

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF DIRECT CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK ON ENGLISH SPEAKING CONFIDENCE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Speaking confidence is a crucial component in English language learning, particularly for EFL students who often struggle with anxiety, low self-esteem, and fear of making mistakes. Direct Corrective Feedback (DCF) is widely used by teachers to address spoken errors, yet its psychological impact on learners remains underexplored. This qualitative study investigates students' perceptions of DCF and how it influences their confidence in speaking English. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with ten 11th-grade students with beginner-level English proficiency at a senior high school in Kuningan. The findings reveal that students generally perceive DCF as helpful for improving pronunciation, linguistic accuracy, and awareness of errors. Most participants reported increased confidence after receiving clear and supportive correction. However, one student experienced decreased confidence due to feelings of embarrassment when corrected publicly. These results highlight that while DCF is effective in promoting linguistic development, its emotional impact depends on teacher delivery, timing, and individual learner characteristics. The study emphasizes the need for teachers to implement DCF with sensitivity to foster both accuracy and confidence in EFL speaking contexts.

Keywords: Direct Corrective Feedback, Student Confidence, Speaking, EFL, Qualitative Research

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, English proficiency, especially in speaking, is increasingly viewed as a critical skill for academic and career development. As an international language, English functions as a bridge in global communication, higher education, international business, and digital culture. For Indonesian students, especially those majoring in English education, the ability to speak English fluently and confidently is a core expectation, both during their studies and in their future professions as language teachers. However, speaking English confidently Students often face psychological and emotional barriers such as shyness, fear of making mistakes, lack of vocabulary, and low self-esteem (Chen & Ying, 2024). These affective factors limit their oral participation and ultimately hinder their language development. According to Gregersen (2023), language learners who experience anxiety during speaking activities tend to withdraw and avoid communicative interaction, even when they have the necessary linguistic knowledge. Therefore,

fostering student confidence is essential in ensuring they make full use of speaking opportunities in the classroom.

To help address these issues, teachers often implement feedback strategies to guide students' language development. Among these, Direct Corrective Feedback (DCF) is one of the most commonly used techniques. DCF refers to the teacher's immediate response to spoken errors, such as mispronunciations or grammar mistakes, during class activities. According to Cooper, Soto, and Clarke (2021), DCF techniques include clarification requests, explicit corrections, repetition of correct forms, and recasts. When applied correctly, DCF can help students recognize their errors and produce more accurate speech over time. However, DCF is not just a linguistic tool, it is also a psychological intervention. Depending on how feedback is delivered, it can either improve or diminish a student's confidence. Lang et al. (2022) found that emotional responses to feedback vary depending on tone, timing, and the perceived attitude of the teacher. Supportive, patient feedback encourages student participation, while overly

critical or harsh correction can trigger feelings of shame and reduce students' willingness to speak.

The effect of direct corrective feedback on students' confidence has been studied by many previous researchers. One such study was conducted by Merizawati et al. (2025) found that Direct corrective feedback enhances students' speaking confidence by addressing language errors explicitly, allowing learners to understand their mistakes. Further research conducted by Gaffar et al. (2024) also found that direct oral corrective feedback (OCF) significantly improved students' speaking confidence, as reported by participants. The supportive nature of feedback fostered a positive learning environment, enhancing their overall speaking skills and encouraging greater engagement in classroom activities. Other research conducted by Bawut et al. (2025) reveal that Direct corrective feedback significantly enhances students' speaking confidence, as indicated by a high mean score of 4.50 for the statement "I feel more confident when my teacher corrects my speaking errors," reflecting its supportive role in language learning. Furthermore, many other studies have examined this topic, such as Hamidi et al.'s (2022) study, which found that direct oral corrective feedback significantly enhances EFL learners' speaking accuracy and motivation to speak. Hartono et al.'s (2022) study revealed that oral corrective feedback generally facilitated rather than hindered students' speaking performance in the EFL classroom. Paul & Al-Mamun's (2023) study that examined students' perceptions of teachers' oral corrective feedback, found that students perceived oral corrective feedback positively and found it helpful in developing English speaking skills.

