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## Iranian EFL Teachers' Cognition of Corrective Feedback as an Element of Classroom Management: A Qualitative Study

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This qualitative study aimed to explore Iranian EFL teachers' cognition of corrective feedback as one of the elements of classroom management in the EFL context of Iran's language institutes. Participants of the study were 12 in-service Iranian EFL teachers who taught adult EFL learners. The participants were selected through purposeful sampling, and the sample size was determined based on saturation. The main instrument of the study was a semi-structured one-to-one in-person interview, which aimed to elicit the participants' cognition of corrective feedback. These individual interviews were audio-recorded and then they were transcribed. Thematic analysis of the data indicated that the participants considered corrective feedback an important element of classroom management in EFL classes. Moreover, the participants believed that corrective feedback should be provided for common errors and errors related to lesson objectives. They classified EFL learners' errors in terms of the purpose of activities (communication vs. form, and fluency vs. accuracy). In addition, they knew about different timings for the provision of corrective feedback (delayed vs. immediate/on-the-spot). Furthermore, they highlighted the inclusion of teacher correction, peer correction, and self-correction for sufficiently providing corrective feedback in EFL classes. They also foregrounded EFL learners' proficiency level and their affective factors for appropriate provision of corrective feedback. On the whole, the participants had a sound cognition of corrective feedback as one of the elements of classroom management in EFL classes in Iran. The findings of the present study have implications for language teacher educators, EFL teachers, and language institute supervisors.

**Keywords:** *Teacher Cognition, Corrective Feedback, Classroom Management, Teacher Education, Language Institutes*

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## 1. Introduction

Teacher cognition is an important concept in teacher education (Borg, 2006), and research on this concept has, of late, risen in importance in language teacher education (Li, 2019). In the field of language teacher education, teachers are considered active decision-makers whose performance is highly influenced by their cognition (Borg, 2011). Research on teachers' cognition strives to investigate and describe what teachers think, know, believe, and feel with the goal of understanding the impact of their cognition on their professional practice (Borg, 2019). Classroom management constitutes a component of teachers' professional practice crucial for successful teaching (Rinda & Indrastana, 2020), and can be directly impacted by teachers' cognitions (Buchanan & Timmis, 2019). Corrective feedback is an element of importance in classroom management and teaching practice (Harmer, 2012; Spratt et al., 2011). The importance of corrective feedback in EFL classes and the crucial role of EFL teachers deems corrective feedback in EFL classes worthy of investigative attention. Besides, EFL teachers' cognition of corrective feedback is of vital importance. Nonetheless, few studies concentrated on corrective feedback from EFL teachers' perspective, particularly in the Iranian EFL context. Therefore, due to the importance of teacher cognition inquiry, this qualitative study aimed to explore Iranian EFL teachers' cognition of corrective feedback, as an element of classroom management, in foreign language institutes in the EFL context of Iran, by addressing the following research question:

What are foreign language institutes' EFL teachers' cognitions regarding corrective feedback in EFL classes?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Teacher Cognition

Borg (2006) postulates teacher cognition as “the complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs that language teachers draw on in their work” (p. 272), which underlies the present study's theme. However, the present study explored the socio-emotional dimension (Borg, 2019) of teacher cognition in addition to its mental dimension. This study adopted a social and participation-oriented as well as cognitive perspective (Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). Teacher cognition is dynamic; it may change throughout teachers' lives due to their educational and professional experiences (Borg, 2006). From a more exhaustive viewpoint, teacher cognition can shape and is shaped by teachers' professional practice (Borg, 2009). It can also impact teachers' effectiveness (Zolghadri & Jafarpour Mamaghani, 2022). Burns et al. (2015) consider the context (including social factors, culture, institutional rules, participants, time, and place) an important factor in teacher cognition inquiry.

## **2.2. Corrective Feedback**

Learners of the English language are provided with corrective feedback in English language classes; their errors are corrected in the class and this is supposed to be in service of learning. Ellis and Shintani (2014) believe that error correction, or corrective feedback, “takes the form of responses to learner utterances that contain (or are perceived as containing) an error” (p. 249), and can provide learners with both positive and negative evidence (Ellis & Shintani, 2014). They further indicate a necessary distinction between activities that focus on developing L2 learners’ fluency and those that focus on L2 learners’ accuracy. Ellis and Shintani (2014) believe that focus on accuracy necessitates immediate corrective feedback; however, focus on fluency and communication requires delayed corrective feedback. They also distinguish between errors and mistakes, mentioning that errors must be corrected while mistakes can be ignored.

