



## THE PHENOMENON OF SELF-CORRECTION IN THE SPEAKING SKILLS OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY OF SBKWU

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### Abstract

In Pakistan, where English is taught as a foreign language, students often take control of their own learning in order to become self-regulated learners. The aim of this research was to explore the phenomenon of Self-correction, its frequency and the feature of language that was mostly corrected by undergraduate learners in their speaking skills. The research in this regard followed a mixed method approach in which both Qualitative and Quantitative methods were opted. Data was collected from BS and Master's students of English department of Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University Quetta. Sampling was done through the technique of convenience sampling. The research tool was a speech activity in which the participants were assigned a topic on which they spoke for (2) minutes and their speech was recorded and transcribed. The theoretical model that supported this study was Krashen's (1982) monitor hypothesis in which the learners gave their utterance a more polished look by applying the Self-correction technique. Through data analysis, it was revealed that **37%** of mistakes were corrected by the students while **63%** were not corrected by them while speaking. Moreover, grammatical category was mostly corrected and the least corrected category was that of pronunciation. The findings determined that monitor's role is minor in the speaking skills of the students, as Krashen himself asserted that it is used by the speakers only to correct the mistakes of their ordinary speech in order to give it a more refined form.

**Keywords:** Self-correction, Speaking Skills, Undergraduates, Case Study

### 1. Introduction

In Pakistan, where English is taught as a foreign language, there is a great challenge to shift from a teacher-centered classroom to a student-centered classroom. This occurs because the teacher is a person of superior linguistic skills and he/she can impart ample knowledge to the students. However, there are some learners who want to correct their mistakes without the involvement of a teacher. Self-correction imparts that the teacher should not make the correction and should give a chance to students to correct their mistakes themselves. Krashen (1982) makes a point that "Self-correction is the opposite of other corrections or correcting someone else's output" (p.105). The learners should be motivated to correct their mistakes themselves so that they could become more independent and confident and develop a readiness to comprehend and process their mistakes.

It is a well noted fact that mistakes are inevitable by the L2 speakers, even the speakers using their own language are prone to mistakes, but correction is one of the major aspects of the learning process. So, a learner should know what and when to correct while speaking. Among the four language skills, speaking is one of the vital skills that students endeavor to attain. The present study focused on the application of Self-correction in the speaking skills

of undergraduate learners, the frequency of its usage and also the determined the feature of language most frequently Self-corrected in their speech. The study helped in exploring the phenomenon of self-correction and its usage in the speaking skills of undergraduate learners. It also helped in creating awareness amongst them regarding the notion of Self-correction, hence making them less reliant and consequently increasing their linguistic competence.

## **2. Research Objectives:**

1. To determine the extent of self-correction employed by undergraduate speakers.
2. To find out the most frequently self-corrected feature of language in the speaking skills of undergraduate learners.

### **2.1 Research Questions:**

1. What is the extent of Self-correction employed by undergraduate speakers?
2. Which feature of language is mostly Self-corrected by undergraduate learners in their Speaking Skills?

## **3. Literature Review**

In the language learning process, learners occasionally notice some of their errors themselves by using the strategy of monitoring and are able to catch and correct their own errors before it is done by others. This technique is known as Self-correction. It can activate their linguistic competence (the linguistic knowledge) and makes them more confident.

### **3.1 Existing Literature Concerning the Notion of Self-Correction:**

Researchers all around the world have conducted in depth studies on Self-correction. According to Edge (1989), the reason behind this practice is that usually people give more preference to sorting out their mistakes themselves, despite being corrected by someone else. Ferris (1995) stated that it is important that his students learn to edit their own work successfully because he will not always be there to help them correct their mistakes. Self-correction plays a significant role in monitoring the errors made by the students while speaking because it enables the students to pay a greater attention to form.

Kulič (1971) emphasized on independent Self-correction in higher learning processes because according to him, Self-correction does not only corrects the result, but also the process itself that leads to a certain result and it increases learners' active participation in the learning phase. Allwright and Bailey (1991) posit that Self-correction is the ideal goal for students to achieve, because they will repair their own communicative defect, will be more accurate and fluent in their speaking without any guidance from a teacher and can internalize the correct form of the words. Copeland and Oliphant (2014) conducted a study, in which the major focus was to develop suitable teaching strategies in order to improve Bachelors students' ability to understand and develop their personal reflection through the technique of Self-correction. Ramsar and Yarlett (2007) reported that children are able to attain correct linguistic behavior in the absence of feedback.

This study focused on the learner's Self-correction in the speaking skills. There is little research done in this area of linguistics in Pakistan. A study was conducted by Rana and Perveen (2013) on Self-correction in which the researchers gave much preference to Self-correction by encouraging the students to improve their written work using the said technique.

