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EFL Students' Perceptions of Peer Oral Corrective Feedback and Its Influence on Student Engagement during Collaborative Speaking Activities in a Pesantren-Based English Learning Context

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ABSTRACT

The study purpose was to explore EFL students' perceptions of Peer Oral Corrective Feedback (POCF) during collaborative speaking activities and to examine how these perceptions related to students' engagement in a pesantren-based English learning context.

Materials and methods. This study employed a qualitative case study design involving fifteen EFL students purposively selected from five English language institutions within a pesantren in East Java, Indonesia. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and field notes, and were analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2014) interactive model of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Students' perceptions were interpreted through Robbins and Judge's (2005) three-stage perception process, while engagement was examined through Liu and Feng's (2023) behavioral, affective, and cognitive engagement framework.

Results. Students' perceptions of POCF developed through three interconnected stages: acceptance, understanding, and evaluating. Although several students initially felt nervous or embarrassed when corrected by peers, they gradually came to view POCF as a helpful, reciprocal part of collaborative speaking practice that improved their pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and sentence construction. Students also perceived POCF as closely related to their engagement, reflected in more active participation (behavioral), growing confidence (affective), and deeper reflection on language use (cognitive), with socio-cultural values such as ta'dzim and social harmony shaping how feedback was delivered and received.

Conclusions. Peer Oral Corrective Feedback contributes not only to students' speaking development but also to a more supportive and engaging collaborative learning environment within a pesantren-based English learning context, provided that feedback is delivered respectfully and constructively.

Keywords: Peer Oral Corrective Feedback (POCF), students' perceptions, student engagement, collaborative speaking activities, pesantren-based English learning

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INTRODUCTION

English has become one of the most widely used languages for global communication, and speaking is considered one of the most essential skills in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) because it enables learners to communicate ideas and interact effectively in real-life contexts (Nhan, 2024; Brown, 2001). Despite its importance, speaking is often regarded as one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners because it requires real-time processing, spontaneous production, and immediate interaction (Harmer, 2001), and many learners still struggle due to limited practice opportunities and insufficient feedback (Madhavi et al., 2023; Castillo-Torres & Quintanilla-Espinoza, 2025).

Consequently, students often experience anxiety and a lack of confidence in speaking activities, a psychological barrier described by Krashen (1982) as the affective filter. To address this, collaborative speaking activities such as role plays and group discussions are widely implemented as a communicative strategy that provides authentic opportunities for interaction (Harmer, 2001), consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural view that cognitive and linguistic development occurs most effectively through social interaction. However, the effectiveness of such activities depends heavily on the availability of adequate feedback, which in many EFL classrooms remains predominantly teacher-centered, leaving many learners without sufficient corrective input (Niu et al., 2021; Harmer, 2001; Dai & Wu, 2023).

Corrective feedback helps learners notice gaps between their current output and the target language (Lyster & Ranta, 1997), but when delivered directly or in a face-threatening manner, it may cause embarrassment and reduced confidence (Vuono & Li, 2021). Peer Oral Corrective Feedback (POCF) refers to oral feedback provided by students to their peers to correct errors in grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary (Wang, 2023). Because it is delivered by a peer rather than an authority figure, POCF is often perceived as less intimidating, potentially lowering the affective filter and encouraging more open participation.

Previous studies have examined POCF from various perspectives, generally in mainstream or public educational settings. Ha and Nguyen (2021) found that students preferred teacher feedback for its perceived reliability while still recognizing the value of peer correction when supported by appropriate guidance, and Syafitri and Tiarina (2025) found that oral peer feedback enhanced speaking confidence and reduced anxiety in a boarding-school context. However, limited attention has been paid to students' perceptions of POCF within pesantren-based educational settings, where socio-cultural values such as ta'dzim (respect), politeness, and social harmony are deeply embedded in daily interaction (Burga & Damopolii, 2022). Within this context, students are not only English learners but also santri embedded in a social and religious hierarchy that may shape how they perceive their role when correcting or being corrected by a peer, dynamics that are rarely accounted for in existing POCF research.

This study therefore aims to explore EFL students' perceptions of Peer Oral Corrective Feedback during collaborative speaking activities in a pesantren-based English learning context, and to examine how students perceive the relationship between POCF and their engagement in such activities.

METHOD

Study participants

This study employed a qualitative case study design (Yin, 2018), best characterized as a single case with embedded units of analysis, in which the pesantren-based English learning environment of Pondok Pesantren Nurul Jadid, Wilayah Az-Zainiyah, constituted the bounded case, while five English language institutions—LPBA, LIPS, IPA Unggulan, IPS Unggulan, and EXO—served as embedded units. Fifteen santri who actively participated in English learning programs were selected through purposive sampling, three from each institution, and were categorized into three groups (active, moderately active, and less active/silent participants) to capture diverse perceptions across different levels of classroom participation.