Ellis (2015) notes that error correction can be either implicit (e.g., recast) or explicit (e.g., metalinguistic comments). Ellis and Shintani (2014), in a parallel fashion, state that error correction can be either overt or covert. Ellis (2015) adds that error correction can be either input-providing or output-prompting (2015). Ellis and Shintani (2014) mention different strategies for error correction such as questioning the learner, direct indication, requesting clarification, requesting repetition, echoing, using gestures, modeling, and discussing the error. They also add that error correction can be implemented by the teacher (teacher-correction), the learner who made the error (self-correction), and other learners (peer-correction). Ellis (2015) states that general findings from different studies indicate that corrective feedback, whether implicit or explicit, whether input-providing or output-prompting, is effective in language learning. In addition, he believes in a higher effectiveness of error correction in foreign language settings than in second language settings. According to Ellis (2009), corrective feedback is an essential aspect of instruction, as it requires teachers to decide whether, how, and when to correct their learners’ errors, and these decisions are based on teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning.

In the field of language acquisition studies, corrective feedback, and error correction are generally considered the same entity (Ellis 2015). It is worth noting that, considering classroom management components, most of the time, feedback is a more general term, and learners are provided with feedback not only when there is an error in their performance, but also on other occasions (Harmer, 2012; Spratt et al., 2011). In the research reports, however, error correction and corrective feedback are referred to as one entity. Therefore, following what has been conducted and reported in the literature, researchers of the present study treat corrective feedback and error correction as the same.

### 2.3. Studies on Language Teachers' Cognition of Corrective Feedback

Mirzaei Shojakhanlou and Saedian (2023) focused on novice EFL teachers' cognition of corrective feedback in a task-based teacher education program. Participants of the study were two Iranian EFL teachers who had one year of teaching experience, the setting was a private foreign language institute in Tehran, and the instruments were a questionnaire, observation, and video prompts. The participants were taking a Teacher Training Course (TTC) that concentrated on educating EFL teachers about corrective feedback through a task-based approach to teacher education. Content analysis was employed by the researchers to analyze the collected data. The findings indicated that before taking the course, the participants had limited knowledge about corrective feedback; however, after taking the course, their cognition about corrective feedback developed, and they gained more awareness in this regard.

Moradkhani and Goodarzi (2020) explored EFL teachers' cognition of corrective feedback in the Iranian EFL context, their main focus being the differences between novice and experienced EFL teachers regarding their cognition of oral corrective feedback. Participants of the study were three female Iranian EFL teachers, two experienced and one novice, who taught adolescents at a foreign language institute. They video-recorded the class and conducted stimulated-recall semi-structured interviews to collect data. Each participant's class was video-recorded three times followed by a follow-up, stimulated-recall interview session with each respective participant. The findings of the study indicated that all three participants believed in the importance of oral corrective feedback in EFL classes, the experienced participants practiced more implicit types of oral corrective feedback in their classes, and the novice participant mostly practiced explicit error correction. However, this study would have yielded more reliable results for such a comparison with a larger number of participants.

Couper (2019) qualitatively explored ESL teachers' cognition of corrective feedback on pronunciation in the context of New Zealand. A semi-structured interview and classroom observation constituted the instruments of the study. Nineteen participants were interviewed, and then, the classroom practices of six of them were observed. The analysis of the data led to the emergence of four main themes: beliefs about sources of the errors, timing, and rationale for corrective feedback, choice of errors to be corrected, and the manner in which errors were corrected. The researcher concluded that these themes guided the participants' corrective feedback on pronunciation. Moreover, the gaps in the participants' cognition of corrective feedback on pronunciation were delineated, indicative of the need for the gaps to be bridged.

Shafiee et al.'s (2018) case study, a qualitative longitudinal one, explored an experienced Iranian EFL teacher's cognition of oral corrective feedback in a high school in Karaj, Iran, and utilized as its instruments classroom observation, a semi-structured interview, and reflective verbal recollection. Thematic analysis of the data led to the emergence of four main themes guiding the participant's oral corrective feedback: beliefs, knowledge, decision-making, and critical reflection. The researchers stated that reflective inquiry played a transformative role in the reconstruction of the participant's cognitions regarding oral corrective feedback.

In a qualitative study in the EFL context of Japan, Mori (2011) focused on how two EFL teachers' cognition of corrective feedback shaped their practices of corrective feedback, one of the participants being Japanese and the other one British. This study used interviews and classroom observation to collect data over a four-month span. The findings of the study indicated that the participants tried to provide their EFL learners with corrective feedback such that could enhance their learners' confidence and communicative ability, reflecting the teachers' belief that these features were undervalued in Japan's cultural context.

