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The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning, 2014–4 (1), 37-54

Exploring Student Errors, Teachers' Corrective Feedback, Learner Uptake and Repair, and Learners' Preferences of Corrective Feedback

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Abstract

This study explored college student errors, teachers' oral corrective feedback, learner uptake and repair, and learners' corrective feedback preferences in a Chinese language classroom setting. Data collection included the oral interactions in the classrooms, a preference of feedback survey, and focus-group interviews. The present study adopted the coding schemes used in Yoshida (2008) and in Lyster and Ranta (1997) to categorize data. Chi Square tests were run to examine whether there were significant differences in the frequency of students' error types and teachers' feedback types, and whether teachers' feedback types and learners' subsequent responses were related. The results showed that the most frequently made errors were phonological and lexical and that recasts were the most frequently used feedback type. Also, this study found a statistical significance between feedback type and learner repair in the beginner class. In addition, the survey results showed that the majority of the beginners preferred recasts while the advanced participants had preferences more scattered among different feedback types. The interview results showed that the participants' preferences were influenced by their learning styles and beliefs, their proficiency levels, the nature of the Chinese language, and the differences between Chinese and their native language, English.

Keywords: Corrective feedback, learner uptake and repair, learners' preferences of corrective feedback, Chinese language teaching and learning

1. Introduction

Corrective feedback (CF) is a type of negative feedback, which contains a response to a language learner's erroneous utterance (Ellis, 2009). Sheen (2011) defines CF as "a teacher's reactive move that invites learners to attend to the grammatical accuracy of something they have said or written" (p. 1). The purpose of using CF to induce learners to pay attention to form while they try to communicate is so that the learners can make connections between form and meaning which lead to second language acquisition. Although many may agree with the importance of CF in language learning, the role of CF in the process of second language acquisition is much debated. Ellis (2009) identified several

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controversial issues regarding CF, such as whether CF assists in language acquisition, what types of CF are most effective, what factors influence the effectiveness of CF, who should provide CF (self, teacher, or peer), what errors should be corrected, and when should they be corrected.

All of these controversies prompted second language researchers to examine the role of CF in the process of language learning in different research settings. Some studies focused on the effectiveness of certain types of CF (e.g., Ammar & Spada, 2006; Mackey & Philp, 1998) while others looked into the relationship between error types and CF types or between CF types and learners' subsequent responses (e.g., Kennedy, 2010; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Sheen 2004; Yoshida, 2008). A few studies emphasized the investigation of teachers' and learners' perceptions of CF in the classroom and their preferred CF types (e.g., Yoshida, 2008; 2010); while some studies compared CF used in different instructional settings with learners at different levels of proficiency (e.g., Ahangari & Amirzadeh, 2011; Sheen, 2004). However, to date there has been no study which explores students' error types, CF types, learner uptake and repair, and learners' CF preferences at different proficiency levels in a Chinese as a foreign language classroom setting. As Sheen (2004) argues, "the learning environment plays a crucial role in how a second/foreign language is learned" (p. 264). The results of previous CF studies cannot be completely generalized and applied in a Chinese language learning setting without scientific evidence. Inspired by the lack of research on CF in a Chinese setting, this present study explores learners' error types, teachers' oral CF types, subsequent learner responses (learner uptake and repair), and learners' CF preferences in beginning and advanced Chinese language classrooms.

2. Theoretical Framework

Interaction is seen as essential from a sociocultural perspective in providing language learners with linguistic input which is required for language processing. The role of input in the sociocultural sense can be best explained using the concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). ZPD, derived from the cultural-historical theory, explains how the development of a child's individual mental processes is socially mediated (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) defined ZPD as, "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). The notion of ZPD implies that a child's development is determined by conducting social interaction and collaborative problem-solving with more experienced community members. In sum, the concept of ZPD claims that social interaction is crucial in learning, including second language learning. Unlike the cognitive view that input is the data feeding into the learner's language processing mechanisms, ZPD implies that input becomes comprehensible when learners interact with others in negotiating meanings in the target language. When learners and their interlocutors manage to communicate meaning through interaction, input is made available. "The more the input was negotiated to increase its comprehensibility, the greater its potential usefulness as input well targeted to the particular developmental level and acquisitional needs of the individual learner" (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 122). Suggested by ZPD, the key to developing L2 proficiency relies on negotiation for meaning during learners' interaction with their interlocutors.

In applying ZPD to explain CF, CF is viewed as a series of communication episodes in which more competent speakers assist language learners to achieve self-regulation in the target language. According to Shen (2011), from the view of ZPD, CF "needs to be tailored to the developmental needs of individual learners and thus one type of corrective feedback that works for one learner might not work for another learner" (p. 29). From the view of sociocultural theory, it is more important for teachers to use CF types which accommodate individual learners' levels of ZPD rather than trying to claim that a certain type of feedback is more effective than others to all learners. This view coincides with Mackey's (1999) and Philp's (2003) claim that learners tend not to recognize input that is beyond their level of acquisition and that certain CF types are effective in facilitating language learning only when the prime time arrives. If learners' language development levels and individual needs are

factors influencing the effectiveness of CF, exploring learners' error types, teachers' CF types, subsequent learner responses (learner uptake and repair), and learners' CF preferences at different proficiency levels and exploring their learning needs are necessary.

3. Literature Review

The current literature pinpoints two factors which influence learners' error types, teachers' CF types, learners' subsequent responses, and learners' CF preferences. The first factor relates to learners' individual learning needs and styles and the second factor relates to learners' proficiency levels.

