

Voices of Correction: EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Practices of Oral Corrective Feedback Strategies in China

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Received: December 26, 2025

Accepted: March 6, 2026

Online Published: June 17, 2026

doi:10.5430/wjel.v16n5p510

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v16n5p510>

Abstract

Oral corrective feedback (OCF) has long been considered an essential tool for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. However, there remains a gap in the study of EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of OCF in college. This study examines Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of OCF strategies in the tertiary education context to check the consistencies and inconsistencies between the two. Seven business English teachers from three universities participated in this study. A qualitative case study was designed to examine Chinese EFL teachers' views on their OCF strategies, namely, their perceptions and practices of OCF strategies, as well as the (in)congruities between the two. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Thematic analysis was conducted based on Ellis's (2021) taxonomy of explicit and implicit OCF. The findings of this study revealed four key features. Firstly, Chinese EFL teachers adopted explicit, implicit, and combined OCF strategies to correct learners' lexical, grammatical, and phonological errors, thereby enhancing their linguistic accuracy. Secondly, teachers' selection of OCF varies with class timing and learners' language proficiency. Thirdly, incongruities emerged between teachers' perceptions and practices regarding recasts, explicit corrections, and elicitations. Fourthly, teachers used translanguaging, electronic feedback, and nonverbal strategies to enhance the effectiveness of OCF. This study highlights teachers' flexible use of OCF and supplementary strategies to facilitate OCF teaching. Further studies could be conducted to effectively and appropriately use OCF in Chinese EFL instruction for English majors.

Keywords: oral corrective feedback, strategies, perceptions, practices, Chinese EFL teachers, explicit & implicit oral corrective feedback

1. Introduction

As a pivotal construct in second language acquisition (SLA), oral corrective feedback (OCF) has gained significant popularity in SLA research (Soruç et al., 2025; Sardabi et al., 2025; Ergül, 2023). Compared with written corrective feedback (WCF), OCF boasts the advantages of providing learners with both positive evidence and corrected forms of the target language (Oliver & Adams, 2021). Therefore, it has been considered as an effective tool in promoting English language acquisition among EFL learners (Gaffar et al., 2024; Arumugam et al., 2022; Hartono et al., 2022). Moreover, teachers' OCF outweighs peer OCF and other forms of OCF in improving EFL learners' academic performance, motivation, and confidence in English learning, due to its authoritativeness and influence (Patra et al., 2022; Nhac, 2022).

In previous studies, EFL teachers' OCF strategies have been examined from three major perspectives: errors corrected, timing, and effectiveness. Regarding learners' error correction, Tarigan et al. (2023) held that OCF types such as explicit correction, recasts, and elicitation are targeted at learners' grammatical errors. Gholami (2021) distinguished between formulaic errors (idioms, collocations, or lexical bundles) and non-formulaic errors (linguistic errors), holding that recasts addressed more non-formulaic errors while elicitation addressed more formulaic errors. As to OCF timing, Qun (2025) found no difference between immediate CF (feedback provided shortly after learners' erroneous utterance) and delayed CF (feedback offered after a temporal interval) in improving learners' language learning. However, Fu and Li (2022) justified that immediate CF outweighed delayed CF in promoting learners' language acquisition (Cheng & Zhang, 2024). Moreover, teachers' OCF has also been justified as an effective tool for improving learners' oral accuracy in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Nhac, 2021). Arumugam et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of learners' proficiency level and background knowledge in the effectiveness of teachers' OCF.

In the Chinese EFL context, although several studies have examined teachers' CF, there remains a gap in understanding Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of OCF strategies in tertiary education, especially the differences between their perceptions and practices. For example, Yang et al.'s (2021) study revealed Chinese EFL teachers' preferences for selective WCF and integrative use of direct and indirect WCF methods in a tertiary context, but did not focus on teachers' perceptions and practices of OCF. Ye and Hu (2024) pinpointed differences in junior middle school teachers' attitudes towards OCF, learner uptake, and preferences for OCF between Chinese students' and teachers' beliefs about OCF. Zhang et al. (2025) found that Chinese teachers' OCF strategies do not necessarily match their effects on learner uptake: i.e., recasts, which teachers used most, yielded lower learner uptake and repair than elicitation, metalinguistic

feedback, and explicit correction, and the study was also done in a high school context. Jia (2023) compared Chinese EFL teachers' and students' perceptions of OCF and found great differences in error correction and preferences for OCF. Wang and Li (2020) also conducted comparative studies on CF and learner uptake between the American English as a second language (ESL) and the Chinese EFL context. Despite studies on Chinese EFL teachers' CF, none target their perceptions and actual classroom practices in tertiary education. Given the important role of OCF in EFL teaching, it is vital to understand how university teachers in China perceive and use OCF in their classes, and to determine appropriate OCF strategies to facilitate Chinese EFL learners' English learning in universities.

To address this gap, this study examines Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of OCF tertiary education and aims to answer the following research questions:

What OCF strategies do Chinese EFL teachers report in their perceptions?

What OCF strategies do Chinese EFL teachers use in teaching practices?

What are the consistencies and inconsistencies between Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practices?

By answering these research questions, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of OCF in tertiary education, highlighting the specific OCF strategies teachers use and the differences between their perceptions and classroom practices.

2. Literature Review

Oral corrective feedback (OCF) has been defined as the response of teachers or other interlocutors to learners' erroneous nontarget-like and/or inappropriate utterances (Oliver & Adams, 2021). To explore the perceptions and practices of EFL teachers' OCF, this study reviews literature from three perspectives: 1) the explicit and implicit taxonomy of teachers' OCF, 2) EFL teachers' OCF strategies, 3) EFL teachers' OCF perceptions and practices, and 4) the theoretical framework of the study.