## **4. Monitor's Hypothesis**

Krashen (1982) proposed the monitor hypothesis in which he differentiated between learning and acquisition. According to him, acquisition plays an important role in our fluency and it also plays a part in initiating our utterances in L2. On the other hand, learning acts as a monitor or editor. It comes into action when we want to change the form of our

utterance which is produced by our acquired system. This can only take place before we begin to converse or write, or after Self-correction. Houck (1978) noted that the most suitable object of study in exploring the monitor's strength is Self-correction because through this, one can monitor his/her own performance even in real life situations (as cited in McLaughlin, 1978). However, the previous researches on Self-correction in foreign countries are mostly done on writing skills instead of speaking skills. The present study is significant in the sense as it analyzed Self-correction in the speaking skills of undergraduate learners in Pakistan; more specifically it focused on the undergraduates in the area of Balochistan. The data was collected in such a manner that it did not involve feedback and explored the Self-correction ability of the students on their own.

## 5. Research Methodology

A mixed method approach was undertaken to collect and analyze data. The current study employed qualitative method for the purpose of exploring the subject of oral Self-correction in support of quantitative method for presentation of data in the form of tables and graphs. The mixed method was used to draw the data on both textual and statistical analysis. The study established exploratory research technique. It was a case study as it focused on the undergraduate participant's i-e the students of Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University, Quetta. The population of the study was the coterie of undergraduate learners of SBKWU, Quetta. The selected participants were B.S and Master Students of English Department and the sample size of the study were 20 undergraduate learners; 10 students from B.S and 10 from Masters. Convenience sampling was used in the study for investigating the role of Self-correction in the oral proficiency of learners. The research tool was an activity in which the researchers assigned a topic "*Role of social media in your life*" to the participants on which they spoke for (2) minutes and their speech was recorded and transcribed by them.

## 6. Theoretical Framework

Krashen (1982) proposed five hypotheses of second language acquisition which are the most significant hypotheses in all areas of second language research and pedagogy since 1980's. These are: The Acquisition- Learning hypothesis, the Monitor hypothesis, the Natural Order hypothesis, the Input hypothesis and the Affective Filter hypothesis.

The Monitor hypothesis served as a theoretical support for the study. It determines the relationship between learning and acquisition and the influence of learning on acquisition. According to Krashen, acquisition plays an important role in our fluency and initiates our utterances in L2. On the other hand, learning acts as a monitor or editor. It comes into action when learners want to change the form of utterance which is produced by their acquired system. This can only take place before we converse or write, or after self-correction. The monitor plays an active role in planning, controlling and correcting the functions of language effectively when most particularly, three conditions are fulfilled. These are:

1. The L2 learner has enough time to use the conscious rules and to ponder upon them effectively.
2. He/ she focuses on the form of language and thinks about the correction factor.
3. He/ she has some knowledge about the rules and regulations of the language.

It means that formal rules or the role of conscious learning plays only a limited role in second language performance. Krashen (1982) stated that, the monitor's role is minor and is used by the speakers only to correct the mistakes from their ordinary speech in order to give it a more refined form. The essence of monitoring function is that it helps learners to filter their own language and entails Self-correction on the basis of consciously learned grammatical rules. Krashen (1982) proposed regarding the use of monitor that there is individual disparity among learners. He further declared that those learners, who employ the monitor habitually, are known as "over-users". Those who are not aware of how to apply the

monitor or do not prefer to use their knowledge of the language are classified as “under-users” and those who use it appropriately, but not to a greater extent are known as “optimal users”. The monitor permits a user to modify his/her utterance before speaking by applying the consciously learned rules or after refining the utterance through the strategy of Self-correction.

## 7.Data Analysis

Subjective analysis and presentation of data in a tabular form fulfilled the purpose of using mixed method approach. The researchers qualitatively analyzed the data according to the theoretical framework presented by Krashen (1982) and then quantitatively analyzed the frequency and percentage of Self-correction in the form of tables. Qualitative analysis of data also explored the reasons which compelled the respondents of the study to correct a particular feature of the language most frequently.

### 7.1 The frequency and percentage of Self-correction

The percentage of Self-correction was computed. Audio recordings of all twenty students were transcribed and analyzed by the researchers for the Self-corrected words. The frequency and percentage of Self-correction employed by each student and the number of mistakes that were not corrected by them are summarized in table no 1.