Despite the growing body of research on Direct Corrective Feedback (DCF) in EFL classrooms, most previous studies have primarily emphasized its impact on linguistic outcomes such as speaking accuracy, pronunciation, and fluency (Hamidi et al., 2022; Phuong, 2022; Gaffar et al., 2024). These studies consistently report that direct feedback helps learners recognize errors and improve oral performance. However, students' speaking confidence is often treated as a secondary or uniform outcome, with limited attention given to learners' emotional variability and subjective experiences. Several studies have reported positive

perceptions of DCF and its role in enhancing speaking confidence (Wardani et al., 2023; Jo & Park, 2024; Paul & Al-Mamun, 2023). Nevertheless, these findings tend to present confidence as a linear and stable construct, overlooking the possibility that corrective feedback may produce mixed or even contradictory emotional effects. As Hartono et al. (2022) argue, oral corrective feedback can function as a psychologically sensitive practice that may either support or threaten learners' self-efficacy depending on how it is delivered.

Moreover, limited qualitative research has explored how Direct Corrective Feedback simultaneously generates both positive and negative emotional responses among learners, particularly in beginner-level EFL contexts. Asnaini et al. (2025) highlight that anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and embarrassment remain dominant factors influencing students' speaking confidence, yet these affective variables are rarely examined in relation to teachers' corrective practices. This gap is especially evident in the Indonesian senior high school context, where students are still developing basic speaking competence and emotional readiness to communicate in English.

Therefore, there is a need for an in-depth qualitative investigation that foregrounds students' voices to explore how Direct Corrective Feedback influences speaking confidence in nuanced and sometimes contradictory ways. By examining learners' emotional reactions, perceived benefits, and confidence-related responses, this study seeks to address the gap in existing literature and contribute a more psychologically informed understanding of DCF in early-stage EFL speaking development. This study further demonstrates that Direct Corrective Feedback operates as a double-edged pedagogical strategy, enhancing speaking confidence for some learners while simultaneously increasing anxiety and reducing confidence for others, depending on emotional sensitivity, feedback delivery style, and correction timing. Corrective feedback has also been widely recognized as a fundamental instructional strategy in EFL classrooms to support learners' awareness of language form and communicative accuracy (Nhac, 2021).

METHOD

This research adopted a qualitative case study approach to explore students’ perception of Direct Corrective Feedback (DCF) and the impact on their confidence in English speaking. The study was rooted in the belief that human experiences, particularly those involving psychological and emotional aspects, are best understood through detailed, descriptive analysis. Qualitative research, as defined by Creswell (2014), allows researchers to examine participants’ perspectives and interactions within a real-world context, enabling a deep understanding of complex classroom dynamics and learner experiences.

This research was conducted in grade 11 of Senior High School 3 Kuningan, in the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The setting was chosen due to its relevance to the research topic: students were regularly engaged in speaking activities. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals who had direct experience with DCF. The sample consisted of ten 11th-grade students with beginner level of English proficiency enrolled in the compulsory English subjects. Although ten students participated in the interviews, all participants’ responses were included in the thematic analysis. The analysis focused on identifying recurring patterns and variations across students’ emotional reactions, perceived linguistic benefits, and confidence-related experiences with Direct Corrective Feedback. This approach allowed for a comprehensive representation of learners’ perspectives rather than individual comparison.