2.1 The Explicit and Implicit Taxonomy of Teachers' OCF

The explicitness of CF has been a significant indicator of its effectiveness. Sheen (2020) claimed that the degree of CF explicitness, rather than the modality of CF, i.e., whether it is oral or written, was the vital factor of CF effectiveness. Ellis (2006) first categorized CF into two broad categories: explicit and implicit feedback, based on the distinction between learners' overt and covert attention to errors. Explicit feedback aims to correct learners' errors directly and straightforwardly. In contrast, implicit feedback does not provide precise corrections but may serve potential functions, such as topic continuation or meaning negotiation. Ellis (2021) further refined this division and proposed a taxonomy of OCF, which serves as the basis for this study. In the explicit vs. implicit OCF taxonomy, metalinguistic clues and explicit correction are more salient than in other CF types. Typically, explicit OCF includes direct correction, explication correction, elicitation, and metalinguistic clues/explanations, while implicit OCF includes recasts, clarification requests, and repetition. Table 1 below exemplifies Ellis's (2021) distinction between the explicit and implicit OCF.

Table 1. Ellis's (2021) taxonomy of explicit and implicit OCF

Dimension	OCF Strategy	Example
Explicit OCF	Direct correction	No, not "goed."
	Explicit correction	"Ran" not "runed."
	Elicitation	The man...?
	Metalinguistic clue	You need to use passive voice here.
	Metalinguistic explanation	In the subjunctive mood, "be" should be replaced with "were", regardless of the pronoun.
Implicit OCF	Recast	S: He attend the interview this morning. T: He attended the interview this morning.
	Clarification request	S: He attend the interview this morning. T: Sorry?
	Repetition	S: He attend the interview this morning. T: He attend the interview this morning.

2.2 EFL Teachers' OCF Strategies

In teaching practices, EFL teachers have used various OCF strategies to improve learners' English, taking account of learners' language contexts and proficiencies. On the one hand, many researchers agree that recasts, explicit corrections, and metalinguistic feedback are the most frequently used OCF in teaching practice. Laeli and Setiawan (2019), however, identified recasts, repetition, and clarification requests as the primary OCF strategies. Regarding explicit OCF, Uddin (2022) found higher use of elicitation and metalinguistic feedback in lower- and intermediate-proficiency classes, whereas elicitation was used only in high- and intermediate-proficiency classes. On the other hand, Lwin and Yang (2021) argued that elicitation was the most frequently used and effective OCF strategy in Chinese university EFL classrooms; however, metalinguistic feedback was the least frequently used and least effective. As to implicit OCF, Milla and Mayo (2023) found that teachers mainly provided recasts to learners and overlooked oral errors.

Moreover, EFL teachers also demonstrate different preferences for OCF. Alkhamash and Gulnaz (2019) identified teachers' preferred use of elicitation to encourage learners' self-correction. However, there are also exceptions. Many studies regard recasts as the most frequently used OCF across all proficiency levels. However, Tan et al.'s (2024) systematic review showed that teachers preferred recasts

over prompts and explicit correction, although recasts led to a lower rate of lexical repair than prompts. Tersta and Gunawan (2017) supported the frequent use of explicit correction in practice. In contrast, Ha et al. (2021) argued that metalinguistic feedback was the most preferred OCF for EFL learners, given the test-driven nature of English curricula. These two studies reflect the incongruity between EFL teachers' and learners' preferences for OCF strategies in practice. Implicit OCF was used to stimulate learners' uptake and self-repair. Sepehrinia et al. (2020) also showed that EFL teachers were inclined to use implicit forms of correction to elicit learner uptake and self-correction. Moreover, some EFL teachers employed output-prompting feedback, such as elicitation and clarification requests, and input-providing feedback, including recasts and metalinguistic feedback.

Regarding the effectiveness of teachers' OCF, previous studies have examined it through either specific or combined OCF strategies, and opinions also vary. Zhao and Ellis (2020) demonstrated that explicit feedback with dual feedback moves led to greater uptake with repair. In contrast, implicit CF with a single feedback move was equally effective as explicit CF. Bougataia and Brigui (2025) found that EFL learners regarded explicit feedback as the most effective OCF for improving pronunciation accuracy and stress. Du and Ma's (2025) visualized analysis of OCF in China justified the overall effectiveness of explicit OCF over implicit OCF. However, they could not clarify the extent of combined OCF with both explicit and implicit OCF strategies. Ha's (2021) study, however, showed that most Vietnamese EFL high school teachers perceived prompts and explicit corrections as more effective than recasts. Schenck's (2020) meta-analysis revealed that implicit reformulations, such as recasts, were beneficial for learners' grammatical acquisition, and that the effectiveness of teachers' OCF was positively related to learners' proficiency levels and the similarity between L2 and L1. Alshammari and Wicaksono (2022) proved that recasts were the most effective OCF strategy. However, Kamiya and Nakata (2021) did not consider learners' proficiency as an affecting factor for the effects of OCF.

Moreover, EFL teachers' OCF also plays a significant role in enhancing EFL learners' pragmatic appropriateness. On the one hand, the underlying social rules could be realized through the linguistic system. On the other hand, CF affects learners' "speech act performance, speech acts, semantic formulas, language content and form" (Bardovi-Harlig & Yilmaz, 2021, pp. 431-432). Teachers' OCF, such as explicit CF and corrective recasts, help learners identify the linguistic and pragmatic errors in their utterances and improve their oral performance (Yousefi & Nassaji, 2024). Memari and Hafez (2025) also agreed that explicit feedback, especially metalinguistic feedback, was more effective than implicit feedback, such as recasts, in promoting EFL learners' pragmatic competence. In addition, Martinez-Flor (2023) claimed that correcting L2 pragmatic errors was challenging, as learners lacked sufficient pragmalinguistic and sociolinguistic knowledge to identify all pragmatic errors.

2.3 Teachers' Perceptions and Practices of OCF

There are always different views regarding EFL teachers' beliefs and their practice in offering OCF. Some studies showed that teachers' beliefs aligned with their practice, while others found the opposite.

The consistency between EFL teachers' perceptions and practices lies in the frequency with which they use OCF strategies and the errors they correct. For example, Ha's (2022) findings showed that teachers' beliefs in OCF frequency, OCF to grammatical error corrections, and immediate OCF were consistent with their practice in grammar lessons. Yüksel et al. (2021) found a consistency between Turkish EFL teachers' beliefs that learners most often made grammatical, phonological, and lexical errors and their practice of using OCF to correct the same error types. In addition, teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the timing and effectiveness of OCF were similar. On the one hand, immediate OCF was used both in perceptions and in practice. On the other hand, around two-thirds of the participants agreed that OCF was effective.