Table 1: The percentage of Self-correction in the speaking skills of learners

No. of Students	Total mistakes	Corrections	No corrections	Percentage of Self-correction
S.1	21	4	17	19 %
S.2	11	4	7	36 %
S.3	12	6	6	50 %
S.4	6	5	1	83%(highest)
S.5	11	2	9	18%(lowest)
S.6	14	7	7	50 %
S.7	21	5	16	24 %
S.8	18	7	11	39%
S.9	14	4	10	28 %
S.10	13	4	9	31%
S.11	6	4	2	67 %
S.12	7	5	2	71%
S.13	24	7	17	29 %
S.14	22	4	18	18 %(lowest)
S.15	14	4	10	28%
S.16	11	8	3	73%
S.17	11	8	3	73%
S.18	15	3	12	20 %
S.19	18	11	7	61%
S.20	11	3	8	27 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>37 %</b>

The analysis shows that overall, 37% of Self-correction was employed by the speakers. The data was analyzed on the basis of Krashen (1982) monitor hypothesis. The learners Self-corrected their mistakes because they had enough time to use the conscious rules, they were aware of the correction factor and had some knowledge about the rules and regulations of the language. The highest percentage of Self-correction employed by a student was 83% while the lowest percentage was 18%. The student with 83% is assumed to be the over-user,

while those who have low percentage of correction are under-users as implied by the said theorist. However, it is important to note that every student under study practiced Self-correction in their speaking, but majority of them applied it in a limited way. Krashen himself (1982) stated that, the monitor's role is minor and is used by the speakers only to correct the errors from their ordinary speech in order to give it a more refined shape.

## 7.2 The frequency and percentage of Self-corrected features of language

In order to figure out which feature of language was Self Corrected by the speakers most frequently, the overall data of corrections done in the categories of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and better presentation was computed and shown in table 2.

Table 2: Total percentage of Self-corrected features of language

No. of Students	Grammatical category	Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Better presentation	Total
S.1	1	2	0	1	4
S.2	1	1	0	2	4
S.3	2	1	0	3	6
S.4	1	1	1	2	5
S.5	1	1	0	0	2
S.6	1	2	2	2	7
S.7	1	1	1	2	5
S.8	1	3	1	2	7
S.9	2	0	1	1	4
S.10	1	1	2	0	4
S.11	1	1	0	2	4
S.12	2	1	1	1	5
S.13	4	1	0	2	7
S.14	2	2	0	0	4
S.15	2	1	0	1	4
S.16	4	2	0	2	8
S.17	4	1	2	1	8
S.18	1	1	1	0	3
S.19	3	4	1	3	11
S.20	0	0	1	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Percentages</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>37%</b>

It was revealed from the analysis that the type which was mostly corrected by speakers was grammatical category. The qualitative analyses of the data reveals that speakers under study corrected their grammatical mistakes in order to be more proficient in their speaking skills, to gain accuracy and also because they knew the rules of grammar. The overall percentage of the above mentioned categories is: Grammatical category (**12%**) vocabulary (**10%**), pronunciation (**5%**) and better presentation (**10%**). The reasons for Self-correcting the grammatical category was explained through subjective analysis that students mostly preferred to correct grammar in their Speaking because they considered it as one of the important factor to correct. Moreover, they were more conscious of correcting their grammatical category because presumably they had more knowledge of the form of language, as grammar is taught to students in Pakistan since childhood in schools. Pronunciation was the aspect that was least corrected because perhaps they did not consider it an important factor and had the influence of their mother tongue on their speech.

An important aspect in the current study computed was that **63%** of mistakes were not corrected by the students. The reason for not correcting a large number of mistakes could be because of one of the factors such as, limited time, less consciousness towards correction factor, lack of knowledge and less exposure of students towards the form of language.

### 7.3 Self-corrected Language feature

It was observed that respondents mostly corrected three features of language while applying the Self-correction process in their speech. These were grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. The interpretation of data revealed that along with these three categories, the participants did Self-correction for presenting their ideas in a better way by replacing them with suitable words, sentences and tenses.

#### *Grammatical Category (syntax, tense, preposition)*

The first and the highest corrected feature of language was the grammatical category which was further specified into three more classes' i-e syntax, tense and preposition. The following table shows some of the incorrect grammatical sentences uttered initially by the speakers and Self-correction of their erroneous.

Table 2: Grammatical feature of language

Grammatical category	Incorrect	Self-correction
<b>Syntax</b>	Something which is when gone, that can never come back.	Something which is gone can never come back.
	It is very a positive	It plays a very positive.
	We now facing	We are now facing
	It gives you more explore	It gives you more exposure.
	So, by express your ideas	So, by sharing your ideas
	Two days they discuss	Yesterday, they discussed
	There are plays animportant role.	That plays an important role.
	It is also helping in us..	It is also helping us in
	What are the happening	What is happening
	We <b>are to</b> check them	We <b>have to</b> check them
<b>Tense</b>	We are <b>live</b>	We are <b>living</b>
	It will <b>be benefitted</b> for them.	It <b>will benefit</b> them

Developments **from** the person. Development **in** a person

**Preposition**

Something <b>of</b> your life	Something <b>from</b> your life.
We can get information <b>from</b> every topic	We can get information <b>on</b> every topic.

