

Greek Primary School Teachers' Attitudes and Teaching Practices Towards Students' Oral Errors

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Abstract

According to the communicative approach, the principles of which are integrated in modern curricula, errors serve as useful tools for educators to assess student achievement. They may also give an indication of the students' gaps in knowledge and/or the challenges they face during the learning process. In this paper, we aim to investigate the attitudes of Greek primary school teachers towards students' oral errors and the teaching practices they employ towards error management. To achieve the aforementioned research objectives, we collected data via questionnaires and class observations. Questionnaire data allowed us to assess teachers' attitudes, whereas the observation data shed light on the teaching techniques they use in error correction. Both the teachers' perceptions as well as their teaching practices generally demonstrate a moderate attitude towards students' oral errors. Based on the research findings, the teachers do not strictly correct every single mistake students make but they focus on specific types of errors. Moreover, they tend not to correct the errors in a direct way; rather they first provide hints and instructions to the students who try to correct their mistakes on their own. In this way, students may discover knowledge themselves. Finally, it can be concluded that the findings reflect a shift towards modern linguistic approaches, and more specifically towards the communicative approach, as far as error management is concerned.

Keywords: oral errors, primary school teachers, attitudes, teaching practices

1. Introduction

In the constructivist model of teaching, errors are a natural and integral part of the learning process, as these occur when the newly offered knowledge is not in compliance with the students' pre-existing one (Santagata, 2004; Tulis, 2013). According to this perspective, teachers must first treat errors as indicators of their students' needs and then as an opportunity to modify their teaching strategies/practices (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Furthermore, they ought to make students realise that conformity to linguistic norms undeniably contributes to their smoother social adaptation and participation but this is not the only prerequisite for language acquisition and learning (Kampaki-Vougioukli, 2020). Teachers should also accept forms and structures, used by students, which may belong to different linguistic varieties (e.g., dialects) and they should not automatically reject them on the basis that they deviate from the norm (Motsiou, 2020). This will allow students to think of their mistakes as an expression of their linguistic creativity and not as wrongdoing. Therefore, students must be encouraged to discuss and analyse their mistakes, so that they familiarise with them; any deviations from the norm will not be treated as wrong or unacceptable (Tulis, 2013). If reference to students' errors is avoided, this has a negative effect on the learning outcomes and on students' motivation to participate in the learning process (Santagata, 2004). Even if these consequences are not evident during the lessons, they may accompany students throughout their learning lives; for instance, when they avoid setting high goals or taking initiatives due to the fear of failure (Dweck, 1986). The aforementioned points fully justify the necessity of investigating the attitudes of teachers towards students' errors as well as their teaching practices as far as error correction is concerned. Additionally, the creation of an appropriate pedagogical environment for error management should further form the basis of any research that sees errors as a learning opportunity (Antlova et al., 2016). In our study, we examine Greek primary school teachers' attitudes regarding students' oral errors and the teaching practices they employ towards error management.

2. Theoretical Background

In order to examine the teaching practices Greek primary school teachers adopt when managing students' oral errors, it is first necessary to explore their attitudes towards those errors. Their attitudes affect –to a great extent– their behaviour and the teaching methods they implement in class. The concept of attitudes is not one-dimensional but rather broad, as it includes people's opinions, thoughts, feelings and dispositions (Rao, 2004). According to Underwood (2012: 107), "an attitude is a psychological tendency or mental predisposition that is expressed by evaluating an object or entity with some degree of like or dislike, favor or disfavor". In line with the tripartite model, attitudes consist of three components (cognitive, affective and behavioural) which are also considered their shaping factors (Leighton et al., 2015). This model can also be applied to teachers' attitudes towards errors: A) The cognitive component of attitude towards errors includes teachers' beliefs and opinions about them (Antlova et al., 2016). B) The affective component of attitude towards errors reflects how favourably or unfavourably teachers feel about students' errors (Antlova et al., 2016). C) The

behavioural component of attitude towards errors essentially includes the practices by which teachers choose to manage errors when these occur in the school reality (Antlova et al., 2016).