3.1 Individual Learning Needs and Styles

Yoshida (2008) explored teachers' and learners' preferences of CF types in second-year Japanese as a foreign language classrooms at a university in Australia and found that the teachers chose CF types based on the learners' individual differences such as their language development levels in certain areas (grammar, listening, etc.) and learning styles. For example, one of the teachers chose not to provide correct answers directly but use elicitation and metalinguistic feedback for a learner he considered to be a quick thinker with good grammar skills. However, the same teacher thought using recasts without providing explanations to a learner who did not think about grammatical rules was more effective. In addition, the results showed that the learners in the study expressed their preference to receive clarifications and elicitations types of feedback, which help them find correct answers themselves. Similar results were concluded regarding teachers' choices of CF types in Rydahl's (2005) study. The result of Rydahl's (2005) study on English language teachers' opinions on oral CF in the classroom showed that the majority of the 16 teachers in the study said that they almost always adapt the type of oral CF depending on the needs of individual students.

3.2 Learners' Proficiency Levels

Kennedy (2010) investigated an English as a second language teacher's corrective feedback to 15 child ESL learners who were placed in two different proficiency levels. The results of the study showed that each proficiency group produced different types of errors. The low proficiency group made more errors of content while the high proficiency group made more errors of form. With respect to teacher feedback, the teacher believed that the high proficiency group was capable of self-repair and the low proficiency group needed more assistance; therefore, the teacher gave more CF to the low group in which the correct form was provided, whereas the high group received more CF in which the correct form was not provided. With regard to learner uptake and repair, the study found that the high proficiency group had a higher rate of uptake and repair compared to the low proficiency group. Kennedy pointed out that the finding could be contributed by the proficiency level difference between the two groups. The high proficiency level group might have more linguistic resources to use to try to repair their utterances.

Ahangari and Amirzadeh's (2011) study is in support of Kennedy's (2010) study results which suggested that high proficiency learners are more independent learners who are capable of repairing their own errors in their utterances. To be specific, Ahangari and Amirzadeh explored teachers' CF to learners at three levels of proficiency. The study found that recast was the most frequently used CF type by the teachers at all three different proficiency groups; however, the frequency of using recasts diminished and CF types such as metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and clarification request, which encourage self-repair increased when the learners became more proficient.

On the contrary, the results of Mackey and Philp's (1998) experimental study to test the effectiveness of using recasts suggested that intensive recasts may be more beneficial for advanced learners, but not the low-proficiency group. Mackey and Philp (1998) further explained that the

different effects of recasts at different proficiency levels may indicate that recasts are effective only when language learners reach a certain developmental readiness.

In another experimental study, Ammar and Spada (2006) seem to draw a similar conclusion. The researchers compared the effectiveness of two CF types, recasts and prompts, for grade six learners of English as a second language at different proficiency levels in the Montreal area and found that high-proficiency learners benefited from both the prompts and recasts CF type, whereas low-proficiency learners benefited more from prompts.

Although many of the studies that have been discussed above mentioned learners' individual differences and proficiency levels as indicators of learners' error types and teachers' CF types, findings vary regarding which CF types resulted in increased learner uptake and repair, which are often seen as indicators of learning effectiveness. In addition, to the researchers' knowledge, no studies have looked into the possible influence of the linguistic nature of the target language on learners' error types and teachers' CF types. For example, Chinese is a tonal language, which is deemed to be more difficult for learners whose native language is a non-tonal language (for example English speakers) than learners whose native language is a tonal language (for example Vietnamese speakers). It is possible that due to the nature of the target language and the native tongue of the learners, learners might make certain types of errors more than other types and teachers may choose to use certain types of CF more than other types. The current study examines learners' error types, teachers' CF types, and learners' subsequent responses with a new scope. More specifically, in addition to considering individual learning differences and learners' proficiency levels, the nature of the Chinese language and learners' native language are also considered when interpreting the study results.

3.3 Research Questions

In order to understand teachers' CF types used in Chinese language classrooms of different levels with English speaking learners and the effectiveness of using the CF types in terms of learner uptake and repair, four research questions were investigated.

1. What types of language errors are produced by Chinese as a foreign language learners, whose native language is English, at different proficiency levels?
2. What types of oral CF do teachers provide to Chinese as a foreign language learners, whose native language is English, at different proficiency levels?
3. Are certain types of teachers' CF more effective than others in eliciting learner uptake or repair in Chinese as a foreign language classrooms of different levels?
4. What types of corrective feedback do learners, whose native language is English, prefer to receive?

4. Methods

4.1 Participants

Twenty-one male and 11 female English speakers, ranging in age from 18 to 30 years (M = 21, SD = 2.78) in two Chinese language classes, one beginner (n = 22) and one advanced (n = 10), at an university in southwestern United States participated in the study. The learners in the beginner class were in their first semester of studying Chinese while the learners in the advanced class had studied Chinese for more than two years. Among the participants, 18 of them majored in Business, five of them in Asian Studies, three of them in Computer Science, one in Landscaping, one in English, one in Psychology, one in Education, and two were undeclared. The teachers were native speakers of Chinese; one had two years of Chinese language teaching experience and the other had five years of

Chinese language teaching experience. Both teachers were female in their mid-thirties who received graduate degrees in language teaching in the United States.

4.2 Instructional Settings and Routines

Two Chinese language classes of different proficiency levels were examined in the current study: First-Year Chinese I and Readings in Contemporary Chinese Culture. These two courses were a part of the undergraduate Chinese minor program offered by the university. Both classes used the method of communicative language teaching, which is suitable for analysis of oral CF.