Inconsistencies between EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of OCF can be found in their preferences for OCF and the specific strategies they use. For example, Uddin's (2022) study found that EFL teachers preferred implicit OCF and prompts. However, their OCF strategies varied by students' proficiency levels. Sepehrinia and Torfi (2022) reported that one teacher preferred recasts with advanced learners, while she used them more with low- and intermediate-level learners. Similarly, Sawaluddin and Tajuddin (2017) also stated that teachers tended to adjust their stated OCF strategies according to students' characteristics. The difference between perceptions and practices is also evident in Shirkhani and Tajeddin's (2017) findings, which show that teachers believed pragmatic CF, whether implicit or explicit, should be provided to learners at all proficiency levels. However, they did not provide sufficient pragmatic CF to correct pragmatic errors, and only explicit CF was used. Moreover, teachers were not concerned about learner uptake, either. Given this context, it is plausible to explore teachers' OCF from both their perceptions and teaching practices, and to identify the appropriate OCF strategies for Chinese EFL teachers to promote learners' oral English acquisition.

2.4 Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study follows three theoretical perspectives: Long's (1981, 1996) Interactional Hypothesis, Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis, and Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory. Long's (1981, 1996) Interactional Hypothesis provides a framework for EFL teachers' interactionally modified input, negotiation in form, and the taxonomy of explicit and implicit OCF. Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis guides EFL learners' noticing of EFL teachers' OCF and facilitates their uptake. Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory focuses on social interaction between teachers and students, learners' knowledge construction, and self-regulation. Figure 1 illustrates the integration of the three theoretical components and their guidance of the study's exploration of Chinese EFL teachers' conceptions of OCF in the tertiary education context.

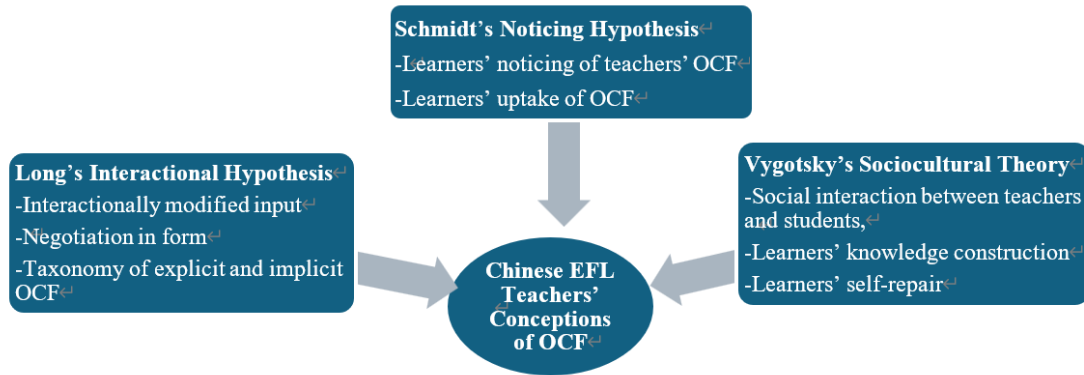


Figure 1. Theoretical framework of the study

3. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach to explore Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of OCF in the tertiary education context. Data were collected in the natural setting of interviews and classroom observations, following Yin's (2014) claim that case study inquiry studies either a single case or multiple cases in a natural, real-life, and contemporary setting.

3.1 Research Design

A case study approach was utilized to examine Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of OCF. According to Yin (2014), a case can be a concrete entity (e.g., a person, a partnership, an organization, or a small group), a particular community, a relationship, a decision-making process, or a less concrete-level project. In this study, seven oral business English teachers from three universities in China were selected as the case study participants. By examining their perceptions and practices of OCF strategies in the tertiary education context, this study enabled researchers to gain insights into OCF strategies, the factors that affect them, the effects of teachers' OCF strategies, and the consistencies and inconsistencies between teachers' perceptions and practices.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, data triangulation was employed through two sources: semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, supported by field notes. Through multiple data sources, the analysis of findings could be triangulated, ensuring credibility through both what the teachers said and what they did.

3.2 Participants

Three universities were selected purposively to obtain rich, relevant, and diverse data (Patton, 2015). To ensure the depth and quality of insights, the three universities could represent three tiers of undergraduate education in the business English discipline in China, ranked from highest to lowest. For convenience, the three universities were given pseudonyms A, B, and C, and all are located in northwestern China. University A is a public university that offers top-quality business English education in the region. Students from this university generally boast high English proficiency and strong academic backgrounds. University B is a public university offering intermediate business English education, and its students' proficiency ranks intermediate among the three universities. University C is a private university with quite good business English instruction, but relatively low language proficiency among students. In this case, teachers from the three universities face students with totally different language proficiency and academic backgrounds. To ensure their participant confidentiality, they were given pseudonyms, such as A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2, and C3. The first letter indicated the university each teacher worked at, and the number was assigned randomly to identify each teacher across the three universities.

Regarding the number of business English teachers participating in the study, the researcher initially contacted 12 teachers. Three teachers were unavailable for interviews, and two declined the classroom observation. Seven teachers agreed with all the requirements and participated in the entire study process. Among them, two are from University A, two from University B, and three from University C. All seven business English teachers were regarded as cases to be examined in this study, with each business English teacher accounting for one single case, or a unit of analysis. Detailed information about the seven business English teachers is shown in Table 2. All of them, with an average age of 40, taught the second-year oral business English course (officially named Business English Viewing, Listening, and Speaking). Among them, six are female, and one is male. Their in-service time for oral business English teaching averaged nine years. Most of them taught sophomores, and some also taught freshmen or juniors. However, the Oral Business English course was only offered to first- and second-year students in China.

Table 2. Demographic information of the teachers

University	Pseudonym	Gender	Degree	Age	Years in Service	Students
A	A1	Male	PhD (Economics)	45	10	Sophomore/ Freshman
	A2	Female	PhD (Linguistics)	40	10	sophomore
B	B1	Female	PhD (Linguistics)	36	6	Sophomore
	B2	Female	Master (Business English)	33	4	Sophomore
C	C1	Female	PhD (Linguistics)	43	8	Sophomore
	C2	Female	Master (International Finance)	37	15	Sophomore /Junior
	C3	Female	Master (Linguistics)	44	12	Sophomore

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected over 12 weeks, with the first six devoted to one-to-one semi-structured interviews with the seven teachers and the remaining six to classroom observations. Through this dual process, data about both Chinese EFL teachers’ perceptions and practices were obtained.