Baleghizadeh and Rezaei's (2010) research was a case study aimed to explore a pre-service EFL teacher's cognition regarding corrective feedback, before and after taking a Teacher Training Course (TTC) in Iran Language Institute (ILI), Tehran, Iran. The participant, a 25-year-old volunteer with no teaching experience, completed a questionnaire and then took part in an interview before attending the TTC held at Iran Language Institute (ILI). After the TTC, he began teaching at ILI, and one of the researchers observed his class to investigate any changes in his cognition after the TTC, which revealed an improvement in his cognition of corrective feedback, compared with his cognition in this regard before taking the TTC.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Participants**

Twelve in-service Iranian EFL teachers (Female = 5 and Male = 7) who taught adult EFL learners at foreign language institutes in the Iranian EFL context participated in this study. The participants' teaching experience ranged from 5 to 10 years (Mean = 6.7), and their ages ranged from 24 to 39 (Mean = 28.9). They had all passed a Teacher Training Course (TTC) before starting their EFL teaching profession. The sample size was decided based on data saturation, the point when collecting more data did not develop the themes any further. The foreign language institutes were selected through convenience sampling, and the participants were selected through purposeful sampling. Their informed consent was obtained prior to starting the data collection procedure. They were

assigned a number for the purpose of anonymity and also for their identification during the study (T1, T2, ...). They answered a demographic questionnaire and were then interviewed. Table 1 shows details of the participants' demographic information.

**Table 1**  
*The Participants' Demographic Information*

	Age	Gender	Teaching Experience	University Education (Educational Level)	Field of Study in the University
T1	24	male	5 years	BA graduate	management
T2	33	male	8 years	MSc graduate	mechanical engineering
T3	39	female	10 years	MA graduate	TEFL
T4	30	female	10 years	BSc graduate	computer engineering
T5	25	female	5 years	BSc graduate	chemical engineering
T6	25	male	5 years	BSc graduate	civil engineering
T7	28	male	9 years	BSc graduate	electrical engineering
T8	30	female	6 years	MA graduate	management
T9	25	male	5 years	BA graduate	English literature
T10	26	male	5 years	BSc graduate	civil engineering
T11	26	male	5 years	BSc graduate	computer engineering
T12	36	female	7 years	BA graduate	photography

### 3.2. Materials and Instruments

A semi-structured, one-to-one, in-person interview was the main instrument of this study, which aimed at eliciting the participants' cognition of corrective feedback as an element of classroom management. One individual interview session was held with each participant, twelve interviews in sum. The interview sessions were in English and were audio-recorded. Each interview session took about an hour in length, and about eight hours to be transcribed. A flexible interview guide, including a written list of prepared questions, was developed to be used in the interview sessions. A professional EFL teacher educator checked the interview guide questions, and the guide was modified according to the expert's comments. The expert was a Ph.D. holder in applied linguistics and had more than 20 years of experience in educating EFL teachers at the university level. Moreover, the guide was piloted by interviewing three Iranian EFL teachers in order to identify potential problems. Subsequently, it was revised ahead of being utilized in the

main interview sessions. However, the questions of this interview guide were the departure point for the interviews, and the participants were encouraged to thoroughly elaborate on each of the matters raised by the interviewer during the course of the interview. The semi-structured interview guide included the following main questions:

- Do you think corrective feedback is necessary in an EFL class? Why/why not?
- For what kind of errors should EFL teachers provide corrective feedback for their EFL learners?
- When should EFL teachers provide corrective feedback to their EFL learners' errors?
- Who should provide corrective feedback for EFL learners in an EFL class? Teacher, peers, or students themselves? Why?
- Which is more useful in an EFL class: teacher correction, peer correction, or self-correction? Why?

### **3.3. Procedure**

After gaining the participants' informed consent, they were administered a demographic questionnaire aimed at gathering the participants' demographic information, including age, gender, educational background (university degree, field of study at university, English language teaching certificates, and English language proficiency level), teaching background (teaching experience and teaching level), and the name of the ELT coursebooks that they were teaching at the time of this study or had taught before that. After that, the participants were interviewed and the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed after each interview session.

### **3.4. Data Analysis**

Data analysis was an iterative process of reading, thinking, rereading, rethinking, coding, re-coding, and seeking the themes. The process was inductive and bottom-up (data-driven), moving from the particular to the general (from data to themes), and in the end, the data were interpreted (Creswell, 2014). Dörnyei (2007) describes this process as a sequence of transcribing, coding, and re-coding, searching for themes, and making interpretations.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Results

The findings of this qualitative study revealed the participants' cognition of corrective feedback as an element of classroom management in the context of the study. Twelve themes emerged from the data. Each theme is presented, accompanied, and demonstrated by an instance or a few instances of what the participants stated in the semi-structured individual interview sessions.