The teacher of First-Year Chinese I typically started a new chapter by introducing new Chinese characters and grammatical structures, followed by modeling how they were used in different contexts, and ended with involving learners in interactive activities to practice the newly learned materials. The teacher of the advanced class, Readings in Contemporary Chinese Culture, usually started a new chapter with a class discussion about the main text of the chapter using discussion questions as a guide. The teacher often used her own experiences or asked for the learners' experiences related to the content of the text to connect learners with the text. After the discussion, the teacher asked the learners to take turns to read aloud the main text and asked learners their opinions related to the issues mentioned in the text. The discussions usually stimulated a high frequency of interactions between the teacher and the learners and between the learners. Throughout the data collection period, the researchers observed frequent interactions between the teacher and the learners in both classes.

5. Data Collection

The interactions of the two teachers and their learners in the two classrooms were audio-recorded on the seventh and the eighth weeks of a 15-week semester, which covered the teaching of two chapters in each class. Each class taught a total of ten chapters in the semester. One researcher observed the beginner class, which resulted in 500 minutes of recordings, and the other observed the advanced class, which resulted in 360 minutes of recordings. The researchers asked the teachers to carry the audio-recorder with them in order to record not only interactions with the whole class, but also private conversations they might have with an individual or a small group of learners. The researchers sat in the back of the classrooms to observe the interactions and took observational notes, which helped provide information about the recorded interactions.

By the end of the eighth week in the semester, the participants completed the Students' Preference of Oral Corrective Feedback survey, which inquired about learners' preferences of teacher's oral CF when they made different types of errors. Followed by the completion of the survey, the researchers asked for volunteers in the two classes to conduct focus-group interviews to solicit elaborated comments about learners' opinions of teachers' oral CF. Three focus-group interviews, one with four advanced learners and two with a total of six novice learners were completed in English. Each interview took 30 to 40 minutes and was audio-recorded.

6. Data Analysis

In order to analyze learners' error types in the beginner and advanced Chinese classrooms, the current study adopted the coding scheme used in Yoshida (2008) to categorize learners' error types. The researchers decided not to use the fifth type of error, Kanji reading errors, as the classes observed in this study were highly orally communicative. The researchers adopted the taxonomy of CF types and learners' uptake moves described in Lyster and Ranta (1997) to categorize teachers' CF types and learner uptake and repair. The coding schemes used in Yoshida's (2008) and Lyster and Ranta's (1997) studies are defined in Appendix 2. In addition to the six feedback types described by Lyster and Ranta (1997), the current study added the seventh type, translation, and the eighth type, multiple

feedback after the researchers noticed frequent occurrences of these two types in the classrooms observed. After each CF episode was transcribed, the researchers analyzed the data separately and compared their results. Reliability was assessed by comparing the number of coding agreements between the researchers. If the researchers did not agree with each other on the categories for certain instances, they discussed these instances further and came to a conclusion on the category as a team. Before discussion, the inter-rater reliability for the analysis of learners' error types was 96%, the one for the analysis of CF types was 97% and the one for the analysis of learner repair and uptake was 97%.

In order to test whether there were statistically significant differences in the frequency of students' error types and teachers' CF types, Chi Square Goodness of Fit tests, which analyze one variable with two or more categories, were performed. In order to test whether teachers' CF types and learners' subsequent responses were related, Test of Independence Chi Square analyses, which analyze two variables with two or more categories, were performed. The null hypotheses for all tests were assumed and an alpha level of $p < .05$ was set for all tests. The adjusted standardized residuals, also called Haberman Residuals, (+/- 2.0) were used to identify significant differences in the Test of Independence Chi Square analyses. These residuals are similar to the standardized residuals, but are more accurate for making a decision of a cell's contribution to significance (Haberman, 1973).

With respect to the survey data, each participant's preferences of teacher's CF types when the participant made different types of language errors were tallied and presented as descriptive data in the results section. The interview data was transcribed and the coding schemes were the reasons of the interviewees' CF preferences. The coded interview data and the researchers' observation notes were used as the supporting data to explain the findings.

7. Results

7.1 Learners' Error Types

The result of the Chi Square test on the frequency of students' error types in the beginner level Chinese class, $\chi^2(2, N = 125) = 49.072$, $p = .000$, showed that there was a significant difference in the type of students' errors at the beginner level. As shown in Table 1, the most frequently made student error was lexical (56%), followed by phonological (38.4%) and morphosyntactic (5.6%). The fourth type of error, semantic, received a frequency count of 0; therefore, it was not shown in the result.

Table 1. Frequency of Students' Error Types at Beginner Level

	Observed N	Percent	Expected N	Residual
Morphosyntactic error	7	5.6%	41.7	-34.7
Phonological error	48	38.4%	41.7	6.3
Lexical error	70	56.0%	41.7	28.3

The result of the Chi Square test on the frequency of students' error types in the advanced level Chinese class, $\chi^2(2, N = 119) = 58.353$, $p = .000$, illustrated a significant difference in the type of students' errors at the advanced level. Table 2 indicates that the learners in the advanced class most frequently made phonological errors (61.3%), followed by lexical errors (34.5%) and morphosyntactic errors (4.2%). The learners did not make semantic errors during observation, therefore the Chi Square test did not show that category.

Table 2. Frequency of Students' Error Types at Advanced Level

	Observed N	Percent	Expected N	Residual
Morphosyntactic error	5	4.2%	39.7	-34.7
Phonological error	73	61.3%	39.7	33.3
Lexical error	41	34.5%	39.7	1.3

7.2 Teachers' Oral CF Types

The test result on the frequency of the teacher's CF types in the beginner level, $\chi^2(7, N = 175) = 229.8$, $p = .000$, revealed a statistically significant difference in the types of feedback provided by the teacher. As shown in Table 3, the most frequently used oral CF type in the beginner level class was recasts (48%) and the least frequently used type was repetition (.6%).