3.3.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Based on Ellis’s (2021) taxonomy of explicit and implicit OCF, the researcher conducted seven semi-structured interviews with the seven teacher participants and also obtained expert consultation and validation. To ensure smooth communication and rich content, the interviews were conducted in Chinese and lasted 50-60 minutes each. The interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions to explore oral business English teachers’ perceptions of OCF, their OCF strategies and preferences, and the effects on learners’ English learning. All the interviews were video-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Then the researchers translated, coded, and thematically analyzed the transcriptions.

3.3.2 Classroom Observation

The seven teachers also participated in the classroom observation. A total of 470 minutes of classroom instruction were observed, with each teacher participating in a two-period class. For the four teachers from University A and B, each class session lasts 50 minutes, and their total observation time was 400 minutes. For the three teachers from University C, their total observation time was 270 minutes, since each class period is 45 minutes. As different textbooks were used, the topics taught by these teachers also varied in observations. During the observation, teachers A1 and A2 were teaching Business Meetings, and arranged students’ role-play tasks in class. Teacher B1 and B2 focused on the topic of “Developing Market”. Teacher B1 gave instructions on developing the overseas market and invited six students to role-play in front of the class. Teacher B1, on the other hand, outlined the key points of market development and assigned two groups of students to make a group presentation using slides on the market analysis of a Chinese brand. The three teachers from University C, on the other hand, discussed business negotiations in international trade. Teacher C1 and C2 organized group demonstrations in class with online evaluations for students; Teacher C3 discussed organizing class conversations on business negotiation and led student discussions in class. By acting as a systematic non-participant observer, the researcher adopted a naturalistic approach to observe the teachers’ and students’ interactions in a real classroom setting without getting involved in the teaching process. An observation protocol was utilized to record the class observation schedule and details of oral business English teachers’ provision of OCF. Details included the frequency, types, teacher-student interactions, learner uptake, and repair. The researcher noted the process of the OCF sessions for reflection and retrospection. These observations were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, and were analyzed thematically to examine the consistencies and inconsistencies between Chinese EFL teachers’ perceptions and practices in offering OCF.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis is vital among all parts of the methodology. In this study, the researchers followed Braun and Clarke’s (2012) six-phase approach to thematic analysis, namely, (1) familiarization with data, (2) generation of initial codes, (3) theme search, (4) potential themes review, (5) defining and naming these themes, and (6) report production. To explore the perceptions and practices of Chinese EFL teachers’ OCF, four types of data were collected, i.e., general perceptions of OCF, OCF strategies teachers adopted, their preferences for OCF strategies, and the influences of OCF. Using a qualitative case design, this study gathered both interview and classroom observation transcripts and coded them into four categories: perceptions of OCF, OCF strategies, factors affecting OCF strategies, and influences of OCF strategies. A comparison was then made to examine the consistencies and inconsistencies between their perceptions and practices.

4. Results

Findings of Chinese EFL teachers’ perceptions of OCF are presented from the following three perspectives: (1) teachers’ perceptions of OCF strategies, (2) teachers’ practices of OCF strategies they used in oral business English classes, and (3) consistencies and inconsistencies between teachers’ perceptions and practices of OCF. For each section, the taxonomy of explicit and implicit OCF and the influences of OCF strategies were presented. In addition, L1 or translanguaging use was observed in teachers’ OCF practices. A comparison of teachers’ perceptions and practices revealed flexible adjustments of OCF to support learners’ uptake and correction, thereby facilitating their knowledge construction. The analysis below drew on lines quoted from teachers’ interview transcriptions (e.g.,

A1, L35 equals line 35 quoted from teacher A1's semi-structured interview transcription) and classroom observation notes (OB-A2 equals observation of teacher A2).

4.1 Chinese EFL Teachers' Perceptions of OCF Strategies

Findings from interviews with Chinese EFL teachers reveal their perceptions of the frequency of OCF use in oral business English classes. Regarding explicit OCF, all the teachers reported that explicit correction and metalinguistic strategies were the most frequently used strategies due to their time efficiency, the difficulty of errors, and teachers' preferences. Elicitation and metalinguistic clues, however, were not used often. Regarding implicit OCF, recasts and repetition were the most frequently used strategies, followed by clarification requests. Teachers claimed that they used implicit OCF to protect learners' face and stimulate their active thinking and self-repair. In addition, Chinese EFL teachers mentioned employing combined strategies of implicit and explicit OCF, such as recasts + explicit correction or recasts + metalinguistic explanation. This happened when teachers' initial attempt to use implicit OCF failed to take effect, and they resorted to explicit OCF or metalinguistic explanation to prompt learner uptake and self-repair more quickly. Moreover, EFL teachers employed supplementary strategies, such as electronic CF, translanguaging, and peer feedback, to enhance the effectiveness of their OCF. In particular, electronic CF was perceived as more commonly used than the other two means.

4.1.1 Explicit OCF

Teachers' use of explicit OCF demonstrated two features: higher frequency of use and association with learners' proficiency levels. On the one hand, teachers reported using more explicit OCF in interviews, saying that OCF was used to improve the quality of learners' oral output. To them, overt error correction together with the corrected forms was more effective for learner uptake and knowledge construction. On the other hand, teachers from universities A and B used more explicit OCF than those from university C. These teachers were more positive about their students' English foundations. They were more concerned with the content of learners' utterances than with language forms, suggesting they used it more with high- and intermediate-proficiency learners than with low-proficiency learners.

