

# Peer Corrective Feedback: A Review of Its Unique Contributions to Enhancing Second Language Development

Yanxin Wang<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China*

<sup>\*</sup>*Corresponding author: yanxin\_wang@zju.edu.cn*

**Abstract:** *Peer corrective feedback (PCF) refers to the dynamic interactions between language learners in which they provide each other with feedback on their language use. Studies have shown that, similar to corrective feedback from teachers or native speakers, PCF can benefit second language development by raising learners' awareness of gaps in their interlanguage (Sippel & Jackson, 2015). However, PCF is distinct from other forms of corrective feedback and uniquely contributes to second language acquisition and pedagogy. This review first defines PCF and establishes its theoretical basis by discussing how it facilitates language development from sociocultural, cognitive, and interactionist perspectives. The second section reviews evidence demonstrating PCF's effectiveness in improving second language skills. Finally, comparative studies on PCF and other corrective feedback methods are discussed to highlight PCF's unique benefits and vulnerabilities.*

**Keywords:** *peer corrective feedback, peer interaction, corrective feedback, L2 development*

## 1. Introduction

Most theories of second language learning and pedagogy incorporate the concept of feedback. Feedback can be defined as the process by which learners receive information about their performance, understanding, or learning, with the aim of facilitating improvement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). It is an essential component of the learning process, as it assists learners in recognizing their competencies and limitations, empowering them to modify their learning strategies suitably. In terms of pedagogy, feedback is seen as a way to increase learner motivation and guarantee linguistic accuracy in both communicative and structural methods[1-2].

Feedback can be either positive or negative. Positive feedback is regarded as significant in pedagogical theory because it gives the student effective support and encourages motivation to keep learning. However, positive feedback has not received much attention with respect to second language learning. It is because the historical emphasis on error correction and promoting linguistic accuracy in SLA research has overshadowed the role of positive feedback, as researchers and teachers have primarily focused on identifying and rectifying learners' errors to help them achieve native-like proficiency (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Positive feedback confirms that a learner's response is accurate, while negative feedback indicates that a learner's statement is linguistically incorrect, often in the form of corrective feedback.

Corrective feedback, as a type of negative feedback, responds to student statements containing grammatical errors. As Sheen and Ellis (2011) defined, corrective feedback (CF) refers to the feedback learners receive on linguistic errors in their oral or written production in a second language. The primary purpose of corrective feedback is to promote accurate understanding and skill development by addressing errors or misconceptions as they arise (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). With the rise of form-focused instruction (Lightbown & Spada, 1990), corrective feedback has gained more theoretical and pedagogical attention[3-6].

Corrective feedback can be provided by teachers, peers, or even the learners themselves. Therefore, in terms of providers, corrective feedback can be categorized into teacher corrective feedback, peer corrective feedback (PCF) and self-corrections. Teacher corrective feedback is a pedagogical approach in which teachers provide learners with information regarding their language use, with the aim of correcting errors and promoting linguistic accuracy (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). It plays a pivotal role in second language acquisition (SLA) as it aims to facilitate learners' understanding and promote linguistic

accuracy. With the shift to learner-centered teaching, peer feedback activities have become a research trend. Peer corrective feedback refers to the process by which learners provide corrective feedback to their peers, identifying and addressing errors or misconceptions in their understanding or performance (Gielen, Tops, Dochy, Onghena, & Smeets, 2010). This type of feedback is particularly valuable because it encourages collaboration, fosters a sense of responsibility among learners, and provides opportunities for learners to actively engage in the learning process. Peer corrective feedback can take various forms, such as written comments, oral discussions, or even through digital platforms, depending on the context and the nature of the learning task (Nelson & Carson, 1998). Some of the benefits of peer corrective feedback include increased learner autonomy, improved critical thinking skills, and enhanced communication skills (Liu & Carless, 2006)[7-12].

## **2. Theoretical Supports for Using PCF in L2 Classrooms**

Peer corrective feedback benefits L2 development according to psychological, sociolinguistic, and interactionist-cognitive perspectives. Unlike teacher feedback, peer feedback provides interactive situations that facilitate language development. Researchers have justified the merits of peer corrective feedback from multiple angles.