To gather a comprehensive understanding of how DCF affects student confidence, data were collected using semi-structured interview instrument. Interviews were conducted with each participant to find out their experience when receiving direct corrective feedback from educators while communicating in English. Questions in the interview include open-ended questions that can encourage participants to express their thoughts freely. The interview was audio-recorded (with permission) and later transcribed verbatim for thematic analysis. This provided valuable pedagogical insight and context to the classroom interactions observed.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a flexible and systematic method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The following steps were followed by transcribing interview results verbatim. This ensured an accurate representation of participant voices and reactions. The second one is initial coding; the data source (interview) was read multiple times to develop initial codes. The third one is categorization and theme development; codes were grouped into categories based on recurring ideas and emotional trends. From this, broader themes emerged. The fourth one is triangulation and interpretation; data from all sources were cross-checked to ensure consistency. Reporting as the last one, themes were synthesized into narrative findings supported by direct quotes and observational descriptions to provide rich and contextualized results. The analysis emphasized theme prevalence and variation across participants rather than individual frequency, in line with qualitative research principles.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study examined students’ perceptions of Direct Corrective Feedback (DCF) and its influence on speaking confidence through semi-structured interviews with ten Grade 11 EFL learners. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) generated four major themes: (1) emotional reactions toward DCF, (2) perceived linguistic benefits of DCF, (3) preferences for timing and manner of correction, and (4) the impact of DCF on students’ speaking confidence. The findings demonstrate that while DCF is generally perceived as beneficial, students’ emotional and confidence-related responses vary considerably.

a. Emotional Reactions Toward Direct Corrective Feedback

Participants expressed varied emotional reactions when receiving direct correction during speaking activities. Of the ten students, three reported negative emotional responses, four described neutral reactions, and three expressed positive emotions toward DCF.

Emotional Reaction	Number of Students	Description
Negative	3	Felt embarrassed or anxious, especially

		when corrected publicly; tended to hesitate or withdraw from speaking.
Neutral	4	Considered correction as a normal classroom practice and did not feel emotionally disturbed.
Positive	3	Felt supported and motivated; perceived correction as helpful and encouraging.

Table 1. Students' Emotional Reactions Toward DCF

Table 1 illustrates the range of emotional reactions students experienced when receiving Direct Corrective Feedback (DCF) during speaking activities. Rather than indicating a single dominant emotional response, the data reveal a spectrum of affective experiences shaped by individual learner differences and classroom interactional contexts. While some students associated DCF with discomfort and anxiety, others perceived it as emotionally neutral or even encouraging.

Students who reported negative emotional reactions primarily linked their discomfort to public correction and peer presence. Feelings of embarrassment and nervousness emerged when feedback was perceived as interruptive or face-threatening. This finding aligns with Hartono et al. (2022), who argue that oral corrective feedback can negatively affect learners' psychological domains—particularly self-efficacy and emotional security—when it threatens students' social image in the classroom. Similarly, Asnaini et al. (2025) highlight that fear of negative evaluation and anxiety are key factors that undermine students' confidence during speaking performance.

In contrast, students who demonstrated neutral emotional responses viewed correction as a routine pedagogical practice rather than a personal judgment. This perspective reflects a level of emotional resilience and acceptance of feedback as part of the learning process. Wardani et al. (2023) support this interpretation, noting that many EFL learners consider corrective feedback essential for self-reflection and language improvement, provided it is delivered appropriately.

Positive emotional reactions were closely associated with the teacher's supportive tone and clear explanation. Students who felt encouraged by DCF perceived correction as a form of guidance rather than criticism. This finding is consistent with Gaffar et al. (2024), who emphasize that respectful and empathetic feedback delivery fosters emotional safety and increases students' willingness to engage in speaking activities. The emotional responses presented in Table 1 highlight that DCF is an emotionally sensitive instructional practice whose impact depends largely on delivery style and learner affective readiness.

b. Perceived Benefits of Direct Corrective Feedback

All ten participants acknowledged that DCF contributed positively to their speaking development. The most frequently reported benefits included improved pronunciation, increased awareness of errors, and greater speaking accuracy.

Linguistic Benefit	Number of Students Reporting	Description
Pronunciation improvement	6	Helped students articulate words more accurately during reading

		and speaking tasks.
Error awareness	5	Enabled students to recognize incorrect forms and avoid repeating mistakes.
Speaking accuracy	4	Improved clarity and correctness of spoken English.
Vocabulary understanding	3	Clarified unfamiliar words and their correct pronunciation.