Explicit correction was unanimously used by all EFL teachers. The teachers offered three reasons for their preference for explicit correction: 1) time efficiency, 2) the difficulty of the error, and 3) their own preferences. Firstly, due to time constraints, most teachers used explicit correction only on the "typical" errors (those that occurred frequently among many students in class or in some learners' utterances). Just as teacher B1 said, "*I do not allocate much time to correct students' errors, so I would directly correct their errors and tell them the right form*" (B2, L75-76). Secondly, explicit correction was very effective at correcting simple errors such as incorrect pronunciations, misuse of numbers, and changes in verbal tense. Teacher A1 cited an example of his students' recurrent mispronunciation of "resume" during their first role-plays for job interviews. He explained that explicit correction with the right pronunciation could be directly memorized by students. Thirdly, four teachers clearly reported their preferences for explicit correction. They perceived their role as a supporter, coach, or guide, helping students self-correct and achieve the desired output. As teacher C2 stated, "*Our major job is to help students produce meaningful utterances with higher language quality, so I prefer to tell them the corrected forms so that they can quickly speak corrected utterances*" (C2, L72-73).

Metalinguistic explanation was the second-most-commonly mentioned explicit OCF for two reasons: 1) a systematic mastery of knowledge, and 2) the nature of the errors. Firstly, three teachers reported that their students were ready to receive metalinguistic explanations in class, stating that this would enrich their comprehensive understanding of certain linguistic rules. Teacher A2 claimed that explaining the metalinguistic rules to students enabled them to develop a deeper, "systematic understanding" of the relevant grammar, enabling them to memorize all the rules and be well aware of their usage in practice. Secondly, teachers reported using metalinguistic explanations to correct more grammatical and lexical errors than phonological errors. These teachers demonstrated a great interest in explaining grammatical rules to undergraduates, thereby deepening their understanding. According to teacher A2, "*When students make mistakes in oral English, I will explain why it is not allowed, where it is wrong, and the reason. Moreover, I would tell them how to do it correctly so that they will have a more systematic understanding, and next time it will be beneficial for their memorization and awareness*" (A2, L154-158).

Elicitation and metalinguistic clues were less often used. Teachers C1 and C3 reported that the elicitation was targeted at learners with intermediate and low proficiencies. However, it might be too time-consuming as these students could not always understand teachers' hints. The least commonly used explicit OCF was the metalinguistic clue, as most teachers preferred a metalinguistic explanation. They claimed that they would prefer to give students the corrected forms directly rather than leave things half done.

4.1.2 Implicit OCF

Teachers' use of implicit OCF demonstrated three features: greater use of recasts and repetition, protection of learners' faces, and promotion of active thinking during error correction. First, teachers perceived that recasts and repetition were used more often than clarification requests, particularly recasts. Secondly, the teachers were sensitive to learners' face protection. They strived to maintain a harmonious teaching atmosphere and skillfully used OCF to avoid offending or embarrassing their students. Thirdly, implicit OCF prompted learners to reflect on their errors first and then figure out the corrected form on their own, which was what they expected most. For example, teacher B1 stated, "*I prefer to use the indirect prompting method to help undergraduates correct their mistakes; that is, I would like to push them to think first*" (B1, L189-190). Teachers commonly believed that active thinking was highly beneficial for learners' language development. Therefore, they would choose to provide different kinds of hints or covert error correction to undergraduates.

Recasts were the most favored implicit OCF strategy of six teachers for three reasons: 1) learner autonomy, 2) error simplicity, and 3) learner mentality. Firstly, teachers A1, B1, and C2 stressed the need to focus more on learners' autonomous language output than on excessive teacher input. With recasts, they did not bother to explain specific rules or reasons for error correction. Just as teacher C2 stated, *"By replacing their erroneous parts, I can prompt them to think about the sentence and save time for more corrections"* (C2, L150-151). Secondly, recasts were used to correct errors that were easy and accidental. The teachers cited several examples of recasts they used in class, such as a stress change in word pronunciation, a replacement of *"is"* with *"was"*, or a substitution of *"affect"* for *"effect"* after the adjective *"strong"*. To them, a simple recast was enough for students to understand. By doing so, students could quickly identify errors and seldom repeated them. Thirdly, some teachers held that excessive OCF would reduce learner confidence and increase their anxiety during learning. For example, two teachers (A1 and C1) reported that by adopting recasts, they sought to improve students' language accuracy without undermining their self-respect and dignity, thereby balancing learners' knowledge construction and face protection.

Four teachers reported using repetition in their interviews. They were quite positive about using repetition in class, claiming that it was beneficial for stimulating students' deep thinking and had a significant effect on their uptake. For example, teacher A1 stated, *"I would repeat it directly and let them reflect on their own, so they can realize where the problem lies"* (A1, 168-169). Teacher B1 also mentioned that *"Repetition is quite helpful for college students to realize that something must be wrong with what they say"* (B1, L176-177). For teacher A1, repeating errors would draw learners' attention to what they just said and lead them to think more deeply. Teacher B1 also confirmed the positive effect on learner uptake, highlighting possible errors and stimulating their self-correction in class. Secondly, the effect of repetition on learner uptake was greatly supported by the learners. All teachers admitted that students demonstrated different foundations and different levels of learner uptake in English learning. Based on their accounts, they usually used repetition more with learners of high and intermediate proficiency than with those of low proficiency in English, which could explain the greater frequency of repetition with students with better English proficiency.

4.1.3 Supplementary Strategies to OCF

In addition to the taxonomy of explicit and implicit OCF strategies, teachers also mentioned three supplementary strategies to enhance the effect of OCF, i.e., (1) the use of L1/translanguaging to express the error corrections and explanations to students), (2) electronic CF (the use of digital tools to offer corrective feedback on learners' tools in English learning), and (3) peer feedback (the dynamic interaction of the language learners to provide each other with corrective feedback). These strategies were the measures teachers used to facilitate students' uptake of the OCF or to strengthen students' memory of the knowledge presented in the OCF.

Only two teachers from University C mentioned translanguaging. However, the class observation of teacher B2 also showed the combined use of Chinese in the OCF provision, suggesting a potentially higher use of translanguaging in practice. For teachers C2 and C3, it was feasible to use translanguaging, as their students had lower proficiency levels. For example, teacher C2 explained that metalinguistic explanations in Chinese would be much more friendly to their students. They could quickly understand the teachers' meaning and proceed to further knowledge acquisition.