Psychologically, Varonis and Gass (1985) argued that interaction among peers supplies essential input for acquisition. They attributed learners' diverse interactional moves to perceiving "shared incompetence" (p. 84), meaning peer feedback offers a comfortable setting for learners to identify and correct each other's and their own speech errors after receiving feedback. This comfort gives learners more time to process what they hear and say. For example, Swain et al. (2002) found that learners had more thinking time and felt more at ease testing hypotheses with peers. Fujii and Mackey (2009) found students gave more accurate, understandable utterances to L2-speaking than L1-speaking interlocutors. Greater comfort seems to increase willingness to practice and overall language production.

Sociolinguistically, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory supports peer corrective feedback. His Zone of Proximal Development holds that learners can achieve potential development only with a more knowledgeable other's help. One way is through scaffolding, which Bruner (1985) defined as "verbal guidance that an expert provides to help a learner perform any specific task" or "the verbal collaboration of peers to perform a task which would be too difficult for any one of them individually" (p. 83). Like other feedback, peer feedback supports learners moving from other- to self-regulation, facilitating L2 development.

Interactionist-cognitively, Sato's (2017) dual model of peer corrective feedback, based on Levelt's (1983) perceptual loop theory, argues that peer feedback has dual functions: providers and receivers both gain linguistically. Providers must identify receivers' errors and compare to their interlanguage, enhancing their own learning through monitoring[13-19].

## **3. Effectiveness of Peer Corrective Feedback**

Since establishing the theoretical basis for peer corrective feedback, empirical research on its effectiveness in L2 writing contexts has gained momentum (Keh, 1990; Mittan, 1989).

Overall, researchers have emphasized several key benefits: first, peer feedback is tailored more closely to the learner's developmental stage or interests, making it more informative than teacher feedback; second, it heightens audience awareness, allowing writers to recognize egocentrism in their own work; and third, learners' attitudes towards writing can improve through the support and encouragement of their peers. These advantages contribute to the effectiveness of peer feedback in language development[20-27].

Research also shows that peer corrective feedback benefits L2 development akin to other interlocutors' feedback. Sato and Lyster (2012) assessed peer corrective feedback, peer interaction-only, and control groups' effects on speech rate and accuracy. Although the peer interaction-only group improved speech rate most, the peer corrective feedback group improved both rate and accuracy. Regarding grammar, studies show a positive correlation between peer corrective feedback output and acquiring specific structures (McDonough, 2004; Adams, 2007).

However, peer corrective feedback has vulnerabilities and can negatively impact L2 development. Learners may hesitate to explicitly point out mistakes due to emotional factors, reducing efficiency (Mackey, Oliver & Leeman, 2003; Sato, 2007). Effects also vary by social context. Tomita and Spada

(2013) found that Japanese English learners occasionally avoid English with peers due to stigma (Yoshida, 2013)[28-32].

#### **4. PCF VS CF From Teachers and L1 Speakers**

Peer corrective feedback has unique features distinct from other corrective feedback types. Studies exploring these unique features often compare peer corrective feedback to corrective feedback from other interlocutors.

##### **4.1. PCF VS CF From L1 Speaker**

Research suggests that both PCF and corrective feedback from L1 speakers can be effective in promoting learner uptake and subsequent language development (Li, 2010; Sato & Lyster, 2012; McDonough, 2004; Adams, 2007).

However, compared to native speakers, peers provide significantly more elicitation feedback, while native speakers give much more reformulation feedback (Porter, 1986). Varonis and Gass (1985) found L2 learners address communication barriers more with peers than native speakers, increasing corrective feedback production (Pica et al., 1996).

Research also shows learners are more likely to correct original errors (modified output) in response to peer feedback than native speakers'. Shehadeh (1999) found feedback from L2 peers, especially with extended negotiation, more often led learners to "make an initial utterance more accurate and/or comprehensible to their interlocutor(s)" than native speakers[33-34].

##### **4.2. PCF VS Teacher Corrective Feedback (TCF)**

Compared to teacher corrective feedback (TCF), peer corrective feedback (PCF) presents distinct advantages as well as obvious shortcomings. Sippel and Jackson (2015) conducted a quasi-experimental study involving TCF, PCF, and control groups to examine learners' interactional moves with interlocutors. The results revealed a sustained increase in grammaticality judgment test scores solely for the PCF group, indicating the relative superiority of PCF.

