrees, while another highly disagrees with the statement. On the other hand, when asked whether the teachers need to correct them repeatedly for them to remember the error and its correct form, most of them (N=17) believe this to be true, in tune with the previous question. In relation to the previous research, high school students turned out to be more confident in their English-speaking skills, with 52,63% of the participants pointing out they can remember the correct form immediately and refrain from making the same mistake again, and 47,36% of them stating that the teacher does not need to correct them multiple times.

Nodding (N=24) seems to be a bit more favorable than short motivational words (N=22) when correcting adult learners, but the fact remains that adult learners respect both ways of pointing out to the positive aspects of their verbal production. This conclusion is in accordance with the previous study, where nodding (69,47%) was slightly more appreciated than short motivational words (60%).

The participants (N=19) are clear when it comes to *when* they prefer their mistakes to be corrected, having both agreed and strongly agreed with the statement. In relation to this, most of the participants (N=13) do not seem to have problems remembering where the mistake was if the teacher corrects them after the verbal presentation. The same was found for high school students (64,20%).

Table 3: Areas of correction/ways of correction

	%					M	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Question 13 – "I find it useful when the teacher corrects my vocabulary."	/	/	/	28.12	71.87	4.71	0.457
Question 14 – "I find it useful when the teacher corrects my pronunciation."	/	3.12	/	21.87	75.00	4.68	0.644
Question 15 – "I find it useful when the teacher corrects my grammar."	/	3.12	/	25.00	71.87	4.65	0.653
Question 16 – "I find it useful when the teacher corrects me in Croatian."	/	21.87	3.12	40.62	34.37	3.87	1.129
Question 17 – "I would rather be corrected by a peer than a teacher."	56.25	28.12	15.62	/	/	1.59	0.756
Question 18 – "I find it useful when I have to repeat the correct version after the teacher corrects me."	/	3.12	6.25	21.87	68.75	4.56	0.759

Almost the exact number of participants find it useful when the teacher corrects their vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar. Using their mother tongue (Croatian) is also considered useful by most adult learners (N=25), even though there are still participants who

disagree with correcting in Croatian. The previous research found that grammar is the least useful aspect of language to correct, according to 50% of the participants. Correcting in their mother tongue was, consequently, almost equally useful as it was useless.

As expected, adult learners (N=27) do not prefer peer-correction and would only like to be corrected by the teacher, while some (N=5) neither agree nor disagree with the notion. Interestingly, while none of the adult learners prefer peer-correction, there was a small portion of high school participants (4,21%) that did.

Repeating the correct phrase/word after the teacher has corrected them is useful for 90% of the adult learners. This does not go hand-in-hand with the high school students, where only 44,21% stated preference towards repeating the correct version after the teacher.

Table 4: Error correction techniques[8]

	%						
	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
1. Recast	21.87	31.25	6.25	25.00	15.62	2.81	1.447
2. Elicitation	/	12.50	12.50	50.00	25.00	3.87	0.942
3. Clarification request	3.12	12.50	34.37	34.37	15.62	3.46	1.016
4. Metalinguistic feedback	/	6.25	3.12	31.25	59.37	4.43	0.840
5. Explicit correction	9.37	6.25	12.50	28.12	43.75	3.90	1.304
6. Repetition	21.87	15.62	12.50	34.37	15.62	3.06	1.435