EFL Teachers also reported using electronic CF alongside OCF. Teacher A1, for instance, demonstrated a reluctance to offer metalinguistic error correction in class. In his view, metalinguistic feedback could be realized through technology, especially AI. With the maturation of AI modeling, the integration of AI into higher education was becoming increasingly close. Students could turn to AI apps such as ChatGPT, DeepSeek, or Doubao (a Chinese AI app) to address their shortcomings in grammar and vocabulary. At the same time, man-machine dialogue and English talks with AI in a given context could effectively help undergraduates practise their oral business English.

Peer feedback was only mentioned by teacher A2. She explained that peer feedback was suitable for those typical but not particularly difficult errors. That is, errors that students often make but are not particularly challenging for them. According to her, error correction targeted not only one individual student. It would be best if the whole class takes part in the repair and correction. The involvement of the whole class stimulated more idea communication and deeper thinking. More often than not, students could work out the errors with each other's help. When asked whether the whole class would fail the self-repair, she said seldom, noting that it was sophisticated to choose the right time for peer feedback.

4.2 Chinese EFL Teachers' Practices of OCF Strategies

Findings of Chinese EFL teachers' practices of OCF strategies are displayed in three perspectives: (1) summary of the OCF strategies in terms of frequency, timing, and errors that were corrected, (2) specific OCF strategies that were used, and (3) supplementary strategies to facilitate teachers' OCF.

4.2.1 A Brief Summary of the OCF Strategies

Firstly, the classroom observation data showed an increase in OCF use from University A to Universities B and C, and all the OCF strategies were offered after students' utterances. An analysis of the video clips of teachers' OCF showed that the time for teachers' OCF at Universities A, B, and C was 11, 13, and 15 minutes, respectively. Specifically, teacher A2 provided the least OCF, while teacher C2 provided the most. Teachers from University A offered more explicit corrections, and learners showed good uptake. They could immediately recognize the error in their utterances and either produce the corrected form or express their acceptance with a nod. Teachers from University C used OCF most often, and there were more interactions between teachers and students to achieve learner uptake.

Teachers from University B offered an intermediate amount of OCF between the two. As for OCF timing, all the teachers offered OCF after learners' utterances, which was considered immediate OCF use in classes.

Secondly, in terms of the types of errors corrected, teachers most often corrected lexical errors, followed by grammatical and phonological errors. Specifically, teachers from University A mainly corrected more lexical and phonological errors than grammatical errors; teachers from University B corrected more grammatical and lexical errors than phonological errors; teachers from University C corrected more lexical and grammatical errors than phonological errors. The lexical errors were mainly related to professional business English terms and jargon, as well as words with specialized business meanings. Grammatical errors involved the verb tense, the subjunctive mood, and the third-person pronouns. Phonological errors were mainly about inaccurate pronunciations, rising tones, and words with multiple pronunciations.

4.2.2 OCF Strategies in Practice

Regarding the specific OCF strategies teachers used in practice, recasts, explicit correction, and metalinguistic feedback were mainly used, followed by repetition and elicitation. Clarification requests were used only once when the teacher failed to hear the student's low voice. Two teachers (A2 and B2) also used combined OCF strategies (i.e., recasts + explicit correction, and repetition + metalinguistic explanation) when students failed to capture their message in the implicit OCF. Judging as a whole, explicit OCF outweighed implicit OCF in teachers' practice. In addition, supplementary measures, such as nonverbal strategies and handwriting, were used to facilitate teachers' OCF.

Explicit OCF

Explicit correction and metalinguistic feedback were the primary OCF strategies used by all teachers in their practice. It was mainly used to correct lexical and phonological errors. Sometimes, teachers used a combined strategy of explicit correction and metalinguistic explanation to draw students' attention to errors per se and enrich learners' knowledge of it. In this case, teachers offered multiple explicit OCF moves to address several errors, saving time. For example, during teacher B2's classroom observation, the students presented a group project on the marketing of Huawei's smartphones. One student said that "*The marketing of Huawei smartphones faced severe prohibition due to American orders.*" (B2, OB 1, Oct. 8, 2024) Teacher B2 replied with "*The marketing of Huawei smartphones faced severe ban due to American sanctions. Ban is an official rule to prohibit something, and a sanction is an official order to limit trade with other countries*" (B2, OB 1, Oct. 8, 2024). In this excerpt, teacher B2 not only corrected "*prohibition*" with the word "*ban*" but also explained the meaning of "*ban*" and the new word "*sanction*", which referred to the American government orders on Huawei products, making it more persuasive to the audience. Teacher A2 also used explicit correction to correct one student's pronunciation of the word "*analysis*," and then asked the student to repeat the correct pronunciation twice in class.

Implicit OCF

Recasts were the most often used OCF in teachers' practices, and their use greatly outnumbered that of repetition. Teachers used recasts to hint at learners' "*minor but typical*" errors. The teacher-student interaction during error correction was usually brief, and teachers did not pause long on it. Recasts were used to correct errors, such as word collocations and grammatical errors (e.g., SV agreement, verb forms, and improper use of pronouns). For example, one student in teacher C1's class said, "*We are going to order 1,000 tons of beans with you*" (C1, OB 3, Oct. 13, 2024). She offered a correction like this: "*We are going to place an order with you for 1,000 tons of beans*" (C1, OB 3, Oct. 13, 2024). In this excerpt, teacher C1 reformulated the student's utterance with the correct collocation, "*place an order with somebody for something*," to draw students' attention to the fixed-word-order structure, without offering further explanation, as the lesson topic was business negotiation and the structure was not new to them.

Repetition was used occasionally when teachers wanted to draw students' attention to the erroneous utterance. For example, teacher B1 repeated one student's sentence twice, with a rising tone and at a slower pace, when the student said, "*Our price has risen to 10% due to the increase in raw material costs*" (B1, OB 2, Oct. 10, 2024). *The student did not realize the problem for the first time. However, when she finished the second repetition, the student suddenly captured the information, and he immediately produced the corrected sentence with excitement: "Yeah, I got it. Our price has risen by 10% due to the increase in raw material costs"* (B1, OB 2, Oct. 10, 2024). The student's self-correction, marked by excitement, justified the sound effect of teacher B1's repetition during self-repair.