Study organization

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted individually with all fifteen participants, supplemented by field notes documenting non-verbal responses and other contextual observations. The interviews explored participants' experiences of giving and receiving POCF, the perceived benefits and challenges of peer feedback, their emotional responses, and their perceptions of the relationship between POCF and engagement during collaborative speaking activities. All

interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed for analysis. Trustworthiness was addressed following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, and ethical considerations included institutional permission, informed consent, voluntary participation, and the use of pseudonyms.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Analysis was first conducted within each institution before patterns were compared across the five institutions. Students' perceptions were interpreted through Robbins and Judge's (2005) three-stage perception process—acceptance, understanding, and evaluating—while students' engagement was analyzed using Liu and Feng's (2023) behavioral, affective, and cognitive engagement framework.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Students' Perceptions of Peer Oral Corrective Feedback

At the acceptance stage, nearly all participants reported that their peers responded immediately when an error occurred, particularly in pronunciation and grammar, which made the correction noticeable and difficult to overlook. One participant explained that a friend would immediately point out an incorrect tense or pronunciation and demonstrate the correct form, a pattern echoed by the majority of participants. However, acceptance was not always comfortable: several students, especially those in the moderately active and silent groups, described initial feelings of embarrassment or nervousness that gradually gave way to appreciation once they recognized the feedback as genuine support rather than mockery.

"At first I did feel a bit embarrassed being corrected in front of everyone… but because my friends delivered it kindly, eventually I felt it was completely normal. Now I actually feel happy when someone corrects me." (P1)

At the understanding stage, students made sense of corrective feedback by relating it to explanations, examples, and in-the-moment vocabulary support from peers. Corrections accompanied by a modeled correct form or a brief explanation of the underlying rule were consistently reported as easier to internalize than corrections given in isolation. Active students tended to grasp corrections quickly and connect them directly to their own speech, while silent students relied more heavily on step-by-step explanations and repetition before a correction was fully understood.

At the evaluating stage, students weighed the usefulness of POCF against its emotional and social consequences. The overwhelming majority judged POCF positively, viewing it as a reciprocal learning process that improved speaking accuracy and built confidence, while also emphasizing that effective feedback had to be delivered politely, respectfully, and with clear explanation in order to preserve harmonious peer relationships.

"I never say directly that my friend is wrong. I usually say it like, 'Maybe you could use this word,' or 'Try pronouncing it like this instead.' The way we deliver it matters, so our friend still feels comfortable." (P6)

The Relationship between POCF and Students' Engagement

Regarding behavioral engagement, participants explained that feedback-rich collaborative activities such as group discussions and role plays made them more willing to speak up than passively listening to the teacher, and many actively took on the role of feedback provider by waiting politely for a peer to finish before offering a correction. Regarding affective engagement, supportive peer feedback helped students develop greater confidence and more positive feelings toward speaking; although nervousness and embarrassment were common at first, continued experience with POCF gradually reduced these affective barriers. Regarding cognitive engagement, participants reported that peer

feedback encouraged them to monitor their own language use, recognize recurring errors, and apply corrections in later speaking practice, while also learning vicariously from corrections given to their classmates.

"I feel more confident now because my friends help me when I make mistakes… being wrong is normal as long as we are willing to learn." (P1)

Discussion

These findings indicate that students' perceptions of POCF developed progressively through the stages proposed by Robbins and Judge (2005), consistent with Lyster and Ranta's (1997) view that the immediacy of oral feedback makes errors salient as they occur. The discomfort accompanying acceptance and evaluation reflects Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, in which anxiety or fear of embarrassment can hinder how corrective input is received, while students' emphasis on polite, indirect delivery reflects the pesantren's socio-cultural values of ta'dzim and social harmony (Burga & Damopolii, 2022; Takdir et al., 2022), which appeared to shape both how feedback was given and how it was judged, extending Vuono and Li's (2021) observation that peer feedback is generally less face-threatening than teacher feedback.

The relationship between POCF and engagement across behavioral, affective, and cognitive dimensions supports Liu and Feng's (2023) argument that feedback alone does not guarantee language development unless learners actively engage with it. Students' collaborative exchange of corrections, explanations, and reassurance can further be understood through Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, in which POCF functioned as a form of peer scaffolding within students' Zone of Proximal Development, allowing more capable peers to temporarily support one another's language development within the socially and religiously distinct pesantren environment.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explored EFL students' perceptions of Peer Oral Corrective Feedback during collaborative speaking activities in a pesantren-based English learning context and how these perceptions related to students' engagement. The findings show that students' perceptions of POCF developed through acceptance, understanding, and evaluating: initial nervousness or embarrassment gradually gave way to recognition of POCF as a helpful practice for correcting errors in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and sentence construction. These perceptions were closely related to students' behavioral, affective, and cognitive engagement, reflected in more active participation, growing confidence, and deeper reflection on language use. Overall, POCF served not only as a strategy for improving speaking ability but also as a means of fostering collaborative learning and supportive peer interaction, particularly when feedback was delivered respectfully within the pesantren's socio-cultural values. Teachers are encouraged to create a supportive classroom atmosphere and provide clear guidance on delivering constructive peer feedback, while future research may extend this inquiry to other educational levels and cultural settings, or employ quantitative or mixed-methods approaches.

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