#### Theme Number 1: Importance of Corrective Feedback

The participants believed in the importance of corrective feedback in EFL classrooms because, in the absence of corrective feedback, errors would become fossilized.

*T3: It is very important, because when you don't correct them, the errors will stick in their mind, and they cannot fix them, and the errors become fossilized. I can see some of my students, especially at intermediate or upper-intermediate levels. They have some basic pronunciation errors that are completely fossilized. I try to correct these fossilized errors, but most of the time, they don't change, because they are fossilized in their minds and they can't change them.*

*T7: I believe it's really important, because when a student makes an error without being corrected, it's, you know, it's gonna be in their mind, let's say, maybe forever. So, I believe it's important to correct their errors to prevent fossilization of errors, so that hopefully they won't make that error again in the future, and they learn the correct version.*

*T8: Error correction is important and useful in the class because if they are not corrected, that error will stick in their mind. I heard a specific word in TTC, they told us that the mistake will be FOSSILIZED.*

They also stated that corrective feedback could help the process of learning.

*T10: Of course corrective feedback is necessary, because if errors are not corrected, students may not understand the lesson completely, and they may not learn it well. Then they carry their errors with them to higher levels.*

In addition, they believed that in an EFL context, an English language class is probably the only place in which EFL learners have the opportunity to receive corrective feedback.

*T11: It is just in the class that they can see what their errors are, and outside the class, most probably they can't have the chance to be corrected.*

### **Theme Number 2: Provision of Corrective Feedback for What is Related to Objectives of Lessons**

The participants asserted that when an EFL learner's error is related to the objectives of a lesson, corrective feedback should be provided.

*T12: When I teach them a new lesson, and they make errors that are the points that are the objectives of my lesson, I give them corrective feedback about those.*

*T9: If the goal is to teach present continuous in that session, I only correct errors in present continuous. But I tell them that they might make errors on other things as well that I am NOT going to correct.*

### **Theme Number 3: Provision of Corrective Feedback for Common Errors**

The participants said that corrective feedback should be provided for EFL learners' common errors, that is, errors that would be made by many students in most of the classes. They added that learners at lower proficiency levels would start making these common errors; however, learners at higher proficiency levels would also make them. They believed that their occurrence at higher proficiency levels was a sign of insufficient provision of corrective feedback for common errors at previous levels. As examples of such errors, the participating teachers mostly referred to interlingual errors.

*T12: Several students say I HAVE 25 years old when they wanna say I Am 25 years old. I think it's very common when we teach Iranian students. This sort of common error happens a lot when I teach elementary students, but I see common errors in intermediate classes too. I guess it shows they weren't corrected when they were in elementary class. We need to correct common errors to prevent them from happening again.*

*T5: There are some errors that are common among students in our classes. For example, instead of saying I agree with you,*

*they say I AM agree with you. I believe these common errors MUST be corrected because they are serious. Especially at lower levels, if we don't correct, students learn the incorrect ones from each other.*

#### **Theme Number 4: The Difference Between Errors and Mistakes Regarding Corrective Feedback**

The participating teachers were aware of the difference between errors and mistakes. They believed that mistakes might happen because of carelessness. They added that in case they would happen rarely (e.g., once), they could not necessarily show learners' lack of knowledge. They said that mistakes should be ignored by teachers in EFL classes, and they would not need to be corrected.

*T6: Correction should happen when there is an error, but for mistakes, trainers taught us in TTC that we can ignore mistakes, we don't need to correct them, because for mistakes they know it and maybe they are careless at that moment. For example, when my student always uses present simple correctly, and only once it is incorrect, I can see that it is a mistake not an error.*

#### **Theme Number 5: The Difference Between Accuracy and Fluency Regarding Corrective Feedback**

The participants believed that when the focus of an activity was accuracy, immediate, on-the-spot error correction should be provided; nonetheless, when the focus of an activity was on fluency, delayed error correction should be applied.

*T7: I believe when it comes to accuracy, it's really important to correct them immediately, so if the focus is on accuracy, I pay more attention to on-the-spot error correction. But when it comes to fluency, I use delayed correction rather than immediate correction, because if I interrupt them, they become distracted and they may lose their confidence and they may not be able to go on and finish what they wanted to say, so I wait till they stop and then I correct them.*

#### **Theme Number 6: Provision of Corrective Feedback When the Error Hinders Communication**

The participants believed that when errors hindered communication or caused communication failure, they should be corrected. However, they added that when the focus of an activity was only on communication and language use, they preferred delayed corrective feedback, unless it caused a breakdown

in communication since such a breakdown needed an immediate error treatment.