4.2.3 Supplementary OCF Strategies in Practice

Three supplementary strategies were identified in teachers' classroom practice: translanguaging and nonverbal strategies, and handwriting. Firstly, only teachers from Universities C and B used translanguaging, whereas none from University A used it. Teachers from University C used more translanguaging than those from University B. The difference was that teachers from University B used translanguaging only when students could not understand their English OCF. In contrast, teachers from University C used translanguaging more directly and often, especially when offering metalinguistic feedback to clarify grammatical rules or subtle differences between confusing words. Teacher C3 explained that "*We are very clear about our students' proficiency. It is not practical to explain the complicated grammatical rules or phonetic skills in English only. We usually use both English and Chinese together. If time is limited, speaking Chinese is more efficient and easier for students to understand.*" (C1, OB 7, Oct. 30, 2024) Secondly, teachers also used nonverbal strategies and handwriting when offering OCF. The nonverbal strategies they used were mainly facial expressions, such as smiles and eye movements. By smiling and raising eyebrows, the teachers aimed to ease students' anxiety and attract their attention to the error correction. These

strategies were prevalent in teachers A1, A2, and B2's classes, and two of them expressed their concerns about protecting students' faces when offering OCF in interviews. Handwriting was used in teachers A2 and C2's classes. The two teachers used it to note more errors and helped learners recall them, especially after a long utterance. According to teacher C2, the whole class could recognize the errors, not only the student who made them.

4.3 Teachers' Perceptions vs. Practices of OCF Strategies

Three consistencies were identified between Teachers' perceptions and practices of OCF strategies: preferences for explicit OCF, influences on learners' linguistic accuracy, and the use of translanguaging. Firstly, explicit correction was teachers' preferred strategies both in perceptions and practices. All the teachers claimed they would use explicit correction during interviews, and it was also the second-most-often used strategy in their practices. Metalinguistic explanations were also favored by several teachers, both in their perceptions and practices. Both reflected teachers' preferences for explicit OCF in oral business English classes. Secondly, the teachers' OCFs were helpful for correcting learners' lexical, grammatical, and phonological errors, thereby improving students' linguistic accuracy. In particular, lexical errors were regarded as the most frequently corrected errors in both teachers' perceptions and practices. Thirdly, as a supplementary tool, translanguaging was not only reported in teachers' interviews but was also more frequently used in their teaching practices, especially in classes taught by teachers from University C. This flexible change of language reflected teachers' great endeavor to improve learners' language quality and knowledge construction.

The difference between teachers' perceptions and their practice lay in the increasing use of implicit OCF, such as recasts (A2, B2, C2, C3), repetition (A2, B2, C2), and supplementary tools, such as nonverbal strategies and handwriting (B2, C2). Firstly, this difference reflected teachers' choice to foster learners' active thinking and self-correction rather than direct input when offering OCF. By using recasts and repetition, teachers allowed learners to take up and construct knowledge autonomously. This could also be supported by teachers' perception that the oral business English course was set to enable students to speak and produce their utterances. Teachers served as facilitators instead of authorities. Secondly, teachers employed translanguaging, nonverbal strategies, and handwriting in practice, whereas they reported using translanguaging, electronic feedback, and peer feedback in interviews. The presence of nonverbal strategies and handwriting, and the absence of electronic and peer feedback, reflected the difference between teachers' expectations and the practical requirements of teaching practice.

5. Discussion

This study examines Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of OCF from three perspectives: the diversity of OCF strategies, comparisons of teachers' perceptions and practices regarding OCF, and the influences of OCF.

5.1 The Diversity of Teachers' OCF Strategies

Firstly, Chinese EFL teachers used a range of OCF strategies to correct learners' errors, including explicit, implicit, and combined strategies. They showed a preference for certain OCF types, such as explicit corrections and recasts, and also employed them quite often in practice. On the one hand, teachers' preference for explicit correction aligned with Ha et al.'s (2021) findings that teachers preferred explicit CF and metalinguistic feedback. On the other hand, teachers' frequent use of recasts aligns with many previous studies, which have considered recasts the most frequently used OCF (Sephehrinia & Arabmofrad, 2025; Uludağ, 2024). Teachers held that explicit OCF allowed students more time for deeper thinking and self-reflection. As for metalinguistic feedback, teachers offered it selectively, depending on their judgment of the time left in class and the "typicality" of the errors.

Secondly, the combined OCF strategies, both implicit and explicit, stimulated students' self-repair. Teachers' combined strategies to correct errors and prompt learners' uptake and self-repair resonate with Ha and Nguyen (2021), who deemed teachers as the primary source of CF, since students might fail at self-correction. In addition, it is valuable to encourage learners to sustain their effort by taking the initiative and actively participating in class discussions. This positive attitude towards the functions of combined OCF forms contrasts with learners' preference for direct OCF plus metalinguistic feedback. It is also contrary to Lwin and Yang's (2021) claim of a single OCF strategy, such as elicitation, as the most effective OCF strategy.

This study also indicates that teachers used translanguaging, nonverbal strategies, and handwriting when applying OCF. Electronic CF may also have been used, although it was not observed during this study. On the one hand, the use of translanguaging aligns with many previous studies. For example, Uddin (2024) argued that translanguaging reduces the burden of prompts and promotes a high rate of uptake and repair. Wang and Li (2022) also supported the positive effect of translanguaging on Chinese EFL learners' argumentative writing. On the other hand, teachers' use of nonverbal strategies also resonates with Ergül's (2023) finding that genuine smiling led to successful learner uptake and repair. In addition, teachers' mention of electronic CF in their interviews aligns with Liu et al. (2025) and Rkiki et al. (2025), who showed that modern technologies, such as AI, can facilitate teachers' OCF.

5.2 Chinese EFL Teachers' OCF Perceptions vs. Practices

Regarding the comparison of Chinese EFL teachers' OCF perceptions and practices, this study showed similarities in the use of explicit corrections, recasts, and metalinguistic explanations. Differences, however, exist in duration and in the use of OCF strategies, such as elicitation, repetition, and supplementary tools, including translanguaging, nonverbal strategies, electronic CF, and handwriting.