Many students had corrected their sentential structure during the speaking process because they learnt to focus on the forms of sentences and were more inclined towards the correction factor. For example, sentences like **it is very a positive, there are plays an important role, it gives you more explore, two days they discuss**, etc. were corrected by students. The correct forms are shown in the table 2. Moreover, the learners corrected their tense by modifying their utterance through the suitable use of tense like **we are to check them** was replaced by **we have to check them, It will be benefitted for them with it will benefit them**, etc. Along with this, they also focused on the appropriate use of preposition in their sentences. Prepositions like **from, in, on** were used to correct some sentences.

Apart from the grammatical features, students also Self-corrected their vocabulary, pronunciation and sentences in order to present their ideas in a more suitable way. The following table demonstrates the initially uttered sentences/words and their correction by the students.

Table 3: Correction of Vocabulary, Pronunciation and Better Presentation

	<b>Incorrect</b>	<b>Self-Correction</b>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Important <b>spheres</b>	Important <b>aspects</b>
	Abouts	About
	Friends book	Facebook
	Everybody is <b>having</b> with	Everybody is <b>attached</b> with
	<b>This</b> problems..	<b>Many</b> problems
	I share my life <b>diary</b>	I share my life <b>moments</b>
	It can <b>diffuse</b> the differences	It can <b>decrease</b> the differences
	Positive <b>size</b>	Positive <b>side</b>
<b>Pronunciation</b>	Immore	Immoral
	Diasadvantage	Disadvantage
	Cimes	Crimes
	Shocial	Social
	Cheapo	Cheaper
<b>Better Presentation</b>	Things that have no use.	Things that are having a negative impact.
	It is very important	It has been very important
	Spend more than	Spend several hours
	Pakistan is as progressing	Pakistan is a progressing country
	They are the stories	These stories are

Disadvantages and advantage	Disadvantages and advantages
It will be benefitted for them	It will benefit them
If it is religion	If it is related to religion
But other side	But, on the other side
Can't sometimes afford	Sometimes we can't afford

### *Vocabulary, Pronunciation & Better presentation*

The second important feature of language corrected by the speakers in their speech was vocabulary. They used those vocabulary items which were more appropriate for their sentences. They replaced their incorrect use of words by the correct ones. For instance, words like **spheres, abouts, this, size**, etc. were replaced by the correct ones like **aspects, about, many, side**, etc. Pronunciation was the aspect that was least corrected. The reasons for not correcting the pronunciation were several, firstly, all the speakers under study belonged to different cultures, secondly the influence of their mother tongue on their target language was immense and thirdly difference in their accents and their lack of knowledge on phonetics compelled them to ignore the pronunciation of certain words. Lastly, they did not consider it an important factor to be corrected in the language. Some students corrected the sounds of certain mispronounced words like **crimes, social, cheapo**, etc. and replaced them by the correct pronunciation. On the other hand, many students were not able to correct their wrong utterances. Those students who faced this problem belonged to the Pathan and Hazara tribes of Balochistan. Due to their Meta linguistic influence, they pronounced some words incorrectly and were also not able to Self-correct their pronunciation.

The aspect of better presentation was not predetermined by the researchers, but through the examination of data it was determined that along with the above mentioned features of language, the students also Self-corrected their speech to refine the utterance and to present it in a better way. The students filtered their spoken competence via relating vocabulary, appropriate synonyms, phrases and expressions, so to increase their speaking proficiency as indicated by Krashen. The aspect of better presentation also served as a new finding of the current study.

## **8. Findings and Discussions**

Self-correction is a student-centered learning strategy which increases the learners' linguistic competence. In the context of this study, Krashen's views are interpreted that learning acts as a monitor or editor and it can take place after the practice of Self-correction. The findings of the study reveal that the overall extent of Self-correction was less in the speaking skills of undergraduate learners as Krashen asserted that monitor's role is applied in a limited way by learners in their oral proficiency. Through data analysis and calculation, it was found that 37% of mistakes were corrected while the remaining 63% were not corrected by them. This shows that Self-correction was applied by the speakers to a limited extent because monitor's role is minor.

Secondly, the analysis also reveals that the grammatical category (syntax, tense and preposition) was the most applicable feature of language that was Self-corrected by the students in their speaking skills. The highest percentage was that of grammatical category (12%), followed by the correction of vocabulary and better presentation (10%), while the lowest percentage was that of pronunciation (5%). It was also examined through analysis that along with grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, the students modified their sentences in order to present their ideas in a better way. This factor serves as a new finding of the current study which can be further explored by future researchers. The students



should be encouraged to use Self-correction in their oral communication skills so that they can enhance their language learning ability. Speaking is one of the most important language skills and Self-correction technique in speaking should be a long-term goal of the students through which they can become more accurate and less reliant on teacher feedback or any other type of correction.

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