Metalinguistic feedback was shown to be the most preferred technique among adult learners, after which *explicit correction* and *elicitation* follow. Their least favorite method of correction is *recast*. Previous research among high school students has shown exact results when it comes to the least preferred technique, with the adult learners generally disliking recast the most as well. However, even though metalinguistic feedback was *one* of their most preferred techniques, elicitation was actually the most interesting and functional to them, with 42,10% of high school students believing that the teacher should give them the option to get to the right answer themselves.
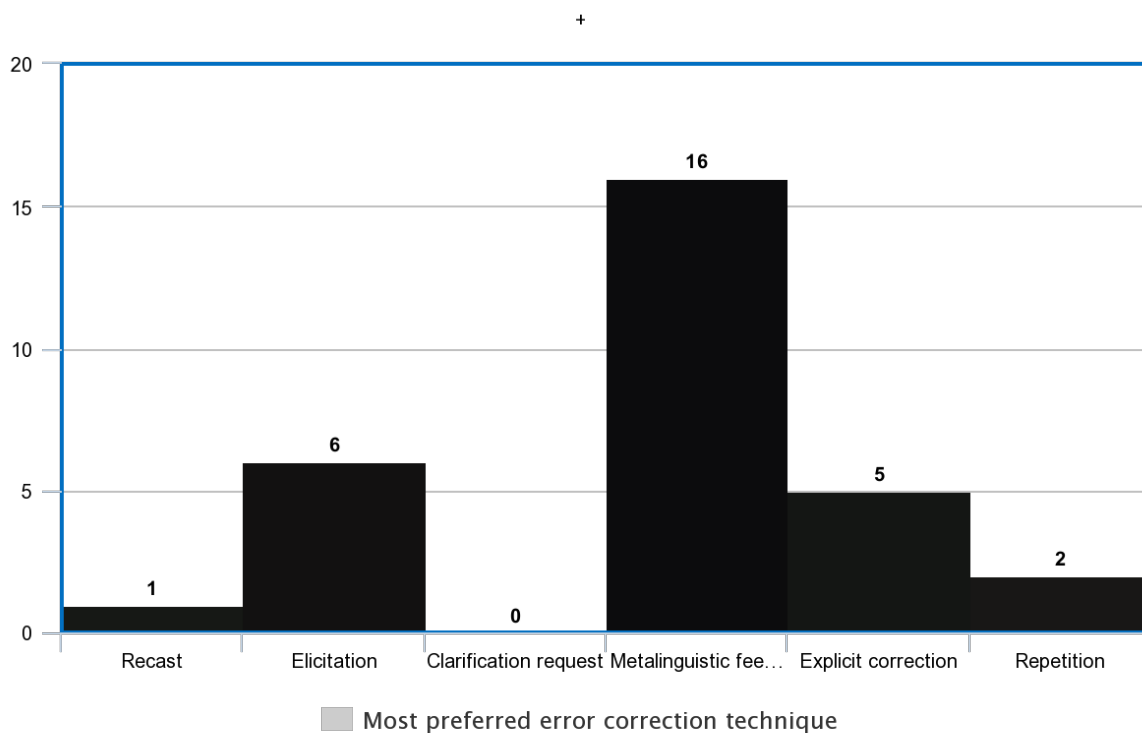
In the next section of the questionnaire, the participants have answered open-ended questions which were processed qualitatively.[9]

When asked to discuss which of the mentioned error correction methods is their most and least favorite and why, the participants answered as follows:

---

[8] Previously explained in details with examples. The participants have only been given the example and the explanation, without the technique's name.
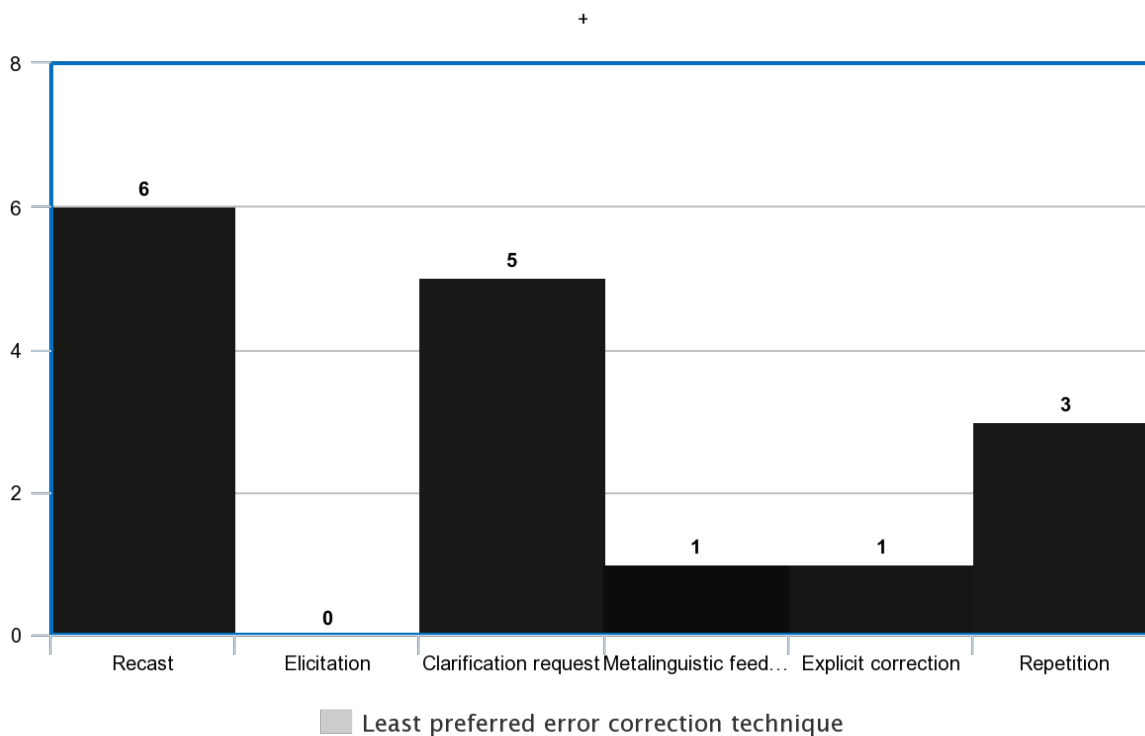[9] Not all of the participants have answered all of the open-ended questions.