Nonetheless, the pedagogical potential of PCF lacks the extensive empirical evidence that is available for TCF. The implementation of PCF in classroom settings poses challenges for instructors, who may inadvertently disrupt peer interactions (Nassaji & Kartchava, 2017). Achieving an equilibrium between non-intervention and over-intervention is crucial for the effective implementation of PCF.

Sun and Wang (2022) conducted a quasi-experiment to investigate the impact of teacher intervention on peer feedback in writing revisions among Chinese advanced EFL learners. Results suggest that teacher intervention significantly influenced the adoption and accuracy of different types of peer feedback, leading to higher self-correction rates. These findings contribute to the understanding of the effectiveness of peer feedback and the role of teacher intervention in promoting effective feedback use.

In conclusion, although peer feedback exhibits unique advantages and vulnerabilities compared to teacher feedback, an integration of these two approaches can create a more comprehensive and effective learning experience for students by complementing each other's strengths and weaknesses[35-36].

#### **5. Conclusion and Future Directions**

Peer corrective feedback (PCF), a form of corrective feedback (CF), has been widely studied within peer interaction. Theorists (Varonis & Gass, 1985; Bruner, 1985; Sato, 2017) have justified its usefulness psychologically, sociolinguistically, and interactionist-cognitively. Researchers have investigated its effects under various circumstances (Sato & Lyster, 2012; Mackey, Oliver & Leeman, 2003; Tomita & Spada 2013). Comparing PCF and other CF revealed a lack of evidence on PCF effectiveness and implementation challenges. Capturing spontaneous learner interactions among groups in classrooms challenges research accuracy (Nassaji & Kartchava, 2017).

Future research should focus on several key areas to enhance our understanding of peer corrective feedback (PCF) in L2 development. Primarily, empirical research on PCF in classrooms and labs should continue. Since distinguishing between PCF and teacher guidance is challenging, studies should examine their integration to determine effective pedagogical approaches for L2 development. As Lyster, Saito and

Sato (2013) said, research should examine "combinations of CF types that more closely resemble teachers' practices in classroom settings." As PCF effectiveness may vary by context, comparative studies across different contexts, such as English as a foreign language, English as a second language, and computer-mediated communication, are essential for a broader understanding of PCF effectiveness in various learning environments. Finally, investigating the role of individual learner differences, like motivation, language aptitude, and learning styles, can help identify which student populations benefit most from PCF interventions.