Table 3. Frequency of Teacher's CF Types at Beginner Level

	Observed N	Percent	Expected N	Residual
Explicit correction	16	9.1%	21.9	-5.9
Recasts	84	48.0%	21.9	62.1
Clarification	18	10.3%	21.9	-3.9
Metalinguistic feedback	6	3.4%	21.9	-15.9
Elicitation	31	17.7%	21.9	9.1
Repetition	1	.6%	21.9	-20.9
Translation	5	2.9%	21.9	-16.9
Multiple Feedback	14	8.0%	21.9	-7.9

The test result on the frequency of the teacher's CF types in the advanced level, $\chi^2(5, N = 119) = 89.084$, $p = .000$, showed a statistical significance in the types of the feedback provided by the teacher. The most frequently used oral CF type as shown in Table 4, was recasts (41.2%). The least frequently used feedback types were repetition and translation, which received frequency counts of zero and were excluded from the table below by the test result.

Table 4. Frequency of Teacher's CF Types at Advanced Level

	Observed N	Percent	Expected N	Residual
Explicit correction	2	1.7%	19.8	-17.8
Recasts	49	41.2%	19.8	29.2
Clarification	2	1.7%	19.8	-17.8
Metalinguistic feedback	11	9.2%	19.8	-8.8
Elicitation	21	17.6%	19.8	1.2
Multiple feedback	34	28.6%	19.8	14.2

7.3 Learner Uptake and Repair

Table 5 shows that on average, the rate of learner uptake in the beginner class was 89.1%. The result of the Chi Square test, $\chi^2(7, N = 175) = 10.116$, $p = .182$, indicated a non-significant difference in the type of teacher's feedback in relation to eliciting uptake in the beginner class; that is, no certain type of teacher feedback was more effective than others in eliciting uptake.

Table 5. Relationship Between Feedback Type and Learner Uptake at Beginner Level

Feedback Type		Uptake	No Uptake	Total
Explicit correction		16 (94.1%)	1 (5.9%)	17 (100%)
	adjusted residual	.7	-.7	
Recasts		72 (85.7%)	12 (14.3%)	84 (100%)
	adjusted residual	-1.4	1.4	
Clarification		8 (88.9%)	1 (11.1%)	9 (100%)
requests	adjusted residual	0	0	
Metalinguistic		6 (100%)	0 (0%)	6 (100%)
feedback	adjusted residual	.9	-.9	
Elicitation		40 (97.6%)	1 (2.4%)	41 (100%)
	adjusted residual	2.0	-2.0	
Repetition		1 (100%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)
	adjusted residual	.3	-.3	
Translation		3 (60%)	2 (40%)	5 (100%)
	adjusted residual	-2.1	2.1	
Multiple feedback		10 (83.3%)	2 (16.7%)	12 (100%)
	adjusted residual	-.7	.7	
Total		156 (89.1%)	19 (10.9%)	175 (100%)

The test result of the relationship between the teacher's CF type and learner repair at the beginner level, $\chi^2(7, N = 156) = 17.796$, $p = .013$, revealed that certain feedback types more or less effectively elicited learner repair. As shown by the adjusted residuals in Table 6, the recasts feedback type, with a positive residual of 2.6, was significantly more effective than other types in eliciting learner repair while the clarification requests feedback type, with a negative residual of 3.4, was significantly less effective than other types in eliciting learner repair.

Table 6. Relationship Between Feedback Type and Learner Repair at Beginner Level

Feedback Type		Repair	Needs Repair	Total
Explicit correction		10 (62.5%)	6 (37.5%)	16 (100%)
	adjusted residual	-.4	.4	
Recasts		56 (77.8%)	16 (22.2%)	72 (100%)
	adjusted residual	2.6	-2.6	
Clarification		1 (12.5%)	7 (87.5%)	8 (100%)
requests	adjusted residual	-3.4	3.4	
Metalinguistic		3 (50%)	3 (50%)	6 (100%)
feedback	adjusted residual	-.9	.9	
Elicitation		27 (67.5%)	13 (32.5%)	40 (100%)
	adjusted residual	.0	.0	
Repetition		0 (0%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)
	adjusted residual	-1.4	1.4	
Translation		2 (66.7%)	1 (33.3%)	3 (100%)
	adjusted residual	.0	.0	
Multiple feedback		6 (60%)	4 (40%)	10 (100%)
	adjusted residual	-.5	.5	
Total		105 (67.3%)	51 (32.7%)	156 (100%)

Table 7 shows that on average, the rate of learner uptake in the advanced level class was 70.6%. The test result, $\chi^2(5, N = 119) = 4.740$, $p = .448$, revealed that there was no statistical significance between the teacher's feedback type and learner uptake in the advanced class. In other words, no certain type of feedback more effectively elicited learner uptake at the advanced level class.

Table 7. Relationship Between Feedback Type and Learner Uptake at Advanced Level

Feedback Type		Uptake	No Uptake	Total
Explicit correction		1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2 (100%)
	adjusted residual	-.6	.6	
Recasts		39 (79.6%)	10 (20.4%)	49 (100%)
	adjusted residual	1.8	-1.8	
Clarification		2 (100%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)
requests	adjusted residual	.9	-.9	
Metalinguistic		7 (63.6%)	4 (36.4%)	11 (100%)
feedback	adjusted residual	-.5	.5	
Elicitation		13 (61.9%)	8 (38.1%)	21 (100%)
	adjusted residual	-1.0	1.0	
Multiple feedback		22 (64.7%)	12 (35.3%)	34 (100%)
	adjusted residual	-.9	.9	
Total		84 (70.6%)	35 (29.4%)	119 (100%)

Table 8 indicates that on average, the rate of learner repair in the advanced class was 91.7%. The test result, $\chi^2(5, N = 84) = 5.509$, $p = .357$, illustrated that there was no significance between the teacher's feedback type and learner repair. No particular feedback type elicited more learner repair.