Table 5: Most preferred error correction technique

+

	Recast	Elicitation	Clarification request	Metalinguistic fee...	Explicit correction	Repetition
	1	6	0	16	5	2

Most preferred error correction technique

Highcharts.com

Table 6: Least preferred error correction technique

+

	Recast	Elicitation	Clarification request	Metalinguistic feed...	Explicit correction	Repetition
	6	0	5	1	1	3

Least preferred error correction technique

Highcharts.com

The histogram clearly shows how the answers regarding the most and the least preferred method of error correction correspond to the previous question with the Likert scale of preferring each individual method. Therefore, *recast* has once more been identified as the least preferred method, with the *metalinguistic feedback* being the most to the participant's liking. In the same questions, the participants had to explain *why* they prefer or do not prefer a certain method. Metalinguistic feedback, as the most preferred one, has been chosen because the participants "like to hear the grammar explanation", think it is "easier to remember when the teacher explains the correct version of my mistake", believe that it "gives a proper solution", "it is detailed", because "grammar is the base of language", and "it doesn't waste time". Adult learners have also described elicitation as the method that "makes you think" and with which you can "learn the most" and "remember the mistake better".

When asked to choose the least favorite one, the participants described recast as a method "without explanation" which encourages "learning by heart" and which "doesn't prevent the mistake from happening again". Clarification request, as the second least favorite is "stressful", "confusing", "doesn't help in finding the solution" and "it wastes time on uncertainties".

All of the participants noted that teacher's corrections help them a lot because they are "useful" and they "stop me from repeating the same mistake again" (fossilization).