The path to error management –from a pedagogical perspective– requires teachers not only to form favourable attitudes towards their students’ errors, but also to adopt appropriate strategies and techniques when dealing with and exploiting those errors (Amara, 2018). Correction is a teaching practice that aims to improve students’ use of language (Mitsis, 2004). According to Ellis (1994), “correction” refers to the way language errors are managed mainly by teachers; it is defined as an action through which student errors are pointed out. However, error correction –despite its undoubted value for the learning process– is a topic that often raises questions and concerns among teachers and researchers as to whether it can prove beneficial for student achievement (Lee, 1997; Margolis 2010). The key considerations that arise were formulated by Hendrickson (1978) in the form of the following five questions: A) Should students’ mistakes be corrected? B) When should they be corrected? C) What types of mistakes should be corrected? D) Who should correct them? E) How should they be corrected?

Oral error correction is distinguished into explicit and implicit correction/feedback (Ayoun, 2001; Firwana, 2010; Ellis, 2015; Monaghan et al., 2019). In explicit correction, teachers provide the correct answer directly to the learner (Firwana, 2010). As teachers replace the incorrect form with the correct one –by using expressions such as “You probably mean...” or “You should have said...”– they clarify, in a straightforward way, where the error lies (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Explicit correction seems to have a clear advantage over implicit, as students are immediately informed about the error they have made and the category to which this belongs. Thus, they are not forced to engage in complex mental processes in order to recognise their error; this also minimises any ambiguity or vagueness. Explicit oral correction is very often preferred, since it proves to be highly effective and beneficial for the learning process (Carroll & Swain, 1993; Saito, 1994; Nassaji & Swain, 2000; Shi, 2017). On the other hand, in implicit correction, students are asked to identify their own errors and correct them through clues and hints provided by the teacher (Firwana, 2010). Several studies claim that implicit correction is the most appropriate and effective form of oral feedback. The main argument in favour of implicit correction is that explicit error correction hinders student thinking and the development of their communication skills; when teachers provide the correct answer straight away, this deprives students of the opportunity to think and engage in complex mental processes (Firwana, 2010). On the contrary, during implicit oral feedback, teachers’ suggestions and hints give learners the opportunity to correct their mistakes themselves and, consequently, to be led to the discovery of knowledge (Firwana, 2010).

Both explicit and implicit feedback are closely related to second/foreign language acquisition (Loewen, 2012; Tarigan et al., 2023). Various error correction techniques have been developed, each of which constitutes either an explicit or an implicit form of feedback. These techniques (Lyster & Ranta, 1997) are: A) Recast/reformulation: According to Long (2006), recast is the technique of reformulating an utterance; in such cases, deviant linguistic forms are replaced by the corresponding correct ones. Teachers revise students’ utterances (by replacing the incorrect forms with the correct ones) but they do not put emphasis on the error

as such and, of course, they do not alter their meaning (Firwana, 2010). B) Repetition: This technique is very similar to recast/reformulation. Teachers repeat the students' answers word-for-word with no corrections this time. However, they put emphasis on the errors. In this way, students can identify and correct the erroneous utterances themselves (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). C) Clarification request: This is a technique used in oral implicit feedback. Teachers indicate to the learners that the utterances they produced are either incorrect or incomprehensible and, therefore, they should be corrected (Saxton, 2000). Once teachers identify the errors, they make clarification questions (such as "Excuse me?", "What did you say?", "What do you mean?" and so on) to the students. In this way, mistakes are indirectly pointed out. Students should, therefore, revisit what they have said, acknowledge the mistake and correct it (Firwana, 2010). D) Elicitation: It is a technique through which feedback is provided. It aims to motivate students to correct their mistakes themselves. Unlike reformulation, in which teachers repeat the students' words by incorporating the correct forms, elicitation prompts students –through explicit or implicit suggestions– to reformulate their utterances and provide the correct ones (Nassaji, 2004). Consequently, student self-correction is also promoted. E) Metalinguistic feedback/metalinguistic information: Teachers do not provide the correct forms directly to the learners. They point out the nature of the error through comments, information and/or questions about the "quality" and the correctness of any linguistic externalisation (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). In fact, metalinguistic feedback is based on grammatical, syntactic or lexical rules that help learners understand the nature of their error. It is not based, by any means, on demanding linguistic data that would exceed learners' abilities and lead them to further confusion (Lyster, 1998; Lochman, 2002). As Zarkogianni (2016) points out, providing metalinguistic information can be combined with both explicit and implicit correction.