*T8: I am careful about correcting errors that make a difference in the meaning of what students want to say, or if that error actually blocks the communication or leads to a misunderstanding, a global one as they call it, I think, that's where the teacher should interrupt and correct immediately, but for the other errors, when our goal is communication, kind of give students time to correct themselves or correct them yourself later on. I think when the goal is communication, delayed correction is more suitable.*

### **Theme Number 7: Provision of Corrective Feedback When the Focus is Language Form**

Moreover, the participants emphasized that when the focus of an activity was language form, that is, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary, they would carry out immediate on-the-spot correction.

*T10: Errors in grammar MUST be corrected immediately I believe, also errors in vocabulary and pronunciation. These three I think they need on-the-spot error correction, actually errors that are related to the form of the language.*

*T3: For language sub-skills, I mean grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary, on-the-spot corrective feedback is needed. Especially, I am VERY sensitive about errors in pronunciation.*

Specifically, they emphasized the necessity of correcting errors in grammar and pronunciation in EFL classes.

*T6: Basically, I think errors related to grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary should be corrected instantly. Immediate error correction is necessary for them. Um, to be honest, I believe grammar errors are the most important among these three. But at the same time, I am extremely obsessive about pronunciation errors.*

*T12: When they make errors in grammar, I try to immediately correct them, because they should learn the structures correctly.*

It should be mentioned that the participating teachers stated that they adhered to CLT (Communicative Language Teaching); therefore, the activities that were carried out in their classes were communicative in nature and included meaning-based interaction. The participants added that whenever it was in accordance with

the lesson objectives, they focused on the form of the English language while doing the interactive activities.

### **Theme Number 8: Provision of Corrective Feedback at Stages of ESA (Engage, Study, and Activate) in a Teaching Sequence**

The participants believed that if a teaching sequence in an EFL lesson was divided into three stages of Engage, Study, and Activate (ESA), EFL teachers should ignore the errors which were made at the Engage stage. Moreover, they stated that while immediate corrective feedback should be applied at the Study stage, delayed corrective feedback was more preferable at the Activate stage.

*T9: Error correction is not the same for the three parts of ESA. In Engage, I don't give them any corrective feedback. In study, I am in favor of immediately giving them corrective feedback for almost every error. In Activate, I prefer delayed corrective feedback. You know, in Activate, I monitor them and I write down their errors, and after they are done then I give them corrective feedback. Most of the time, after they are done, I write these errors on the whiteboard, and I ask all the students in the class to help with correction. But I don't specify the name of the student who made each error, because I don't want to embarrass them.*

### **Theme Number 9: Avoidance of Corrective Feedback During Warmers/ Icebreakers of a Lesson**

The participants stated that during warmers/icebreakers of lessons in EFL classes, errors should not be corrected, and they could be ignored.

*T3: If we are doing a warm-up of our lesson, we shouldn't correct our students' errors at all. Because the objective of a warm-up is just to make them interested in that lesson. So, we should just let them speak freely as much as they can without correction.*

It is worth noting that warmers/icebreakers are short activities that are used at the very beginning of lessons in order to generally warm up the learners for a lesson before starting a teaching sequence that includes three stages of Engage, Study, and Activate (Harmer, 2007 & 2012). Warmers/icebreakers are not considered the same as the Engage stage in ESA (Harmer, 2007 & 2012), since in the Engage stage learners are specifically involved in the objective of a teaching sequence through curiosity or emotion (Harmer, 2007). In fact, the aim of the Engage

stage is to motivate the learners and make them involved in a specific teaching sequence, while warmer/icebreaker is an activity that is carried out to simply get the learners in a good mood at the beginning of a lesson (Harmer, 2012).

### **Theme Number 10: Teacher Correction, Peer Correction, and Self-Correction**

The participants stated that teacher correction, peer correction, and self-correction should all be included in EFL classes.

#### ***Teacher Correction***

The participants reasoned that teacher correction was important because being a source of knowledge and a provider of corrective feedback were among the roles of an EFL teacher; therefore, correcting learners' errors was one of the responsibilities of every EFL teacher, and EFL learners expected to be corrected by their teachers in case they could not correct their own errors.

*T1: Actually, in my opinion, they come here to learn from their teachers, so WE, as teachers, have to correct them. We have to correct them; we have to share our knowledge with our students. You know, correcting our students is a part of our job as teachers, and students actually want US to do that.*

In addition, they asserted that if EFL teachers provided correction, they should be careful about Teacher Talking Time (TTT), since teacher correction might increase TTT.