Table 8. Relationship Between Feedback Type and Learner Repair at Advanced Level

Feedback Type		Repair	Needs Repair	Total
Explicit correction		1 (100%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)
	adjusted residual	.3	-.3	
Recasts		37 (94.9%)	2 (5.1%)	39 (100%)
	adjusted residual	1.0	-1.0	
Clarification		1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2 (100%)
requests	adjusted residual	-2.2	2.2	
Metalinguistic		6 (85.7%)	1 (14.3%)	7 (100%)
feedback	adjusted residual	-.6	.6	
Elicitation		12 (92.3%)	1 (7.7%)	13 (100%)
	adjusted residual	-1.0	1.0	
Multiple feedback		20 (90.9%)	2 (9.1%)	22 (100%)
	adjusted residual	1.0	-1.0	
Total		77 (91.7%)	7 (8.3%)	84 (100%)

7.4 Survey and Interview Results

The survey and interview results investigated learners' preferences of teacher's oral CF type when the learners made different types of language errors in class. Table 9 shows the survey results from the beginner class. For all four types of student errors: mispronunciation, incorrect grammar, inappropriate use of lexical item, and misunderstanding of what the teacher said, the beginners' answers revealed that the majority preferred the recasts CF. Recasts, which are reformulations of all or part of a student's utterance, directly provide correct forms of students' utterances (Yoshida, 2008). According to the interview results, there were several reasons the beginners thought recasts were an effective oral CF type in correcting their errors.

Table 9. Beginners' Preferences of Oral Feedback

Beginner Class						
	recasts	explicit correction	meta-linguistic feedback	repetition	elicitation	Other
1. Mispronunciation	15 (68%)	3 (13%)	2 (9%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	0 (0%)
2. Incorrect Grammar	12 (55%)	6 (27%)	4 (18%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
3. Wrong Chinese Word	13 (60%)	6 (27%)	3 (13%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
4. Misunderstanding of What Your Teacher Said	12 (55%)	3 (13%)	6 (27%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)

With respect to correcting mispronunciation, five out of six interviewees expressed that they just wanted to be told how to say it right and did not think hearing the teacher repeat their ill-formed utterances would help. Interviewee 1 said, "I want to be corrected before I make another mistake." Interviewee 2 said, "I don't want to hear the wrong sounds four times." Interviewee 3 explained that the reason they wanted to hear the correct pronunciation has to do with the tonal feature of the Chinese language. She said, "If you pronounce it the right way I will be like, oh, that's how it is. I think that the problem for a lot of people who are American is we don't use tones in our language." Interviewee 3 pointed out the tonal difference between Chinese and English, and how the difference led to the beginners' preference of recasts to correct their pronunciation errors. It seems that listening to teachers recasting the right tones would be most helpful to beginners learning pronunciation and tones in Chinese.

With regard to correcting grammar errors, Interviewee 6 explained why he preferred recasts. He said, "I like that the teacher uses recasts, so I can hear the correct sentence. If I still don't understand, then she can explain why." This comment seems to suggest that the learner liked to use the time when the teacher used recasts to think about the grammar and see if he would understand his error. The comments from Interviewees 3 and 4 confirmed this assumption. They explained that regardless of which type of CF the teacher uses, they wanted the teacher to give them time to think about the grammar being corrected. One said, "If they are grammar errors, they get you thinking" while the other said, "With grammar I would like to have time to think about it. My mind tends to retain the information better if I have time to think." Having time to think about the grammar errors they made seems to be crucial for beginners to acquire grammar.

With respect to correcting lexical errors, several interviewees expressed that if the teacher just used recasts, they think they would get it. However, in addition to receiving recasts, Interviewee 5 explained her need to ask the teacher to write the correct lexical item on the board. She said:

> I am a visual learner, so I like it when you write the correct characters on the board because then I can associate with that. I feel like in Chinese there are so many /shi4/, there are like 17 characters for that one word [sound].

This comment points out that the learners' CF preferences to correct lexical errors are related to both their individual learning styles and the nature of the Chinese language. Another interviewee, Interviewee 4, also made a comment related to the different natures between her native language, English, and Chinese, and how it influenced her CF preference. She said:

> Metalinguistic feedback is helpful to correct lexical errors. Like when I learn measure words in Chinese. I mean, you sort of have measure words in English, but not really. So that's a totally new concept, so it is really good to go over that when I make an error.

Chinese uses measure words much more frequently and broadly than English. The learner felt the need for the teacher to give her an explanation on the lexical item which is used distinctively in the target language compared to her native language.

With regard to correcting students' misunderstanding of what the teacher said, Interviewee 1 explained why he preferred recasts. He stated:

> If you were to ask me a question, and I give you the wrong answer, and you ask me again, then I realize I give you the wrong answer. I would try to think of something else. I would think deeper about the question.

It seems the interviewee saw recasts as a hint to him that he made an error in his response. Interviewee 5 also preferred recasts for correcting her misunderstanding of what the teacher said. She said her reason is "Sometimes I just don't pay enough attention. I just need the teacher to repeat the question."

One of the six beginner interviewees, Interviewee 5, had a strong individual learning style, believing that when learning, self-discovery was important. She stated:

> I think a lot of people don't realize if the answer is given to you, then it doesn't stick as well. The easy way is just to be told, but they don't realize that they will remember it better if they can discover it by themselves.