Table 2. Perceived Benefits of DCF

Table 2 presents students' perceptions of the linguistic benefits gained from Direct Corrective Feedback in speaking activities. The data indicate that DCF was consistently perceived as a valuable instructional tool that supports multiple dimensions of speaking development, particularly pronunciation accuracy, error awareness, and overall clarity of speech.

Pronunciation improvement emerged as the most frequently mentioned benefit, reflecting the prominence of phonological accuracy in beginner-level EFL instruction. Students reported that immediate correction enabled them to notice and adjust mispronounced words before such errors became habitual. This finding supports Phuong (2022), who asserts that pronunciation-focused corrective feedback plays a crucial role in enhancing intelligibility and preventing fossilization of incorrect phonological forms. This result supports Bawut et al. (2025), who found that direct corrective feedback contributes to improved speaking accuracy by enhancing learners' metalinguistic awareness and self-monitoring ability.

Increased awareness of errors was another salient benefit identified by students. Through explicit correction, learners became more conscious of the distinctions between correct and incorrect linguistic forms. This heightened awareness reflects the development of metalinguistic competence, which Hamidi et al. (2022) identify as a key outcome of direct oral corrective feedback. Such awareness allows learners to monitor their own speech more effectively and contributes to long-term accuracy improvement.

Several students also reported improved understanding of vocabulary and sentence structure as a result of DCF. By clarifying unfamiliar words and correcting inaccurate usage, feedback supported students' lexical development and comprehension. This finding is consistent with Bawut et al. (2025), who note that corrective feedback enhances speaking proficiency by addressing both linguistic form and meaning.

Table 2 suggest that DCF serves not only as a corrective mechanism for immediate errors but also as a pedagogical strategy that facilitates deeper linguistic understanding, self-monitoring, and intentional speech production in EFL contexts.

c. Preferences for Timing and Manner of Correction

Participants expressed different preferences regarding the timing of corrective feedback. Four students preferred immediate correction, three preferred delayed correction, and three reported no strong preference.

Preference	Number of Students	Rationale
Immediate correction	4	Prevented errors from becoming habitual and

		improved accuracy instantly.
Delayed correction	3	Reduced anxiety and helped maintain speaking flow.
No strong preference	3	Teacher's tone and manner were considered more important than timing.

Table 3 Students' Preferences for the Timing of DCF

Table 3 highlights the varying impact of Direct Corrective Feedback on students' speaking confidence, revealing that confidence development is neither uniform nor predictable. While the majority of students reported increased confidence after receiving correction, a smaller group experienced decreased or fluctuating confidence, underscoring the complex psychological nature of feedback in speaking instruction.

Students who reported increased confidence associated DCF with improved preparedness and clarity in speaking. Understanding the correct forms reduced uncertainty and fear of repeating mistakes, allowing learners to participate more confidently in subsequent speaking tasks. This finding aligns with Jo and Park (2024), who found that consistent and constructive teacher feedback enhances speaking confidence by helping learners refine their performance over time. Similarly, Wardani et al. (2023) argue that corrective feedback strengthens confidence when learners perceive it as supportive and instructional rather than judgmental.

Conversely, students who experienced reduced confidence linked their reactions to emotional discomfort, particularly when correction occurred publicly. Feelings of embarrassment and fear of making further mistakes led to hesitation and reduced willingness to

speak. This outcome supports Asnaini et al. (2025), who emphasize that anxiety and fear of failure significantly contribute to low self-confidence in EFL speaking contexts. Hartono et al. (2022) further note that feedback perceived as threatening may heighten learners' affective filter, thereby inhibiting oral participation.

The contrasting patterns shown in Table 3 reinforce the view that Direct Corrective Feedback functions as a double-edged pedagogical strategy. While it enhances confidence for many learners through improved linguistic clarity, it may simultaneously undermine confidence for emotionally sensitive students. These findings emphasize the importance of emotionally responsive and context-sensitive feedback practices in EFL speaking classrooms.