Based on the preceding discussion, it can be seen that reformulation is the only form of explicit oral feedback, whereas repetition, clarification request and elicitation are implicit forms. Furthermore, depending on the nature of the error, metalinguistic feedback can be combined with either explicit or implicit correction. Lyster (2002) used the term "negotiation of form" to include the aforementioned forms of implicit feedback. The common element, on the basis of which he grouped these techniques into the same category, was the indirect way by which teachers indicate to the learners that they have made a mistake –without correcting it directly though. Thus, students are invited –following their teachers' suggestions– to correct either their own mistakes or those of their classmates. In this way, self-correction and other-correction are promoted in parallel. This is the main reason why implicit forms of correction are preferred over explicit ones by teachers and students (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Lyster, 2002; Shi, 2017).

3. The Method

3.1 Research Design

The present study aims to contribute to the discussion of error management in class. More specifically, it envisages to shed light on how primary school teachers in Greece view their

students' oral errors and how they handle them. A mixed-method approach is adopted. Qualitative and quantitative data –within the framework of triangulation– were collected from questionnaires and class observations. Participants were selected via random and convenience sampling, respectively.

3.2 Research Objectives

The paper aims to investigate (a) the attitudes of Greek primary school teachers towards students' oral errors, (b) the teaching practices through which they manage those errors and (c) the relationship between their attitudes and their error-handling teaching practices. Emphasis is given to oral errors –such as phonological, stress, grammatical, syntactic, lexical-semantic, expressive and content-related– and not on coined items (Motsiou, 2017).

3.3 Research Tools

In our study, methodological triangulation was adopted for data collection, as both quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative research methods (observations) were employed. More specifically, we used questionnaires to examine primary school teachers' general perceptions and beliefs about students' oral errors as well as their preferences about the teaching techniques they use to manage those errors. However, if one only looks at those responses, this does not suffice to obtain a holistic understanding of the issues under investigation. To do so, we further conducted classroom observations in order to explore teachers' attitudes and the techniques they adopt in class. In this way, we were also in position to determine whether their statements agreed or disagreed with what they did in class.

For our quantitative research, we designed an attitudinal questionnaire (Athanasίου, 2007) which was based on weighted instruments found in related studies (Dinas et al., 2006; Firwana, 2010; Leighton et al., 2015; Salteh & K. Sadeghi, 2015; Zarkogianni, 2016). Further modifications were also made (Creswell, 2016). The questionnaire included 36 Likert scale close-ended questions. Structured observation was chosen for the needs of our qualitative research. The data were recorded on a predefined coding scheme (Robson, 2010). The protocol which was used to observe the practices teachers employed for the correction of their students' oral errors was based on the tool designed by Lyster & Ranta (1997) (for the observation of oral corrective feedback). Finally, this was structured in five sections following Hendrickson's (1998) five key concerns about error correction (see section 2).

3.4 The Sample

As far as the quantitative research is concerned, the sample size was determined on the basis of a pilot survey which had been previously conducted. The exact number of teachers who participated in the quantitative study was 516 (N=516), following random sampling. In order to observe the teaching practices used in students' oral error correction, 40 Greek primary school teachers were selected through convenience sampling. The teachers taught fourth, fifth and sixth graders. Students' oral language is more developed in these age groups and, thus, more opportunities are provided to observe both the errors in the oral language use and the teaching practices teachers adopt to manage those errors.

3.5 Data Collection & Statistical Analysis

The quantitative data collection was carried out from September to December 2020. Hard copies of the questionnaires were initially distributed across several primary schools in the Prefectures of Ioannina, Thesprotia, Arta, Preveza and Etoloakarnania (Greece). At the same time, the electronic form of the questionnaire was sent to the e-mail addresses of schools to which access was not possible. The observations took place from March to June 2021, during the third quarter of the school year 2020-2021. Data collection was conducted through non-participant observation; the researcher-observer only observed and recorded the data, without taking part either in the field or the object of the observations (Bell, 1997; Verma & Mallick, 2004; Athanasiou, 2007; Creswell, 2016; Mills et al., 2017). The classroom was defined as the field of observation, whereas the language lesson as its object. The quantitative data, collected from the questionnaires and the observation protocols, were extracted and organised in Microsoft Excel 2019. They were then coded and analysed using the statistical package SPSS ver. 26.0. The frequency tables, in which the descriptive statistical results of the study are presented, resulted from the statistical processing and analysis of the data.