This learning belief influenced Interviewee 5 in the way she learned Chinese. She preferred that the teacher used prompts to correct all types of her errors. She gave an example of correcting a pronunciation error. She described:

> I think it is helpful if the teacher can give me prompts. For example, if there is a 4th tone, and you said, 'stronger', then it associates an emotional response with the word, and then this way we can discover what the tone is rather than just saying 4th tone. Then students come to say it the right way without being told so, then they realize what they were doing wrong.

The survey results of the advanced learners in Table 10 illustrate that the most preferred CF type to correct pronunciation and grammar errors is recasts.

Table 10. Advanced Learners' Preferences of Oral Feedback

Advanced Class						
	recasts	explicit correction	meta-linguistic feedback	repetition	elicitation	Other
1. Mispronunciation	8 (80%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
2. Incorrect Grammar	6 (60%)	3 (30%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
3. Wrong Chinese Word	2 (20%)	6 (60%)	2 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
4. Misunderstanding of What Your Teacher Said	2 (20%)	4 (40%)	4 (40%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

With regard to correcting pronunciation errors using recasts, Interviewee 7 mentioned,

> Because I always try to pay attention to the tones, so I pay attention to how I said it and how she [the teacher] said it. So it is not necessary to tell me it's wrong, but simply pronounce the right sounds to me.

Interviewee 8 said, "I am a repeater. If I say something wrong and she says it back to me, I repeat after her [the teacher]." These comments suggest that the learners' preferred CF type is related to their learning styles and possibly the tonal feature of the Chinese language as well. The fact that Interviewee 7 stated that he always tried to pay attention to the tones could be contributed to the difficulty English speakers experience when learning to pronounce Chinese tones.

With respect to grammar, Interviewee 9 preferred the teacher to use recasts to correct her errors. She said, "If I know the grammar, but I just say it wrong or forget, then I prefer the teacher to use recasts". Interviewee 10's preferred CF type to correct his grammar is explicit correction, which is ranked as the second preferred type in the survey results. He explained that learning a grammatical

structure is harder than learning pronunciation or a lexical item, therefore, it is beneficial if the teacher could explicitly point out the errors he made. He said that the teacher could tell him, "This grammar is this, now use it" or "this is what you said, this is what it needs to be said".

With respect to correcting lexical errors, the majority of the advanced learners preferred explicit correction. Interviewee 10 explained that if the error was not explicitly pointed out to him, he would keep using the wrong word. Interviewee 7 stated that in addition to explicitly correcting his lexical errors, it would be helpful if the teacher could write down the correct form of the lexical item on the board. He said, "I would like the teacher to write it on the board for me to visually see it." The learner's need to visually see the lexical item could be related to the nature of Chinese writing, which is a logographic system whose written form has little relation to pronunciation.

With regards to the students' error type of misunderstanding what the teacher said, the advanced learners had different CF preferences. Some reported preferring explicit correction and some preferred meta-linguistic feedback. Interviewee 9 explained why she thought meta-linguistic feedback would be effective for her. She said, "Sometimes it is the specific words in the questions that I don't know. I know the general topic, but like, exactly what she was asking, I don't know. So giving me hints or paraphrase the question will help." Interviewee 8 explained the reason he thought explicit correction was the most effective CF for him. He stated, "Sometimes I just need another second to process the question, so if you tell me I misunderstood you and ask the question again, I think I will get it the second time."

At the end of the interview, the advanced interviewees stated that regardless of their preferences of CF types, since they are at the advanced level in the target language, it is not difficult for them to remember the teacher's corrections. Interviewee 8 said, "Once you are at a certain point with your language study, you remember stuff easier. You are going to remember the corrections." This comment shows that the learners believed it was proficiency level and not oral CF types, which influenced how much they learned from teacher's corrections.

8. Discussion

To respond to the first research question, *What types of errors are produced by Chinese as a foreign language learners, whose native language is English, at different proficiency levels?*, the two most frequently made errors in the beginner and the advanced classes were phonological and lexical errors. However, the beginners made more lexical errors (56%) than the advanced learners (34.5%). Conversely, the advanced learners made more phonological errors (61.3%) than the beginners (38.4%). The two different types of errors made at different proficiency levels could be explained by the language development stages of the learners. In the beginner class, the learners were introduced to approximately 15 to 20 vocabulary words per lesson and practiced how to appropriately use them in complete sentences in specific contexts in interactive activities. While the learners tested out their hypotheses of how these new words should be used in a sentence, they made many lexical errors. On the other hand, the advanced learners had broader vocabulary knowledge and a better control of lexical use compared to the beginners, hence, they made fewer lexical errors. However, in the advanced class, parts of the lessons emphasized the learning of Chinese characters which have more than one pronunciation. Among the 2400 most commonly used Chinese characters, 20% of them have more than one pronunciation (Pinyin Info., 2012). The learners need to know which pronunciation to use depending on the context. The teaching of Chinese characters with more than one pronunciation was new to the advanced learners, therefore, the learning of it was deemed difficult and the learners made many errors.