*T9: In my experience, teacher correction increases my TTT so much, and I give myself a negative mark for that much TTT. So, um, I guess it can happen to every teacher, and every teacher must consider the amount of TTT that happens for teacher correction.*

They also stated that in EFL classes teacher correction should be considered as the last resort after self-correction and peer correction.

*T11: To me, teacher correction is the last resort. I'd rather go for self-correction and after that peer correction. If these two don't work, then I myself correct their errors.*

#### ***Peer Correction***

The participants stated that peer correction was fruitful because some EFL learners would efficiently learn from their peers.

*T12: When their friends correct them, I think they learn more.*

*T8: If my student can't correct himself, I wait for his classmates to correct him, because if they help him, he may learn better.*

Besides, they believed that by correcting errors in each other, EFL learners got more engaged, and they would concentrate more on the lesson.

*T7: When students correct their friends, it's important, because it means they're listening to each other; it means they're participating; it means they're involved; they're listening; they're connected; they're engaged.*

Nevertheless, they said that if EFL teachers would like to encourage peer correction in their EFL classes, they should pay attention to their EFL learners' personalities, feelings, preferences, and needs, because some EFL learners would not want to be corrected by their peers.

*T4: When we are doing this, we should be careful about students' emotions. Sometimes, they get upset or annoyed when other students correct them, and they don't want to get correction from their classmates.*

The participants in all of the interviews consistently highlighted the importance of paying attention to EFL learners' feelings and personality, thus necessitating the comprehensive presentation of this matter as a separate theme (Theme Number 12), regardless of the agent who would provide corrective feedback in an EFL class (teacher, peer, or self).

The participating EFL teachers added that the atmosphere of each EFL class was another point to consider regarding peer correction, since sometimes encouraging peer correction might create unhealthy competition among EFL learners, and this might cause difficulties and problems for classroom management.

*T6: I think in some classes, my encouragement for peer correction causes rivalry among students, and the atmosphere of the class becomes tense. I don't like such competition in my classes. I like a friendly atmosphere in my classes, and my students also like such a friendly atmosphere."*

They also referred to their experiences of having shy learners in their EFL classes who had lost their confidence when corrected by their peers.

*T5: I remember there was a shy student in one of my classes.*

*After being corrected by her fellows, just two or three times, she completely stopped speaking. I asked her the reason, she said when other students corrected her, she lost her confidence. She said she was afraid of making more errors because she thought if they corrected her again, she couldn't focus and she couldn't complete her sentence. It seemed that she really felt embarrassed. Right or wrong, she told me that peer correction would make the class useless to her.*

### **Self-correction**

The participants believed that self-correction was the most useful way of providing corrective feedback in EFL classes.

*T2: In my opinion, when they themselves correct their own errors, they will remember it much better, compared with peer correction and teacher correction.*

They asserted that self-correction could enhance EFL learners' autonomy.

*T8: I believe if the student corrects himself, it means that he is trying to focus. I just don't rush it, so that they are not afraid of or stressed about making errors and correcting themselves. They see that there is no harsh atmosphere, so they feel free to make errors and learn from their errors. I assure them that they can learn from self-correction too, and they should not be dependent on the teacher all the time. I believe it can improve their autonomy.*

They also stated that self-correction could increase EFL learners' self-awareness.

*T3: Self-correction is the most useful, because first we give them the chance to understand that they have made an error, and this gives them self-awareness. We give them the chance to understand this and find out the error themselves, and then correct it themselves, it will stick in their mind, and they will never forget it.*

They added that EFL teachers should motivate and encourage their EFL learners to correct their own errors.

*T12: I encourage my students to correct their errors. For example, by using my facial expressions, I show them that there is an error in the sentence that they made, then I give them time to think and self-correct. In this way, I try to encourage them to self-correct.*

*T5: We should encourage and motivate students to correct themselves. Sometimes, they are not sure about their own knowledge, and the teacher should encourage and motivate them, so that they can see that they have enough potential for self-correction, and they can do it on their own.*

### **Theme Number 11: Attention to EFL Learners' Proficiency Level for Provision of Corrective Feedback**

The participants asserted that the provision of corrective feedback for errors was also dependent on EFL learners' proficiency level and what they had learned up until their current proficiency level.