4. Results

4.1 Quantitative Data Results

Table 1. Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Correction of Students' Oral Errors

Do you consider correcting students' oral errors necessary?	Number	Percentage %
Not at all necessary	.00	0.00%
A little necessary	10.00	1.94%
Moderately necessary	96.00	18.64%
Very necessary	299.00	58.06%
Extremely necessary	110.00	21.36%
When do you prefer to correct students' oral errors?	The moment they are made, so that they are not fixed in the students' linguistic capital.	164.00 32.22%
	With a slight delay, so that the students' train of thought is not interrupted.	345.00 67.78%
Do you correct all oral errors or specific types, depending on the objectives of the learning process?	All errors	135.00 26.73%
	Specific types of errors	370.00 73.27%

As far as the necessity of correcting students' oral errors is concerned, most teachers responded that they consider error correction very necessary (58.06%). When they were asked when errors should be corrected, the majority of the respondents stated that they prefer to correct students' errors with a short delay, so that they do not interrupt students' train of thought (67.78%). Regarding the number of oral errors that must be corrected, most teachers' statements were in favour of selective correction, as they responded that they correct specific

types of errors according to the objectives of the learning process (73.27%) –compared to 26.73% who choose to correct all students' errors. The teachers' responses are presented in Table 1 –any discrepancies between the number/percentage of participants presented in the tables and the sample's total number are due to the fact that not all participants answered all questions.

Table 2. Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Types of Students' Oral Errors

To what extent do you correct the following oral errors?		Number	Percentage %
Phonological errors	Not at all	6.00	1.17%
	To a small extent	64.00	12.45%
	To a moderate extent	162.00	31.52%
	To a large extent	214.00	41.63%
	To an absolute extent	68.00	13.23%
Stress errors	Not at all	4.00	0.78%
	To a small extent	52.00	10.14%
	To a moderate extent	126.00	24.56%
	To a large extent	232.00	45.22%
Grammatical errors	To an absolute extent	99.00	19.30%
	Not at all	11.00	2.15%
	To a small extent	30.00	5.86%
	To a moderate extent	104.00	20.31%
	To a large extent	248.00	48.44%
Syntactic errors	To an absolute extent	119.00	23.24%
	Not at all	2.00	0.39%
	To a small extent	24.00	4.69%
	To a moderate extent	98.00	19.14%
	To a large extent	268.00	52.34%
Lexical-semantic errors	To an absolute extent	120.00	23.44%
	Not at all	1.00	0.20%
	To a small extent	18.00	3.52%
	To a moderate extent	117.00	22.85%
	To a large extent	250.00	48.83%
Expressive errors	To an absolute extent	126.00	24.61%
	Not at all	5.00	0.97%
	To a small extent	20.00	3.88%
	To a moderate extent	114.00	22.14%
Content errors	To a large extent	240.00	46.60%
	To an absolute extent	136.00	26.41%
	Not at all	6.00	1.17%
	To a small extent	34.00	6.63%
	To a moderate extent	148.00	28.85%
	To a large extent	226.00	44.05%
	To an absolute extent	99.00	19.30%

The extent to which the teachers correct the different types of students' oral errors is presented in Table 2.

Based on the data, it was found that all types of errors (phonological, stress, grammatical, syntactic, lexical-semantic, expressive, content) are corrected to a great extent by most of the teachers.

The teachers' attitudes towards the frequency of oral error correction by the students themselves, their classmates or the teachers are shown in Table 3. According to their responses, most teachers often give students the opportunity to correct their own oral errors themselves (58.06%) or they first give them the opportunity and, if they fail to do so, then they intervene and correct the errors (45.83%).

Table 3. Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Frequency of Oral Error Correction by the Students Themselves, Their Classmates or the Teachers

How often do students participate in oral error correction?		Number	Percentage %
I, as solely responsible for the teaching process, intervene and correct students' oral errors.	Never	17.00	3.30%
	Rarely	61.00	11.84%
	Sometimes	207.00	40.19%
	Often	201.00	39.03%
	Always	29.00	5.63%
I give students the opportunity to correct their oral errors themselves.	Never	2.00	0.39%
	Rarely	21.00	4.08%
	Sometimes	100.00	19.42%
	Often	299.00	58.06%
	Always	93.00	18.06%
I first give students the opportunity to correct their oral errors themselves and, if they do not succeed, then I step in and correct them.	Never	2.00	0.39%
	Rarely	13.00	2.52%
	Sometimes	107.00	20.78%
	Often	236.00	45.83%
	Always	157.00	30.49%
I give other students the opportunity to correct their classmates' oral errors.	Never	76.00	14.76%
	Rarely	116.00	22.52%
	Sometimes	162.00	31.46%
	Often	134.00	26.02%
	Always	27.00	5.24%
I give other students the opportunity to correct their classmates' oral errors and, if they do not succeed, then I step in and correct them.	Never	71.00	13.79%
	Rarely	101.00	19.61%
	Sometimes	127.00	24.66%
	Often	155.00	30.10%
	Always	61.00	11.84%