The findings of this study, based on thematic analysis of interviews with ten Grade 11 EFL learners, reveal that Direct Corrective Feedback (DCF) plays a complex role in shaping students' linguistic development, emotional responses, and speaking confidence.

a. DCF as a Catalyst for Improving Linguistic Accuracy and Awareness

The results consistently demonstrate that students perceive DCF as a helpful tool for improving speaking accuracy, especially in pronunciation and linguistic awareness. As shown in Table 2, all participants acknowledged that teacher correction made them more aware of errors and helped them avoid repeating mistakes. This supports the argument made by Hamidi et al. (2022), who found that direct oral corrective feedback significantly enhances learners' speaking accuracy and helps them distinguish between correct and incorrect forms. Their study revealed that students who received DCF became more conscious of their linguistic output, an effect mirrored in participants who reported heightened awareness after being corrected.

Furthermore, pronunciation emerged as the most frequently corrected aspect, with participants noting that feedback helped them articulate words more accurately. This echoes the findings of *Phuong (2022)*, who concluded that pronunciation feedback is central to improving intelligibility and is often prioritized by teachers during oral performance. The present findings align with *Phuong's* observation that immediate feedback helps students adjust phonological patterns before errors become habitual.

Additionally, several participants emphasized that correction increased their understanding of new vocabulary and sentence structures. This reinforces *Gaffar et al.'s (2024)* findings, which indicated that oral corrective feedback improves learners' pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and general linguistic competence when delivered in a supportive manner. The current study thus affirms that DCF contributes not only to momentary correction but also to long-term linguistic development.

b. Emotional Responses (A Spectrum from Anxiety to Appreciation)

Table 1 highlights that students' emotional responses to DCF vary widely—from embarrassment and anxiety to neutrality and appreciation. These variations resemble patterns found in previous research, confirming that the emotional impact of corrective feedback is highly individualized.

Participants who responded with embarrassment—such as P1 and P3—experienced heightened self-awareness and nervousness when corrected publicly. Their emotional discomfort aligns with *Hartono et al. (2022)*, who found that OCF may provoke negative psychological reactions, including low self-efficacy, frustration, and fear of committing errors. Students experiencing these reactions often become overly cautious, which may hinder spontaneous communication and fluency.

However, not all reactions were negative. Participants P2, P4, and P5 expressed neutral-

to-positive emotions, noting that correction helped them understand mistakes more clearly. Importantly, emotional responses to DCF were not uniform across participants. While several students perceived correction as supportive and motivating, others experienced anxiety and embarrassment, particularly when feedback was delivered publicly. This variation highlights individual differences in emotional sensitivity and classroom affective dynamics. These findings are consistent with *Wardani et al. (2023)*, who reported that more than half of EFL students believe corrective feedback is necessary for self-reflection and skill growth. Likewise, *Gaffar et al. (2024)* found that when correction is delivered respectfully and supportively, learners tend to perceive it as a helpful and motivating instructional practice.

Thus, the emotional dimension of DCF depends greatly on individual differences and teacher delivery style, underscoring the need for corrective practices that are empathetic, gentle, and student-centered.

c. The Role of Teacher Delivery Style in Shaping Learner Perceptions

Across all themes, the findings highlight the essential role of teacher delivery style in determining whether DCF is perceived positively or negatively. Students repeatedly expressed the need for correction to be delivered with a gentle tone, respectful manner, and non-threatening approach. This aligns strongly with the recommendations of *Gaffar et al. (2024)*, who emphasized that supportive feedback prevents negative emotional impacts and enhances students' willingness to participate in speaking tasks.

The present findings also mirror those of *Wardani et al. (2023)*, who noted that students prefer feedback that maintains their dignity and encourages them to reflect on their errors without feeling judged. Participants in this study frequently used expressions like “baik-baik,” “lembut,” and “tidak mengintimidasi,” indicating that the teacher's approach can mitigate emotional discomfort and promote acceptance.