*T2: According to the level that they are in, if he is making an error, which is for a lower level, definitely I will give him feedback, you know. But imagine that he is an elementary student, an A1 student for example, at this level, all that is important is simple past and simple present. So, based on the level, I mean if the error that they are making is not for their level, it's for a level that is lower than their level, I correct [it]. But if the error that they are making is something that they haven't learned yet and it's for higher levels, I'm not going to correct [it], I ignore that.*

### **Theme Number 12: Attention to EFL Learners' Affective Factors for Provision of Corrective Feedback**

The participants believed that EFL learners' affective factors and their personalities should be considered regarding the provision of corrective feedback. Moreover, they asserted that correcting EFL learners' errors should be carried out in a respectful and gentle way.

*T5: I think we should try to correct students in a soft way, because if we do it in a harsh way, they may get offended, and they may see it as a kind of disrespect. They may think their teacher is not friendly, or they may think their teacher is an angry person. They may even stop talking in class. I don't want them to think I'm controlling every word they say. It can ruin*

*the positive mood of the class, and it may even cause trouble for me as a teacher. I have seen students complaining about these misunderstandings to supervisors.*

**T11:** *In my opinion, sensitive students get annoyed and offended, if teachers don't correct their errors gently, they become irritated, they say their teacher doesn't ALLOW them to speak, they may take it personally, they say their teacher doesn't like them. It demoralizes them. Students don't like teachers who act like controllers.*

They added that EFL teachers should not abuse the provision of corrective feedback as a way of maintaining discipline for managing an EFL class, since such corrective feedback would not be in service of learning, and might demotivate EFL learners.

**T2:** *The wicked thing about correcting errors is that it may give us a sort of power to keep those students whom we don't like quiet. I mean we may take advantage of it by over-correcting a student whom we can't tolerate. Too much correction with an unfriendly tone of voice may act as punishment, and too much interruption when a student is speaking can gradually silence that student. I know that it's wicked, and I know that it's not a professional thing to do, but after all, we're humans, and sometimes we do some things on purpose. You know, this sort of correction does not help students learn English. Naturally, it kills their motivation. I experienced this when I was a student. I was a very naughty student when I was learning English. I used to laugh loudly a lot in our class, and my friends laughed with me. We had a teacher who was clearly tired of my presence in that class. Things went out of our teacher's control. So, he penalized me with constant interruptions and over-corrections, to the extent that I felt as if he was trying to humiliate me in front of my classmates, to impose control on the students.*

Further, they highlighted the importance of motivation and accentuated the provision of corrective feedback in a way that would not damage EFL learners' motivation.

**T9:** *We must give our students the courage and motivation to speak and to take part in tasks. If all the time I correct errors, without any encouragement, I destroy my students' motivation.*

*Students fear that if they say a single word, it can be wrong and the teacher will correct that. It can make them embarrassed, specifically, those who are shy or those who are not that much self-confident.*

They also suggested a solution for giving corrective feedback to EFL learners who frequently made errors, in a way that would not cause emotional disturbance.

*T6: Some students, especially those who are weaker than other students, and are repeatedly corrected, feel uncomfortable or belittled when they are corrected over and over. I believe I must be careful about not giving them BAD feelings; for example, I don't need to annoy them by correcting the same error again and again, instead, I write a note about that error for them and give it to them at the end of class or after class. By doing it like this, I don't hurt their emotions, and at the same time, chances are more [higher] that they'll remember the correct one.*

It should be noted that the caveat regarding peer correction which was mentioned in Theme Number 10, that is, attention to EFL learners' feelings and preferences, is similar in nature to Theme Number 12. However, that caveat is specifically pertinent to error correction by peers, while Theme Number 12 generally appertains to the provision of corrective feedback in an EFL class.

## **4.2. Discussion**

The findings of the present study demonstrated that the participants believed in the importance of corrective feedback in EFL classes. It is in agreement with the results of Moradkhani and Goodarzi (2020). Results of the present study also revealed that the participants believed the provision of corrective feedback in EFL classes could be effective in the process of EFL learning, which is in line with Ellis (2015). Besides, the participants of the present study were aware of the difference between errors and mistakes, spotlighted by Ellis and Shintani (2014). Moreover, it was found in this study that the participants emphasized the provision of corrective feedback in a way that would not decrease EFL learners' self-confidence. Similarly, the results of Mori's (2011) study showed that the participants tried to provide learners with corrective feedback in a way that could increase their confidence. The findings of the present study also revealed that the participants believed while immediate, on-the-spot corrective feedback should be given when the focus of the activity is on accuracy, delayed corrective feedback should be provided when the focus of the activity is on fluency. This

differentiation in the provision of corrective feedback is in accordance with Ellis and Shintani (2014). Furthermore, regarding the timing for correction of pronunciation errors and the need for immediate correction of these errors, the cognitions of the participants of the present study were similar to those of Couper (2019). In addition, the findings of the present study showed that the participants believed the provision of corrective feedback should involve teacher correction, peer correction, and self-correction. This has also been stated by Ellis and Shintani (2014).