Table 4. Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Use of Explicit and Implicit Correction Techniques for Students' Oral Errors

How often do you use the following techniques when correcting students' oral errors?		Number	Percentage %
I explicitly point out to the student the mistake and correct it immediately, without explaining the corresponding rule.	Never	263.00	51.07%
	Rarely	174.00	33.79%
	Sometimes	53.00	10.29%
	Often	20.00	3.88%
	Always	5.00	0.97%
I explicitly point out to the student the mistake, I correct it immediately and explain the corresponding rule.	Never	32.00	6.21%
	Rarely	81.00	15.73%
	Sometimes	163.00	31.65%
	Often	164.00	31.84%
	Always	75.00	14.56%
I repeat the student's incorrect utterance by replacing the incorrect form with the correct one, in order to indirectly point out the mistake.	Never	19.00	3.69%
	Rarely	50.00	9.71%
	Sometimes	148.00	28.74%
	Often	225.00	43.69%
	Always	73.00	14.17%
I repeat the student's incorrect utterance by putting emphasis on the part in which the mistake is found to draw the student's attention to correct it.	Never	42.00	8.16%
	Rarely	81.00	15.73%
	Sometimes	176.00	34.17%
	Often	167.00	32.43%
	Always	49.00	9.51%
I repeat the student's utterance up to the point where the mistake is made and ask the student to complete the sentence with the correct form, in order to indirectly elicit the correct answer.	Never	24.00	4.66%
	Rarely	64.00	12.43%
	Sometimes	152.00	29.51%
	Often	222.00	43.11%
	Always	53.00	10.29%
I guide the student to the correct answer through indirect hints, instructions or questions, so that the student corrects the mistake.	Never	5.00	0.97%
	Rarely	30.00	5.83%
	Sometimes	97.00	18.83%
	Often	289.00	56.12%
	Always	94.00	18.25%
I do not correct the student's oral mistake explicitly, but I ask clarification questions (such as "What?", "What did you say?", "Excuse me?"), so that the student identifies the mistake and corrects it.	Never	44.00	8.56%
	Rarely	76.00	14.79%
	Sometimes	175.00	34.05%
	Often	173.00	33.66%
	Always	46.00	8.95%
I do not correct the student's oral mistake explicitly, but I explain the corresponding rule, so that the student identifies the mistake and corrects it.	Never	24.00	4.66%
	Rarely	74.00	14.37%
	Sometimes	169.00	32.82%
	Often	196.00	38.06%
	Always	52.00	10.10%

Following self-correction, the teachers seem to prefer other-correction/mutual correction under teacher guidance; the majority of them often gives other students the opportunity to correct their classmates' oral errors and, if they do not succeed, then they intervene and correct them (30.10%). Finally, most respondents had a neutral attitude towards errors being exclusively corrected by the teacher or their classmates. More specifically, the majority stated that they sometimes intervene and correct the errors (40.19%) and they sometimes prefer to give other students the opportunity to correct the errors of their classmates (31.46%) –in the latter case, neither the student who made the mistake nor the teacher intervene.

In Table 4, the percentages of the teachers' responses regarding the frequency of the use of explicit and implicit error correction techniques are presented. More specifically, the techniques which are frequently used by most teachers are: a) I explicitly point out the error by providing the corresponding rule (31.84%), b) reformulation (43.69%), c) elicitation (43.11%), d) I guide students towards the correct answer through indirect hints, instructions or questions (56.12%) and e) meta-linguistic feedback (38.06%).

Most teachers stated that they sometimes repeat the utterance word-for-word while placing emphasis on the error (34.17%). Moreover, they sometimes ask clarification questions (such as "What?", "What did you say?", "Excuse me?") to the students who made the mistake to elicit the correct form (34.5%). Finally, the majority of the participants responded that they never correct the students' oral errors explicitly, without explaining the corresponding rule at the same time (51.07%).