Table 7: Most commonly corrected aspects of English language

Most commonly corrected
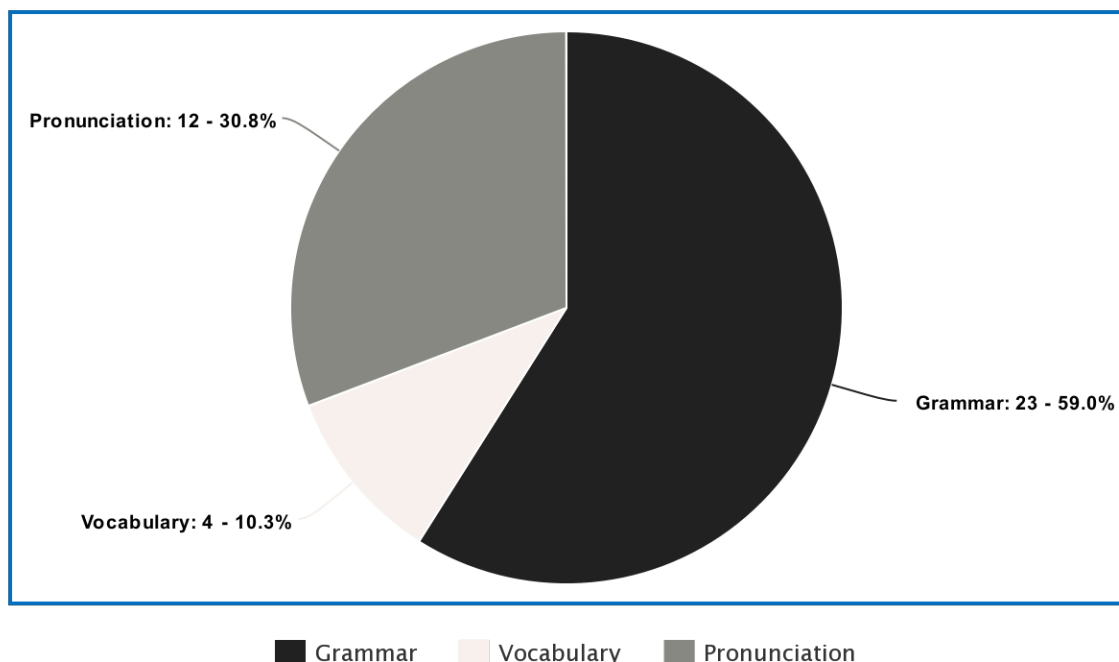
meta–chart.com

As expected, considering the preference of metalinguistic feedback, teachers are usually correcting adult learners' grammar (59%), followed by pronunciation and vocabulary (10,3%).

Obstacles that the adult learners face while being corrected are not as numerous as one might think, since exactly half of the participants (50%) mention that they do not have "any difficulties while corrected by the teacher" because it "helps them to remember better" and they are "there to make mistakes and learn from them". However, almost the third (28,12%) expresses problems with "continuing the sentence", "losing the train of thought" and "loss of concentration".

Last but definitely not the least, the participants provided some useful suggestions to teachers, which will be written in more detail, since they can help teachers modify their teaching and error correction methods to the best of their abilities and for the ultimate understanding of the content. It is important to note that 21,87% of participants had no suggestions for their teacher. Some of the suggestions were:

1. "Do not allow students to make mistakes without correcting them, especially if the student says the incorrect word that only *sounds* similar to the one he was supposed to say"
2. "More examples, memorable ones"
3. "More patience and time for the students that are not good at English"
4. "Positive feedback before the negative one"
5. "More detailed explanation of the mistake; giving associations"
6. "The mistakes have to be corrected immediately, with explanation"
7. "Focus on pronunciation and grammar"
8. "Give the student a chance to comment on the mistake together"
9. "Talk slower in English, provide explanation in Croatian if needed"
10. "Individual approach if needed"

Discussion

The results of this study have provided us with interesting insights into adult learners' preferences regarding verbal production. First of all, most of the adult learners noted that they prefer being corrected *after* they have finished with their oral presentation and that they generally do not have any problems remembering the mistakes they've made during speaking if the teacher explains those mistakes in that fashion. This is in line with the same study conducted among high school students (Stevović, 2017), as well as with Livingstone (2015), who strongly disagrees with correcting students at the very moment they make a mistake.

Most of the adult learners believe they commonly make mistakes while speaking, no matter what level of English language they are currently on, which means that adult learners have a very critical mindset when it comes to their own capability of speaking English. This is different from the high school learners' thinking, where most of the students believe they rarely make mistakes, with only 5,26 % of them believing they often make mistake while speaking English.

The question of *how* provided very interesting results, with the majority of adult learners preferring metalinguistic feedback and disliking recast. Firstly, there are no surprises as to why adult learners enjoy being corrected with grammar rules, since grammar is thought to be the foundation of any language (Saaristo, 2015; Afroogh, 2019), and such corrections help adult learners to better grasp the sentence structure, tenses, and word order. It gives them some structure in further learning, and it consequently provides a sense of accomplishment. In addition, even the high school students enjoy being corrected with grammar rules, even though metalinguistic feedback is not their most preferred technique, but rather *one* of the preferred ones. This is in complete disproportion with the findings of Ur (2014) and Alamri $ Fawzi (2016) where recast was favored by the majority of students. Even though the study by Alhaysony (2016) elicited clarification request as the most favored technique, the present study found that clarification request is right after recast as the technique adult learners do not enjoy. On the other hand, the study by Coskun (2010) did find recast to be the least effective technique, which corresponds to this study's findings, both with adult and high school learners.