Moreover, the findings of the present study demonstrated that various factors might influence the participants' cognition of corrective feedback as an element of classroom management in the context of the study. These factors included pre-service training (Teacher Training Course), language teaching experience, language learning experience, and EFL learners' expectations and needs. As indicated in the interview extracts, T8 referred to what was said in Teacher Training Course about the importance of corrective feedback for preventing the fossilization of errors in EFL classes (Theme Number 1), and T6 referred to what was taught in Teacher Training Course about the difference between errors and mistakes (Theme Number 4). This finding reflects Borg's (2006) perspective on the role of pre-service teacher education in shaping teachers' cognition. In the same vein, the findings of Baleghizadeh and Rezaei (2010) revealed that taking a Teacher Training Course could affect EFL teachers' cognition of corrective feedback. Likewise, the results in Mirzaei Shojakhanlou and Saeedian (2023) indicated that participating in a Teacher Training Course could develop novice EFL teachers' cognition of corrective feedback. An instance of the influence of language teaching experience has been demonstrated in an extract from the interview with T9 when this participant talked about the increase in Teacher Talking Time while conducting teacher correction (Theme Number 10).

Another instance of the influence of language teaching experience was shown in an extract from the interview with T5 when this participant talked about peer correction (Theme Number 10). Likewise, Borg (2009) accentuated the impact of teaching experience on teachers' cognitions. Besides, an instance of the influence of language learning experience was indicated in an extract from the interview with T2, when this participant talked about his own experience of learning English in an EFL class (Theme Number 12). In addition, instances of the influence of EFL learners' expectations and needs on EFL teachers' cognitions were presented in the interview extracts as well. For example, T1 referred to EFL learners' expectations and needs regarding teacher correction (Theme Number 10). There were also references, made by T4 and T6, to EFL learners' expectations and needs regarding peer correction (Theme Number 10).

## 5. Conclusion and Implications

The aim of the present study was to explore Iranian EFL teachers' cognition of corrective feedback as an element of classroom management. The participants in the context of this study understood the importance of corrective feedback in EFL classes and considered it necessary for effectively managing EFL classes. They also knew the reasons for such importance (e.g., fossilization of those errors which have not been corrected). They were aware that common errors and errors related to the objectives of an EFL lesson should be corrected. Moreover, they recognized the difference between errors and mistakes. They were able to categorize the errors in terms of the goals of activities (communication vs. form, and fluency vs. accuracy); besides, they knew how to deal with each kind of error. Furthermore, they were familiar with different kinds of corrective feedback in terms of the time of correction (delayed vs. immediate/on-the-spot), and the stages of a teaching sequence (Engage, Study, Activate) in an EFL lesson. In addition, they believed in the involvement of teachers, peers, and self-correction for appropriately providing sufficient corrective feedback in EFL classes. They paid attention to EFL learners' proficiency level and their affective factors for the provision of corrective feedback. They foregrounded attention to EFL learners' feelings, personalities, expectations, needs, and preferences in this regard. To conclude, it can be said that the participants in the context of this study had a sound cognition of corrective feedback as an element of classroom management in EFL classes. It is also noteworthy that the findings of this study indicated that factors, such as pre-service teacher training, language teaching experience, language learning experience, and EFL learners' needs, might shape the participants' cognition of corrective feedback as an element of classroom management in the EFL context of Iran.

The results of the present study provide implications for language teacher educators, EFL teachers, and foreign language institutes' supervisors. The findings of this study can inform language teacher educators about EFL teachers' cognitions of corrective feedback so that they can design pre-service and in-service teacher education programs that can more efficiently improve EFL teachers' cognitions of corrective feedback. Besides, by reviewing the results of this study, EFL teachers can gain insight into the appropriate provision of corrective feedback in their EFL classes. In addition, the findings of this study can apprise foreign language institutes' supervisors of EFL teachers' cognitions of corrective feedback. The supervisors' awareness of EFL teachers' cognitions in this regard can help the supervisors to observe and assess EFL teachers' classroom practice of corrective feedback in a new light. A word of caution regarding the present study should be mentioned when considering the context

and generalizability of the findings. As is the case with qualitative studies (Dörnyei, 2007), the results of this study may not be generalizable to other contexts. However, according to Dörnyei (2007), the generalizability of the findings is not an aim of qualitative research. Besides, teacher cognition inquiry is essentially context-based (Borg, 2006).

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