4.2 Qualitative Data Results

During the observation of the teachers' practices, as far as students' error management is concerned, a total of 1161 cases of oral errors were recorded. These are divided into the following categories, according to their type, as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Distribution of Students' Oral Errors Based on the Type of Error

		Number	Percentage %
Error type	Phonological Errors	13	1.1%
	Stress errors	15	1.3%
	Grammatical errors	342	29.5%
	Syntactic errors	245	21.1%
	Lexical-semantic errors	159	13.7%
	Expressive errors	127	10.9%
	Content errors	260	22.4%

The most frequently recorded cases were grammatical errors (29.5%), while similar –but smaller– percentages were recorded for content (22.4%) and syntactic errors (21.1%), followed by lexical-semantic (13.7%) and expressive ones (10.9%). With regard to stress and phonological errors, these occurred in percentages of up to 2% (namely, 1.3% and 1.1%,

respectively).

Errors in students' oral production were corrected by the teachers in a percentage of more than 80%. More specifically, the observations revealed that 948 errors –out of 1161 recorded cases– were corrected by the teachers who used one of the correction techniques (Table 6).

Table 6. Students' Oral Error Correction Frequency

Correction		Frequency	Percentage %
Valid	No	213	18.3%
	Yes	948	81.7%
	Total	1161	100.0

The correlation analysis between the error types and the frequency of their correction by the teacher revealed that the majority of the oral errors were corrected to the same degree, regardless of the category to which they belonged. The only exception was expressive errors, which were corrected at a lower rate (48.8%), compared to other types of errors, the correction of which ranged from 66.7% to 92.7%. These correlations are illustrated in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Distribution of students' oral error correction frequency based on the type of the error

		Correction				p
		No		Yes		
		N	%	N	%	
Error	Phonological Errors	2	15.4%	11	84.6%	<0.001
type	Stress errors	5	33.3%	10	66.7%	
	Grammatical errors	25	7.3%	317	92.7%	
	Syntactic errors	41	16.7%	204	83.3%	
	Lexical-semantic errors	18	11.3%	141	88.7%	
	Expressive errors	65	51.2%	62	48.8%	
	Content errors	57	21.9%	203	78.1%	

During the observations, it was found that the vast majority of students' oral errors were corrected immediately, i.e., at the time they occurred and not with any delay. More specifically, 99.4% of all errors were corrected immediately after the mistake was made and only 0.6% of them after a while (Table 8).

Table 8. When are Students' Oral Errors Corrected?

		Frequency	Percentage %
Valid	Immediately	942	99.4%
	With a delay	6	0.6%
	Total	948	100.0

In those cases where the students' oral errors were pointed out and corrected by the teachers in an explicit way, explicit correction was the most frequently used technique (56.9%). Moreover, it was quite often combined with metalinguistic feedback (26.5%). Reformulation was recorded at a lower frequency rate (15.3%), whereas when it was accompanied by some metalinguistic feedback the frequency rate was even lower (1.2%). These results are presented in Table 9 below.

Table 9. Distribution of Explicit Error Correction Techniques

		Frequency	Percentage %
Explicit correction technique	Explicit correction	230	56.9%
	Reformulation	62	15.3%
	Metalinguistic feedback	0	0%
	Explicit correction and metalinguistic feedback	107	26.5%
	Reformulation and metalinguistic feedback	5	1.2%
	Total	404	100%

The results of the observations showed that the teachers explicitly pointed out and corrected students' oral errors at a rate of 64.93%. Less frequently, at a rate of 19.9%, a classmate (other-correction) or the students themselves (self-correction) corrected the oral error in an explicit way (11.69%). Finally, group correction was only recorded in a few cases (3.48%). These results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Frequency of Explicit Error Correction by the Students Themselves, Their Classmates or the Teachers

		Frequency	Percentage %
Explicit error correction	Correction by the teacher	261	64.93%
	Self-correction	47	11.69%
	Other-correction	80	19.9%
	Group correction	14	3.48%
Total		402	100%

As far as implicit error correction techniques are concerned, their distribution by type is shown in Table 11 below.

Table 11. Distribution of Implicit Error Correction Techniques

	Responses		Percentage of cases
	N	Percentage %	
Repetition	174	20.3%	31.9%
Elicitation	91	10.6%	16.7%
Guidance through questions	274	32.0%	50.2%
Guidance through suggestions	232	27.1%	42.5%
Clarification request	53	6.2%	9.7%
Metalinguistic feedback	33	3.9%	6.0%
Total	857	100.0%	157.0%

At this point, it should be pointed out that more than one technique was used in many cases of error correction; these account for 157% of all errors. As shown in Table 11, guidance through questions was most frequently used (50.2%), followed by guidance through suggestions at a rate of 42.5% and repetition at a rate of 31.9%. The remaining techniques (elicitation, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback) were recorded at lower rates, which did not exceed 17% in each case.