The findings of the present study on the frequently made students' error types were contradictory to the findings in Kennedy's (2010) study. In Kennedy's study, grammatical errors (called morphsyntactic errors in this study) were the most frequently made errors by both the beginning (68%) and advanced (62%) English learners while lexical errors (beginner 3%; advanced 21%) and phonological errors (beginner 16%; advanced 12%) did not occur as frequently. Contrarily, the

Chinese learners in this study frequently made lexical errors (beginner 56%; advanced 34.5%) and phonological errors (beginner 38.4%; advanced 61.3%) while morphsyntactic errors were rarely made (beginning 5.6%; advanced 4.2%). These contradictory findings could be attributed to the nature of Chinese grammatical structures. In some aspects, Chinese grammar is easier to master than English, especially the grammar taught in first-year Chinese. For example, Chinese does not require the change of verb forms to indicate tense like English does. The sentence in English, *I went to school yesterday*, requires the speaker to know to change the verb from "go" to "went" to indicate past tense. However, in Chinese, simply mentioning "yesterday" at the beginning of the sentence is sufficient. Hence, in Chinese the sentence, *Yesterday I go to school* is correct. Due to some simpler grammatical structures of the Chinese language, the learners at both beginner and advanced levels made fewer morphosyntactic errors. The type of error which received a count of zero in the current study is semantic error, which is an error made when the teacher doesn't understand a learner's utterance, even though the speech doesn't contain any grammatical, lexical or phonological errors (Yoshida, 2008). According to the researchers' observations, the teachers usually understood what their learners said if they did not make any grammatical, lexical or phonological errors.

To answer the second question, *What types of oral corrective feedback do teachers provide to Chinese as a foreign language learners, whose native language is English, at different proficiency levels?*, this study found that recasts were the most frequently used CF type in both the beginner (48%) and the advanced (41.2%) classes. This finding was predictable as many other studies also found recasts as one of the most frequently used CF types in different foreign language classroom settings (Ahangari & Amirzadeh, 2011; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Sheen, 2004; Yoshida, 2008). Ahangari and Amirzadeh (2011) explained that a reason recasts were often the most frequently used CF type might be due to teachers' concern of interrupting the flow of communication in the classroom. A few studies mentioned that even though recasts were observed to be the most frequently used CF type, they found that teachers used less recasts as the learners became more proficient (Ammar & Spada, 2006; Kennedy 2010; Lyster & Ranta, 1997). The finding of the current study is in support of the previous studies. Even though both the beginner and the advanced classes used recasts most frequently, the teacher in the advanced class used recasts a little less than the teacher in the beginner class. In addition, the second most frequently used CF type in the advanced class, multiple feedback (28.6%), had a considerably higher frequency percentage than the rest of CF types other than recasts, suggesting the richer varieties of CF in the advanced class. According to the classroom observations, the multiple feedback used in the advanced class had combinations of recasts and elicitation, recasts and translation, clarification requests and explicit correction, metalinguistic feedback and translation, recasts and clarification, and explicit correction and translation. Lyster and Ranta (1997) explained that teachers who teach proficient learners tend to draw more on different feedback types because they believe that these learners are better able to repair their errors as they have more linguistic knowledge.

The third research question in this study is, *Are certain types of teachers' feedback more effective than others in eliciting learner uptake or repair in Chinese as a foreign language classrooms of different levels?*. With regard to learner uptake, the current study found that no certain type of teacher feedback was more effective than others in eliciting learner uptake in both beginner and advanced classes. However, this study found a statistical significance between CF type and learner repair in the beginner class; that is, recasts were significantly more effective than other CF types in eliciting learner repair while clarification requests were significantly less effective than other CF types in eliciting learner repair. The frequency percentage of eliciting learner repair using recasts was 77.8% while the frequency percentage was only 12.5% using clarification requests. This finding is somewhat contradictory to Mackey and Philp's (1998) study in which the researchers claimed that learner uptake or repair may not be possible following recasts as the teachers may continue with their turn, not letting learners have the time to respond. The different findings between the current study and Mackey and Philp's (1998) study could be attributed to the types of recasts the teachers in the studies provided. Sheen (2006) stated that recasts are more effective when the teachers use them explicitly with stress. This

way, learners are more likely to notice that they are being corrected by the teachers. In the current study, the researchers observed that the teacher in the beginner class talked slower and louder when she provided recasts to her learners. Moreover, her student, Interviewee 5, mentioned in the interview that she liked when her teacher used gestures while telling her the correct answer. The explicit recasts she provided to the learners may have increased the frequency of learner repair. The clarification request type, which is found to be significantly less effective in eliciting learner repair in the beginner class, could be explained using Ferreira , Moore, and Mellish's (2007) study. The researchers found that beginner learners do not have well developed linguistic knowledge to assist them with repairing their error. This implies that CF, such as clarification requests, which do not directly provide correct answers, may be less effective in eliciting learner repair . More assistance other than asking beginners to clarify what they say is needed.

The fourth question of the current study is, *What types of corrective feedback do learners, whose native language is English, prefer to receive?*. The survey results showed that the majority of the beginner participants preferred recasts while the advanced participants had preferences more scattered among different CF types. The majority of the advanced participants preferred recasts for correcting pronunciation and grammar errors, explicit correction for correcting lexical errors, and explicit correction and meta-linguistic feedback for correcting misunderstanding of the teachers' speech. The interview results illustrated that the participants' CF preferences were influenced by (1) their learning styles and beliefs, (2) their proficiency levels, (3) the nature of the Chinese language, and (4) the differences between Chinese and their native language, English. For example, the visual learners in the interviews expressed that they liked when the teachers wrote the correct answers on the board for them to see, while the learner who believed in the learning concept of self-discovery preferred the teacher to give her prompts (learning styles and beliefs). The advanced learners' preferred CF types were varied because they had reached a certain language development level and they thought they were able to acquire the language regardless of the particular types of CF they received (proficiency levels). The tonal feature of the Chinese phonetics prompted the learners to expect the teachers to use recasts in order to hear the right tones when they made pronunciation errors (nature of the Chinese language). The use of certain type of words in Chinese made the learners feel the need for the teachers to use meta-linguistic feedback to provide detailed information on the use of the words (differences between Chinese and English).