The similarities between teachers' perceptions and practices of OCF resonate with many earlier studies. For example, Teachers' preference for and frequent use of explicit correction align with Nhac's (2021) and Ha's (2022) findings that explicit correction

outweighed implicit OCF in improving learners' accuracy, but with a significantly different emphasis on lexical rather than grammatical accuracy. In addition, the classroom observations revealed that Chinese EFL teachers combined explicit correction and metalinguistic explanations to ensure that students fully understood the error correction and were able to self-repair. This finding is similar to that of Bahrami Maleki et al. (2025), who reported that a combined strategy of explicit corrections and metalinguistic explanations enhanced learners' overall acquisition. In addition, the abundant use of recasts in practice partially aligns with Sepehrinia and Arabmofrad (2025), who found that teachers favored recasts and all eliciting types of feedback.

The differences between teachers' OCF perceptions and practices reflect an increase in the use of elicitation and repetition, as well as commonalities in supplementary tools such as translanguaging, electronic CF, nonverbal strategies, and handwriting. On the one hand, the diverse OCF strategies echo Stephens and Sanderson's (2019) findings that a combination of repetition, clarification requests, and elicitation was more effective than recasts only or combined feedback with recasts. However, it differs from Lwin and Yang's (2021) claim of one single OCF strategy, say, elicitation as the most effective OCF strategy. On the other hand, the positive effects of translanguaging align with many earlier studies, such as Uddin (2022) and Wang and Li (2022). However, this study emphasizes the significance of learners' language proficiency in using translanguaging. The integration of electronic feedback, such as e-dictionaries and AI apps, reflects the positive effect of technology in English teaching. Teachers A1 and C2's mention of electronic CF to strengthen learners' memory of knowledge aligns with that of Chhabriya et al. (2024) and Shadiev et al. (2024), who found that AI feedback or other computer-mediated feedback had positive effects on learners' linguistic quality. Moreover, teachers' increasing use of nonverbal strategies reflects their greater concern about teacher-student interaction and efficacy of uptake, which aligns with the findings of Maruf et al. (2025), who found that gesture-based CF represented a remarkable advancement over traditional CF methodologies, integrating "innovative" gestures. It also resonates with Ergül's (2023) findings of the positive effect of smiling on learners' linguistic development and anxiety reduction.

5.3 Affecting Factors of Teachers' OCF

Both teachers' perceptions and practices reveal that OCF is closely associated with learners' linguistic accuracy. This finding aligns with earlier studies, which highlight the predominance of language-form teaching and a significant concern about language accuracy (Uddin, 2022; Hamidi et al., 2022). For example, regarding the most common lexical errors learners make, teachers not only correct the misuse of words, expressions, and collocations, but also the wrong choice of professional business English terms or jargon. These findings echo those of Yüksel et al. (2021), who found that teachers corrected lexical errors most frequently, followed by phonological and grammatical errors. Teachers' OCF is linked with students' grammatical accuracy, including changes in verbal form (number, voice, tense, and S-V agreement), clause form, and other aspects. In addition, these findings also align with those of Faustino (2024) and Tayebipour (2019), who found that OCF was effective in acquiring the past tense and passive voice. The improvement in learners' linguistic accuracy greatly facilitates their expression of meaning and message, and becomes convincing evidence of improvement in learners' linguistic competence.

Secondly, OCF timing and learners' proficiencies serve as significant factors in the effectiveness of teachers' OCF. On the one hand, the shorter the OCF timing, the more likely it is that teachers will adopt explicit OCF. This is similar to Li et al.'s (2025) view that timing determines teachers' choice of OCF and comments on learners' behaviors. On the other hand, teachers spend more time and use more OCF strategies with learners of lower and intermediate proficiency. In contrast, they spend less time and use more explicit OCF strategies with learners of high proficiency. The reiteration of the importance of learners' proficiency levels in determining OCF strategies shares similarities with Sepehrinia and Torfi's (2022) findings of a match between learners' proficiency and teachers' OCF behaviors.

6. Conclusions

This study examines Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of OCF strategies and the differences between them to identify the most suitable OCF strategies for oral business English teaching. Regarding perceptions of OCF, teachers usually provide OCF to correct learners' lexical, grammatical, and phonological errors. More OCF strategies and timing were provided to learners with low and intermediate proficiency levels, and vice versa. Teachers claim that OCF offers learners a chance to receive explicit or implicit corrections of their erroneous utterances and enables them to engage in learner uptake and self-repair. Teachers adopted a variety of strategies to correct students' errors, and the effects are significant. Their classroom practices align with teachers' perceptions about explicit correction and recasts. Moreover, teachers employed more elicitation and repetition in their teaching practice than in their perceptions. In addition, teachers report using translanguaging, electronic CF, and peer feedback to enhance the effectiveness of OCF in interviews. However, they used translanguaging, nonverbal strategies, and handwriting in practice. Finally, this study justifies the influences of teachers' OCF on learners' linguistic accuracy and could be well used in oral business English teaching.

This study could benefit Chinese EFL teachers, especially the oral business English teachers, in their selection of OCF strategies. Moreover, it could help policymakers in the business English discipline formulate teaching programs and syllabi. Chinese business English learners could also benefit from this study and better understand teachers' OCF instructions.

Due to limited time for data collection and case study design, only seven oral business English teachers participated in the semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Therefore, the findings of this study could not cover all aspects of knowledge regarding Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of OCF, and the comparison between the two could be further explored with additional classroom observation data.

To further examine Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of OCF, future research could be conducted in the following areas.

Firstly, quantitative or mixed-methods research could be conducted to investigate the general features of teachers' conceptualizations of OCF. Secondly, the supplementary strategies of OCF, such as translanguaging, electronic CF, and peer feedback, could be further investigated to better understand the use of L1 in providing OCF and the integration of modern technologies and peers. By doing so, a more dynamic, up-to-date, and learner-centered teaching atmosphere could be realized. Thirdly, more studies could be conducted from students' perspectives, or comparisons could be made between teachers' and learners' views of OCF, to gain insights into the diversity of knowledge and perspectives.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank everyone who helped improve the article. We were also grateful to all the teachers who participated in the study.

Authors' contributions

Dr. Wang Ni conceived the study, conducted the research, analyzed the data, and drafted the manuscript. Dr. Norhakimah Khaiessa Ahmad and Dr. Norzihani Saharuddin were responsible for data validation, revisions, and supervision of the paper. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding

Not applicable.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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