Based on the results obtained from the observations, it is evident (Table 12) that the student who made the mistake corrected the oral error –once this was pointed out implicitly by the teacher– at a rate of 44.2%. The second most frequently used technique (29.48%) was that of other-correction, where the student’s error was corrected by a classmate. Error correction by the teacher was recorded at a rate of 21.71%, whereas group correction at a rate of 4.58%.

Table 12. Frequency of Implicit Error Correction by the Students Themselves, Their Classmates or the Teachers

		Frequency	Percentage%
Implicit error correction	Correction	109	
	by the teacher		21.71%
	Self-correction	222	44.22%
	Other-correction	148	29.48%
	Group correction	23	4.58%
Total		502	100%

5. Discussion

We sought to investigate the extent to which teachers consider it necessary to correct the oral

mistakes their students make. Most teachers rated the correction of oral errors highly, as it was revealed by the results of the quantitative survey. This statement is also confirmed by the observations, as it turned out that the majority of the students' oral mistakes were corrected by the teachers.

Based on the findings of our quantitative research, the teachers answered that they correct all types of oral mistakes to an equally great extent; small priority is given to the correction of grammatical, syntactic and lexical-semantic errors. The teachers' statements regarding this item in the questionnaire are also verified by the observations. It was indeed found that the teachers corrected the different types of errors they observed with approximately the same frequency. More specifically, grammatical, lexical-semantic, phonological, syntactic and content errors are corrected with a slightly greater frequency. Stress errors were corrected with a slightly lower frequency, whereas expressive ones less often than any other type.

Furthermore, we examined the techniques which are used by the teachers to correct the students' oral mistakes. These were investigated on the basis of the following criteria: a) When is the mistake corrected? b) The number of errors that are corrected, c) Ways of correcting errors, d) Who corrects the errors.

We asked the teachers whether they prefer to correct students' oral errors immediately (i.e., as soon as these occur) or with a short delay. Most of them stated that they prefer to correct them after a short period of time and not straight away. The corresponding findings in the research of Alamri and Fawzi (2016) also agree with this specific result. However, the observations showed that there is a mismatch between the teachers' statements and their actions in class, as they corrected almost all errors detected the exact moment they occurred and not with a delay.

When the teachers were asked whether they seek to correct all types of errors or specific ones –depending on the goals of the learning process– the majority of the participants in the quantitative research answered that they prefer selective over comprehensive correction. This is in accordance with research findings in the literature (Truscott, 2001; Ellis, 2009). Moreover, the teachers' responses map their teaching practices, as it was confirmed during the observations; teachers corrected a large percentage of the mistakes identified and in no case not all of the mistakes. This is in partial agreement with Firwana's (2010) research, in which teachers were in favour of selective correction in their statements, but it was observed that some teachers corrected some of the errors, while others corrected every error that identified during the lesson.

Regarding the ways (explicit or implicit oral correction) and the corresponding techniques through which the teachers correct oral mistakes, it was found that they tend to use the following implicit correction techniques more often: guidance through questions and hints, elicitation and metalinguistic feedback. Less frequently –and more specifically “sometimes”– they stated that they use the techniques of repetition and clarification request. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents stated that they never use explicit-direct correction, except for those cases where explicit correction is accompanied by reference to the corresponding rules (metalinguistic feedback). This strategy is often used by a relatively large percentage of