Taken together, these observations underscore that *how* teachers correct may be just as important as *what* they correct. A supportive delivery encourages learners to view feedback as a tool for improvement rather than as a personal criticism, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of DCF.

d. Individual Differences in Timing Preferences and Feedback Acceptance

The findings also show notable variability in students' preferences for timing of corrective feedback. Participants demonstrated varied preferences regarding the timing of corrective feedback. Some learners favored immediate correction for its clarity and preventive function, while others preferred delayed feedback to reduce anxiety and maintain speaking flow. Their preferences align with observations made by Hamidi et al. (2022) and Phuong (2022), who noted that immediate feedback enhances accuracy by preventing error fossilization and correcting articulatory patterns.

Conversely, students like P1 and P3 preferred delayed correction, as they felt embarrassed or disrupted when corrected mid-sentence. This variation reflects the findings of Hartono et al. (2022), who observed that some learners experience increased anxiety when corrected publicly or instantaneously. Individual differences in emotional tolerance, language proficiency, and personality influence whether immediate or delayed correction is more effective.

Therefore, DCF should be tailored to accommodate learners' psychological needs and preferences. A one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to be effective in diverse classrooms.

e. DCF as a Double-Edged Sword for Speaking Confidence

Table 3 illustrates that DCF can both enhance and diminish speaking confidence, depending on how students internalize the correction. Four participants (P2–P5) reported increased confidence after receiving DCF, citing improved accuracy and preparedness. Their experiences support findings by Jo and Park

(2024), who concluded that consistent, constructive feedback promotes confidence by helping learners refine their speaking performance over time.

Similarly, Wardani et al. (2023) found that corrective feedback facilitates self-reflection and contributes to confidence-building, especially when learners understand that correction is intended to support improvement. Participants in the present study reported feeling more assured once they learned the correct forms.

However, Participant 1 (P1) experienced reduced confidence due to embarrassment and fear of making future mistakes. Her experience resonates with findings from Asnaini et al. (2025), who reported that negative past experiences, low self-esteem, and fear of failure significantly contribute to a decline in learners' self-confidence in speaking. These contrasting outcomes indicate that DCF functions as a double-edged pedagogical strategy. While it enhances speaking confidence for many learners by improving accuracy and preparedness, it may simultaneously undermine confidence among emotionally sensitive students, particularly in contexts involving public correction.

This dual effect demonstrates that DCF is a double-edged pedagogical tool: while highly effective for developing accuracy and confidence for many learners, it can simultaneously increase anxiety or reduce confidence in others. The teacher's challenge is therefore to balance linguistic correction with emotional sensitivity, ensuring that feedback is both instructional and supportive. This finding is consistent with Merizawati et al. (2025), who emphasize that effective corrective feedback should balance linguistic accuracy with learners' emotional comfort to foster sustainable speaking development.

CONCLUSION

This study examined students' perceptions of Direct Corrective Feedback (DCF) and how it influences their speaking development and confidence. The findings show that DCF is

generally valued by learners because it improves pronunciation, accuracy, and awareness of errors. Students reported that correction helped them understand the correct forms and become more careful and prepared in future speaking tasks, supporting earlier studies emphasizing the effectiveness of explicit feedback in enhancing oral accuracy (Hamidi et al., 2022; Phuong, 2022).

However, students' emotional responses varied widely. Some experienced embarrassment or anxiety when corrected publicly, while others reacted positively and viewed feedback as a normal part of learning. These differences align with previous research highlighting that corrective feedback can either support or threaten learners' emotional comfort depending on delivery style (Hartono et al., 2022; Gaffar et al., 2024). The study confirms that gentle, respectful, and non-intimidating correction helps students accept feedback more openly.

The impact of DCF on speaking confidence also differed among participants. Most experienced increased confidence due to clearer linguistic understanding, consistent with Jo and Park (2024). Yet one student reported decreased confidence due to fear of mistakes, echoing concerns raised by Asnaini et al. (2025). This indicates that DCF can be both beneficial and challenging depending on learners' psychological readiness.

DCF is a highly effective but sensitive instructional strategy. Teachers should balance linguistic correction with emotional support, adapt the timing of feedback to student preferences, and ensure that feedback fosters both accuracy and confidence. Thoughtful implementation of DCF is essential for helping learners become more competent, motivated, and confident speakers of English.

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