9. Conclusion

This study, which intended to examine Chinese language learners' error types, teachers' CF types, effectiveness of CF types in terms of eliciting learner uptake or repair, and learners' preferred CF type, had several findings. First, contrary to the findings in a previous study (Kennedy, 2010) on English language learners, who made mostly grammatical errors, lexical and phonological errors were the most frequent errors made by the learners in this study. These different findings could be attributed to the distinct nature of the target language (Chinese) learned in this study versus the target language (English) learned in the other study. This finding implies that language learners might make certain types of errors more than other types due to the nature of the target language. For example, the learning of tones in Chinese is deemed difficult for learners of Chinese as a second language, especially for learners whose native languages are not tonal languages; hence, learners of Chinese as a second language tend to make frequent phonological errors. A teaching implication of this finding is that language teachers need to examine the nature of the target language they teach, identify the particular types of errors learners might make frequently, and design lessons which emphasize the teaching of the difficult features of the language.

Second, in agreement with other studies, recasts were found to be the most frequently used CF type in this study. Moreover, this study showed that recasts with stressed tones or gestures, such as the ones used in the beginner class, were deemed to be significantly more effective than other CF types in eliciting learner repair. This finding implies that when language teachers choose to use

recasts as feedback to their learners, especially low proficiency learners, teachers should remind themselves to use recasts explicitly with stress in order to achieve the maximum effectiveness of recasts.

Finally, this study found that the majority of the beginners preferred recasts while the advanced learners had preferences more scattered among different CF types. The interview results illustrated that the participants' CF preferences were influenced by their learning styles and beliefs, their proficiency levels, the nature of the Chinese language, and the differences between Chinese and their native language, English. These findings are aligned with the view of ZPD which claims that no certain type of CF is absolutely more effective than others to all learners. The key is to provide CF which is comprehensible and suitable to the individual learner. An implication of these findings is that when teaching a target language, it is more important to know learners' current language levels, their learning styles and needs, and understand the linguistic differences between the target language and the learners' native language in order to provide effective CF.

This small-scale study is limited by the number of participants and the amount of classroom interaction analyzed. Nevertheless, the findings of this study provided specific directions for future research. For example, when investigating teachers' CF types and learner uptake and repair, instead of making generalizations of the results to all languages, future studies should take into account how the nature of the target language(s) in the study context influence teachers' CF types and learner uptake and repair. Addressing the influence of the particular target language(s) will provide more accurate and insightful research results and give language teachers more guidance on how to provide effective CF.

Biodata

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Appendix 1

Students' Preferences of Oral Corrective Feedback

In each of the following questions, choose the answer which applies to you by putting a check mark in front of it.

1. If you mispronounce a Chinese word in class, how do you prefer your teacher to correct you?

_____ repeat the word with the correct pronunciation. (recasts)
_____ tell me I mispronounced the word and show me the correct pronunciation. (explicit correction)
_____ give me hints on how to pronounce it correctly. (meta-linguistic feedback)
_____ repeat the word in the wrong pronunciation to help me self-correct. (repetition)
_____ try to elicit my reformulation of what I said. (elicitation)
_____ other: _____

2. If you say a Chinese sentence using incorrect grammar in class, how do you prefer your teacher to correct you?

_____ repeat the sentence with correct grammar. (recasts)
_____ tell me I used incorrect grammar and show me the correct grammar. (explicit correction)
_____ give me hints on how to say the sentence correctly. (meta-linguistic feedback)
_____ repeat the sentence using the incorrect grammar to help me self-correct. (repetition)
_____ try to elicit my reformulation of what I said. (elicitation)
_____ other: _____

3. If you use the wrong Chinese word in a sentence in class, how do you prefer your teacher to correct you?

_____ repeat the sentence with a correct word.
_____ tell me I used the wrong word and show me the correct one.
_____ give me hints on which word is correct.
_____ repeat the sentence using the wrong word to help me self-correct.
_____ try to elicit my reformulation of what I said.
_____ other: _____

4. If you misunderstand what your teacher says in Chinese and respond to him/her with an inadequate answer, how do you prefer your teacher to correct you?

_____ repeat the question. (recasts)
_____ tell me I misunderstood him/her and ask the question again.(explicit correction)
_____ give me hints on what he/she tried to ask such as paraphrasing the question. (meta-linguistic feedback)
_____ repeat my inadequate answer to help me self-correct. (repetition)
_____ try to elicit my reformulation of what I answered. (elicitation)
_____ other: _____

Appendix 2

Error Types (Yoshida, 2008)

1. Morphosyntactic error: word order, tense, particles
2. Phonological error
3. lexical error: L1 or inappropriate use of vocabulary
4. semantic error: teacher doesn't understand a learner's utterance even though the speech doesn't contain any grammatical, lexical or phonological errors

1. Explicit Correction: Explicit provision of the correct form.
2. Recasts: Reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance.
3. Clarification Requests: Indicating to students that the utterance is ill-formed by saying, "I am sorry?", "Excuse me?", or "What do you mean by X?", etc.
4. Metalinguistic Feedback: Giving comments or information related to the well-formedness of the student's utterance without explicitly providing the correct form
5. Elicitation: Pausing to let students to fill in the blank, asking questions to elicit correct forms such as "How do we say X in Chinese?", or asking students to reformulate their utterance.
6. Repetition: Repeating students' ill-formed utterances without any change.
7. Translation: Translate between Chinese and English.
8. Multiple Feedback: Use more than one CF to correct an error.

Feedback Types (Lyster & Ranta, 1997)

Learner Uptake and Repair (Lyster & Ranta, 1997)

1. Uptake: A student's response that follows the teacher's CF.
2. Repair: Correct reformulation of an error as uttered in a single student turn.