## References

- [1] Adams R. (2007). *Do second language learners benefit from interacting with each other. Conversational interaction in second language acquisition*, 29-51.
- [2] Botorabi F., Haapasalo J., Smith E., Haapasalo H. and Parkkila S. *Carbonic Anhydrase VII—A Potential Prognostic Marker in Gliomas. Health*, (2011) 3, 6-12.
- [3] Bruner J. (1985). *Vygotsky: A historical and conceptual perspective. Culture, communication, and cognition: Vygotskian perspectives*, 21, 34.
- [4] Fujii A., & Mackey A. (2009). *Interactional feedback in learner-learner interactions in a task-based EFL classroom. International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*.
- [5] Gielen S., Tops L., Dochy F., Onghena P., & Smeets S. (2010). *A comparative study of peer and teacher feedback and of various peer feedback forms in a secondary school writing curriculum. British educational research journal*, 36(1), 143-162.
- [6] Hattie J., & Timperley H. (2007). *The power of feedback. Review of educational research*, 77(1), 81-112.
- [7] Keh C. L. (1990). *Feedback in the writing process: A model and methods for implementation*.
- [8] Li S. (2010). *The effectiveness of corrective feedback in SLA: A meta-analysis. Language learning*, 60(2), 309-365.
- [9] Lightbown P. M., & Spada N. (1990). *Focus-on-Form and Corrective Feedback in Communicative Language Teaching. Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 12(4), 429-448.
- [10] Schwartz M., Hijazy S., Deeb I. *The Role of Play in Creating a Language-Conducive Context in a Bilingual Preschool[J]. European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 2021.
- [11] Liu, J., & Sadler, R. W. (2003). *The effect and affect of peer review in electronic versus traditional modes on L2 writing. Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 2(3), 193-227.
- [12] Liu, N. F., & Carless, D. (2006). *Peer feedback: the learning element of peer assessment. Teaching in Higher education*, 11(3), 279-290.
- [13] 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.
- [14] Lyster, R., Saito, K., & Sato, M. (2013). *Oral corrective feedback in second language classrooms. Language Teaching*, 46(1), 1-40.
- [15] Mackey, A., Oliver, R., & Leeman, J. (2003b). *Interactional Input and The Incorporation of Feedback: An Exploration of NS-NNS and NNS-NNS Adult and Child Dyads. Language Learning*, 53(1), 35-66.
- [16] McDonough, K. (2004). *Learner-learner interaction during pair and small group activities in a Thai EFL context. System*, 32(2), 207-224.
- [17] Mittan, R. (1989). *The peer review process: Harnessing students' communicative power. Richness in writing: Empowering ESL students*, 207-219.
- [18] Nassaji, H., & Kartchava, E. (2017). *Corrective Feedback in Second Language Teaching and Learning: Research, Theory, Applications, Implications. Taylor & Francis*.
- [19] Nelson, G. L., & Carson, J. G. (1998). *ESL students' perceptions of effectiveness in peer response groups. Journal of second language writing*, 7(2), 113-131.
- [20] Nelson, M. C., & Schunn, C. D. (2009). *The nature of feedback: how different types of peer feedback affect writing performance. Instructional Science*, 37(4), 375-401.
- [21] Pica, T., Lincoln-Porter, F., Paninos, D., & Linnell, J. (1996). *Language Learners' Interaction: How Does It Address the Input, Output, and Feedback Needs of L2 Learners? TESOL Quarterly*, 30(1), 59.
- [22] Porter, P. (1986). *How learners talk to each other: Input and interaction in task-centered discussions. Talking to learn: Conversation in second language acquisition*, 200, 23.
- [23] Sato, M. (2007). *Social relationships in conversational interaction: A comparison between learner-learner and learner-NS dyads. JALT Journal* 29.2, 183-208.
- [24] Sato, M. & R. Lyster (2007). *Modified output of Japanese EFL learners: Variable effects of interlocutor vs. feedback types. In A. Mackey (ed.), 123-142*.

- [25] Sato, M., & Lyster, R. (2012). *Peer Interaction And Corrective Feedback For Accuracy And Fluency Development. Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 34(4), 591–626.
- [26] Sato, M. (2013). *Beliefs about peer interaction and peer corrective feedback: Efficacy of classroom intervention. The Modern Language Journal*, 97(3), 611–633.
- [27] Sato, M., & Ballinger, S. (2016). *Understanding peer interaction: Research synthesis and directions. In M. Sato & S. Ballinger (Eds.), Peer interaction and second language learning: Pedagogical potential and research agenda (pp. 1–30). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.*
- [28] Sato, M. (2017). *Oral peer corrective feedback: Multiple theoretical perspectives. Corrective feedback in second language teaching and learning*, 19-34.
- [29] Shehadeh, A. (1999). *Non-Native Speakers' Production of Modified Comprehensible Output and Second Language Learning. Language Learning*, 49(4), 627–675.
- [30] Sheen, Y., & Ellis, R. (2011). *Corrective Feedback in Language Teaching. Routledge eBooks.*
- [31] Sippel, L., & Jackson, C. N. (2015). *Teacher vs. Peer Oral Corrective Feedback in the German Language Classroom. Foreign Language Annals*, 48(4), 688–705.
- [32] Sun, H., & Wang, M. (2022). *Effects of teacher intervention and type of peer feedback on student writing revision. Language Teaching Research*, 136216882210805.
- [33] Swain, M., Brooks, L., & Tocalli-Beller, A. (2002). *Peer-peer dialogue as a means of second language learning. Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 22, 171–185.
- [34] Tomita, Y., & Spada, N. (2013). *Form-focused instruction and learner investment in L2 communication. The Modern Language Journal*, 97(3), 591–610.
- [35] Varonis, E. M., & Gass, S. M. (1985). *Miscommunication in native/nonnative conversation. Language in society*, 14(3), 327-343.
- [36] Yoshida, R. (2013). *Conflict between learners' beliefs and actions: speaking in the classroom. Language Awareness*, 22(4), 371–388.