teachers, according to their claims. A satisfactory proportion of the teachers also stated that they often use reformulation to explicitly point out the mistakes to the students. These findings are largely in agreement with the corresponding results in Shi's (2017) research, according to which teachers were in favour of reformulation while they expressed a negative attitude towards direct-explicit error correction. However, our research findings disagree with those in Alamri and Fawzi (2016) who found that teachers mainly prefer reformulation, clarification requests and explicit-direct correction, while they stated that they use elicitation to a smaller extent. Therefore, based on the results of our quantitative research, it is clear that the teachers opt for implicit forms of correction. The teachers' attitudes in favour of implicit forms of feedback –which basically echoes a modern theoretical approach to language errors– is largely confirmed by the observation findings. It was discovered that the teachers used implicit error correction techniques more frequently than explicit ones. To be precise, guidance (through questions and suggestions) and repetition were used to a greater extent than elicitation and clarification request. As far as explicit feedback is concerned, both quantitative and qualitative findings revealed that the teachers used the following strategies with a moderate frequency: explicit reference to errors in combination with metalinguistic feedback and reformulation. The teachers' preference for the reformulation technique –as demonstrated both in their statements and their teaching practices– is further confirmed by related studies (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Panova & Lyster, 2002; Alamri & Fawzi, 2016). Nevertheless, we should point out that there was a discrepancy between the teachers' statements and practices as far as direct-explicit correction is concerned. Although the teachers stated that they never point out and they do not explicitly correct their students' oral mistakes, the observation findings revealed that this specific technique was used with great frequency. This does not agree with the corresponding findings in Shi's (2017) work; teachers expressed a negative attitude towards direct-explicit correction, which was indeed the least frequently used technique. Finally, in terms of the metalinguistic feedback technique, although the teachers stated that they use it to a large extent, the qualitative findings demonstrated that it was only used at a very low percentage, except for those cases where the error had been previously pointed out explicitly by the teacher and metalinguistic feedback was provided afterwards. This particular combination of direct-explicit correction and metalinguistic feedback was observed quite often in our research.

The participants stated that they more often tend either to give students the opportunity to correct their mistakes (self-correction) or they allow them to correct their mistakes and, if they fail, they intervene to help them. With respect to the technique of other-correction, the majority of the teachers stated that they often give the opportunity to other students to correct their classmate's mistake and, if this is not achieved, they intervene and correct it. Additionally, they less frequently give other students the opportunity to correct the mistakes without them being involved in the process. Finally, most teachers stated that they sometimes intervene directly to correct the mistake. Teachers' preference for other-correction and mainly for self-correction agrees with the principles of modern theories about language learning and more specifically with the communicative approach. In such cases, students have the leading role in the learning process; they should be motivated to identify and correct their own mistakes (self-correction) or even the mistakes of their classmates (other-correction).

(Iordanidou & Sfyroera, 2007). The teachers' responses to the questionnaire questions partially agree with their teaching practices, as witnessed during the observations. More specifically, it was observed that, when the mistake was corrected directly (in an explicit way), the person who intervened and made the correction was the teacher in the majority of the cases; classmates participated less often and the student who made the mistake to a much lesser extent. This particular finding converges with the corresponding result in Firwana's (2010) study; the most frequently used technique was the one in which the teachers corrected the students' mistakes orally, followed by other-correction and finally self-correction. This means that explicit correction of oral errors is mostly intertwined with the teachers; if the students are not guided or they do not receive help in their attempt to identify and correct the error, it is the teachers' duty to do so. On the other hand, when the mistake is pointed out in an implicit way –that is, the teacher indirectly and subtly tries to guide students through hints, comments, questions and without giving them the correct answer– then the teachers' initial statements are verified. To be precise, in these cases, the person who managed, through appropriate guidance, to finally correct the mistake was the student who had made it in the majority of the cases and then, to a lesser extent, one of the classmates (other-correction). In implicit correction, the teachers were most rarely involved in the correction of a mistake that students had not previously managed to correct. The data from the observations provided evidence for the effectiveness of implicit over explicit correction, as self- and other-correction are also further promoted in the first case.

6. Conclusion

Within the framework of triangulation, the results from the quantitative research (questionnaires) were correlated with those from the qualitative one (observations) in attempt to explore the relationship between the teachers' attitudes towards students' oral errors and the teaching practices they employ in error management. Based on these correlations, we found that there is a predominantly convergent relationship between the teachers' statements and their actions as far as error management is concerned. More specifically, teachers' attitudes align with their teaching practices in terms of: a) the frequency with which they correct specific oral errors, b) the types of oral errors they correct, c) the number of oral errors they correct, d) the techniques of implicit oral error correction they employ and d) the subject of implicit oral error correction. By contrast, the relation between the teachers' statements and their actions diverged in the following aspects: a) when they correct students' oral errors, b) the explicit error correction techniques they employ and c) the subject of explicit oral correction.

On the basis of the aforementioned findings and the correlations between the results of the quantitative and qualitative research, it can be concluded that the attitudes and the teaching practices employed by the teachers in error management reflect a shift towards modern linguistic approaches, and more specifically, towards the communicative approach. The fact that the teachers mainly adopt selective error correction, self-correction, peer correction and implicit feedback points to a moderate attitude towards language errors. They choose to

correct some errors (instead of all of them) to avoid discouraging students. Finally, they aim to highlight the error indirectly, so that either the student themselves or a fellow student is motivated to correct it.

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