Peer corrective feedback is not something participants prefer; having strongly pointed out the disagreement with being corrected by their peers instead of their teachers (in line with Baz, Balçıkanlı & Cephe (2016) and Alhaysony (2016)). Interestingly, Livingstone (2015) has found that 2/3 of his participants enjoyed peer corrective feedback.

Ur (2014) pointed out the importance of acknowledging the positive aspects of students' oral production, which coincides with the results found in the present study, with adult learners preferring nodding, even though they find short motivational words helpful as well. Moreover, when asked for possible suggestions to their teachers, adult learners mentioned the importance of focusing on the positive parts of their oral production before moving on to the negative ones.

It is suggested that the teachers take into consideration both studies conducted by Stevović (2017, 2022) when correcting students' and adult learners' mistakes during oral production, since both studies provide some useful insights into high school and adult learners' preferences regarding correction and yield numerous practical implications for the EFL classroom. The teachers should do their best to consider student's ability, language skills, the "size" of the error, groups' proficiency level etc., before deciding which technique to use and how to approach the student in question.

Finally, based on the adult learners' suggestions, the teachers should do their best to implement as many practical examples as possible, to be more patient and to, possibly and if needed, correct in Croatian and be more individually oriented.

This research encountered obstacles that must be taken into consideration. First of all, the sample size was fairly small. Over the last decade, there has been a decrease in popularity of English classes with the adult learners in Rijeka and the surrounding area, which I was able to testify while working in five private language schools in Rijeka, Opatija and Kastav.

Moreover, some institutions refused to participate, while also some of the adult learners did not fill out the questionnaire. Furthermore, theoretical background on adult EFL learners in combination with corrective feedback was scarce, to say the least, which disabled us to compare the results with similar studies.

More in-depth results in further research could be achieved by involving all adult EFT learners in Croatia at one point in time. Furthermore, it would be interesting to see the differences in answers among different language levels, which was almost impossible due to a small sample size. Also, open-ended questions could have been done by the means of an interview.

Still, the results provided some interesting insights into adult EFL learners' hindrances and preferences regarding correcting error in the classroom, especially explained in relation to the previous research done among high school students.

References

Afroogh, M. R. (2019). Grammar is the heart and basis of language teaching and learning: English grammar and its role in ELT. Annals of Language and Literature, 3(1), 6-11., https://www.sryahwapublications.com/annals-of-language-and-literature/pdf/v3-i1/2.pdf

Alamri, B. & Fawzi, H. H. (2016). Students' Preferences and Attitude Toward Oral Error Correction Techniques at Yanbu University College, Saudi Arabia. English Language Teaching, 9(11), 59., DOI:10.5539/elt.v9n11p59, https://ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/elt/article/view/63777

Alhaysony, M. (2016). Saudi EFL Preparatory Year Students' Perception about Corrective Feedback in Oral Communication. English Language Teaching, 9(12), 47., doi: 10.5539/elt.v9n12p47, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1119605.pdf

Baz, E. H., Balçıkanlı, C. & Cephe, P. T. (2016). Perceptions of English instructors and Learners about Corrective Feedback. European Journal of Foreign Language Teaching., https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED572657

Burt, M. K. & Kiparsky, C. (1972). The Gooficon: A Repair Manual for English. Rowley, MA: Newbury House, https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED082574

Calsiyao, I. S. (2015). Corrective feedback in classroom oral errors among Kalinga-Apayao State College students. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, *3*(1), 394-400., https://www.academia.edu/34115977/Corrective_Feedback_in_Classroom_Oral_Errors_among_Kalinga_Apayao_State_College_Students

Corder, Pit. (1967). The significance of learner's errors. International Review of Applied Linguistics, 161-170, https://ediscliplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/5732715/mod_resource/content/1/Corder%201968%20%281%29%20errors.pdf

Coskun, A. (2010). A Classroom Research Study on Oral Error Correction. Online Submission., https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED512065.pdf

