CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a comprehensive description of the study. It includes the background, formulations of the problem, operational definitions, aims of the study, and significance of the study.

1.1   Background of the Study

Oral corrective feedback is a significant component in language learning classes. As its name implies, it refers to a technique used to address and correct learners' errors in language production. One key aspect of corrective feedback is its potential to enhance learners' awareness of their errors (Fathimah, 2020). In other words, it helps the learners recognize and understand their errors. This awareness is important because it allows learners to identify areas where they lack knowledge (Sheen, 2011). Thus, corrective feedback can guide learners in making corrections and adjustments to their language use, which in turn helps them improve their language abilities.

There are many strategies that teachers can choose to provide oral corrective feedback. However, research found that teachers' and students' views on how oral corrective feedback should be provided are not always aligned. For instance, Ha and Nguyen (2021) found that the students were very positive about the necessity of corrective feedback to all kinds of errors, including less important errors. However, the teachers thought that corrective feedback targets should be more selective. Thus, important errors, especially those related to the lesson focus, should be prioritized. Nguyen and Newton (2019) also found that while the teacher believed corrective feedback through repetition was sufficient to address pronunciation errors, the students found this strategy boring and ineffective and so expected pronunciation to be taught communicatively. According to Nhac (2022), mismatches between students' and teachers' beliefs are likely to lead to a counter-impact on learners' motivation and learning outcomes. Thus, teachers need to understand students' views of oral corrective feedback to mitigate its potential negative impacts.

Some researchers also emphasize the need to understand students' perceptions and preferences of oral corrective feedback. Kleij and Adie (2020) stated that understanding student's perception of feedback is crucial for it to be effective. This is supported by Chen et al. (2016) who addressed learner variables, including their perceptions, mediate the effectiveness of feedback. Furthermore, Mahmood (2022) asserted that understanding learners' preferences can also facilitate teachers in choosing the more effective types of corrective feedback upon providing it. Therefore, understanding students' perceptions and preferences is crucial to enhance the effectiveness of oral corrective feedback.

Given the significance of understanding students' perceptions and preferences of oral corrective feedback, this study aimed to address this issue within a multilevel English conversation class at an English learning center in Tasikmalaya. This class is focused on enhancing students' oral communication skills with activities designed to promote the active use of English. Consequently, students have plenty of opportunities to practice their speaking skills, which leads to frequent oral errors as a natural part of the language learning process. Pre-observation indicated that the teacher employs various oral corrective feedback strategies to address these errors. Therefore, examining students' views on the teacher's feedback practices is crucial for evaluating its effectiveness and alignment with students' needs.

Furthermore, the selected class consists of eight students with varying levels of English proficiency, ranging from A1 to B1, according to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). The teacher explained that the reason for grouping these multilevel students is due to the large gap between some students' proficiency levels and their age. Some senior and junior high school students are still at the A1 level, while in the existing classes, A1 level classes mainly consisted of young learners from 3rd to 4th grade of elementary school. Hence, this new class was created to address the needs of these multilevel students. Past research has established that learners' proficiency levels are substantial determinants of their preferences (Orts & Salazar, 2016; Yang, 2016). Thus, it is important to explore these multilevel students' preferences for oral corrective

feedback, as this can help the teacher choose appropriate strategies to address their oral errors.

Several studies have examined students' perceptions and preferences toward teachers' corrective feedback in English as a Foreign Language (henceforth EFL) classes. Muslem et al., (2021) conducted a study in an English Education Department to investigate students' perceptions of oral corrective feedback from lecturers in their speaking classes. The result showed that most students like to receive oral corrective feedback from their lecturer, and they believe that the feedback given by their lecturer is valuable and can help them learn something. Syakira and Nur (2022) also conducted a similar study in a one-to-one class in an informal education setting. The participants agreed that the teacher's corrective feedback greatly assisted them in responding to the teacher's utterances. Furthermore, the way the teacher corrected them contributed to their English improvement. Meanwhile, Gutiérrez et al. (2020) conducted the study in an EFL pedagogy program at a private university. The result indicated that students have a positive perception of the corrective feedback provision practice for their learning goals. The students also mentioned progress in their linguistic and communicative skills. For the most preferred corrective feedback types, they suggested that reformulation is suitable for beginners, and prompt is ideal for advanced learners.

It is important to note that none of these studies was conducted in a multilevel English conversation class setting where the students have varied English proficiency levels. Furthermore, these studies did not distinguish between the preferences of students at different proficiency levels. Therefore, this research seeks to fill the gap by examining how students perceive the teacher's oral corrective feedback in a multilevel English conversation class and how their preferences for feedback vary across different levels of English proficiency.

1.2   Formulations of the Problem

The research questions addressed in this present study are:

1. What are the students' perceptions of the teacher's oral corrective feedback in the multilevel English conversation class?

2. What are the students' oral corrective feedback preferences in the multilevel English conversation class?

1.3 Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding about the terms set out in this study, the researcher provides four definitions related to this study as follows:

1.3.1 Student Perception

Student perception refers to a student's opinion or belief about something. In this research, students are asked about their perceptions of oral corrective feedback given by the teacher during the teaching and learning process in a multilevel English conversation class.

1.3.2 Student Preference

Student preference refers to a student's choices between two or more things based on their interests. In the context of the present study, students express their preferences about the way they want to be corrected when they commit oral errors in a multilevel English conversation class.

1.3.3 Oral Corrective Feedback

Oral corrective feedback refers to verbal responses given by teachers to correct learners' errors. In this study, only corrective feedback aimed at correcting students' oral errors during communication activities in the multilevel English conversation class is counted. Meanwhile, teachers' corrective feedback to learners' written errors, even though it was given orally, is excluded.

1.3.4 Multilevel English Conversation Class

Multilevel English conversation class refers to an English language learning setting consisting of students with varying levels of English proficiency. In the context of this research, the term is used to refer to an English conversation class offered by an English language learning center in Tasikmalaya. The primary focus of this class is on developing and practicing oral communication skills in the English language. Here, students' English proficiency level is categorized based on the CEFR.

1.4   Aims of the Study

Based on the problem formulation above, the aims of this study are:

1. To reveal students' perceptions of the teacher's oral corrective feedback in the multilevel English conversation class; and

2. To understand students in the multilevel English conversation class preferences of oral corrective feedback.

1.5   Significances of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

This study is expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on oral corrective feedback by addressing a gap in the literature regarding the role of proficiency level in students' preferences for oral corrective feedback.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

The findings of this study are expected to serve as a useful guideline for the selected teacher and others in similar settings for providing oral corrective feedback to multilevel students. This guideline aims to enhance the effectiveness of oral corrective feedback practices in multilevel EFL class settings.

1.5.3 Empirical Significance

This research aspires to provide empirical data on how students of different proficiency levels perceive and prefer oral corrective feedback. This evidence can be used to validate existing theories or propose new hypotheses in the field of language education.