James, C. (2013). Errors in language learning and use: Exploring error analysis. Routledge

Lifelong-learning in Croatia https://mentorica.biz/pitanja-i-odgovori/osnove-poduzetnistva/cjelozivotno-obrazovanje-92/ (visited on March 6th, 2022)

Livingston, K. A. (2015). Correcting errors in the L2 classroom: students' and teachers' perceptions. Revista Electrónica del Lenguaje, nº 2, https://www.revistaelectronicalenguaje.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/vol-02-03.pdf

Lyster, R. & Ranta, L. (1997). Corrective Feedback and Learner Uptake: Negotiation of Form in Communicative Classrooms. Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 19(1), 37-66, DOI:10.1017/S0272263197001034, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/252160472_Corrective_feedback_and_learner_uptake

Park, Hyang-Sook (2010). Teachers' and learners' preferences for error correction. California State University, Sacramento (master thesis), https://dspace.calstate.edu/bitstream/handle/10211.9/302/thesis_pdf.pdf?sequence=1

Saaristo, P. (2015). Grammar is the heart of language: grammar and its role in language learning among Finnish university students. Voices of pedagogical development–Expanding, enhancing and exploring higher education language learning, 279-318., DOI:10.14705/RPNET.2015.000296, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED565036.pdf

Scrivener, J. (2005). Learning Teaching. Oxford, UK: Macmillan Publishers Limited, https://jonturnerhct.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/learning-teaching-by-james-scrivener.pdf

Stevović, E. (2017). *Students' Perspectives on Oral Error Correction* (Master thesis, University of Rijeka. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Department of English Language and Literature), https://repository.ffri.uniri.hr/islandora/object/ffri%3A1436/datastream/PDF/view

The most-spoken languages in the world, https://www.berlitz.com/en-uy/blog/most-spoken-languages-world (visited on March 1, 2022)

Truscott J. (1996). The Case Against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes. Language Learning, The journal of research in language studies, Volume 46, Issue 2, Pages 327–369., https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1996.tb01238.x

Ur, P. (2014). A Course in English Language Teaching. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, https://sacunslc.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/penny-ur-a-course-in-language-teaching-practice-of-theory-cambridge-teacher-training-and-development-1996.pdf

PERSPEKTIVE POLAZNIKA TEČAJA ENGLESKOG JEZIKA U OBRAZOVANJU ODRASLIH O METODAMA ISPRAVLJANJA USMENIH POGREŠAKA

Ena Stević, mag. philol. angl.; mag. paed.; mag. iur.

Tehnička škola Rijeka (EFL teacher)

estevovic@gmail.com

Sažetak

Fokus ovog znanstvenog rada jesu perspektive polaznika tečaja engleskog jezika u obrazovanju odraslih o metodama ispravljanja usmenih pogrešaka. Svrha je ustvrditi kada, od strane koga, te kojim metodama polaznici žele da ih nastavnici ispravljaju. Istraživanje također razmatra koji aspekti jezika najviše podliježu ispravljanju, kao i eventualne probleme s kojima se polaznici suočavaju.

Istraživanje je provedeno među 32 polaznika tečajeva engleskog jezika u institucijama za obrazovanje odraslih u Rijeci. Podaci su prikupljeni instrumentom upitnika, te su rezultati analizirani kvalitativno i kvantitativno.

Rezultati istraživanja sugeriraju da odrasli polaznici tečaja engleskog jezika preferiraju metajezičnu povratnu informaciju te pokazuju nesklonost „preinačenju" (recast). Ispitanici izražavaju preferenciju ispravljanja od strane nastavnika, po mogućnosti nakon što su završili govoriti. Ukazivanje na pozitivne strane izrečenog, kimanjem glave i fokusiranom povratnom informacijom je za ispitanike od velikog značaja. Finalno, ispitanici smatraju da bi njihovi nastavnici trebali biti strpljivi, davati konkretne primjere, te po potrebi primjenjivati individualni pristup uz pojašnjenja na materinjem (hrvatskom) jeziku.

Ključne riječi: *cjeloživotno učenje, engleski jezik, metode ispravljanja grešaka, obrazovanje odraslih*