

How Should Teachers Deal with Error Correction

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Key words. *a facilitator, learning skills, humiliate, techniques, cognitive development and language acquisitions, interlingua interference, adequate strategies, folder*

Summary

Correcting language errors has always received much importance because of its significance for analyzing those errors and trying to provide learners and teachers with adequate techniques and strategies to avoid or at least minimize the number of those errors while practicing the foreign language. Errors are regarded as a natural part of the learning process, with the teacher performing the role of facilitator, providing help when necessary and creating a supportive environment in which learners can obtain a successful enhanced learning outcome. Errors are important in learning and teaching a language. They are important for teachers as they show learners' accomplishment, on the other hand, they are equally important for learners, as they can learn from these errors. The teacher's main aim is to prevent pupils' errors. The manner in which teachers correct pupils plays a vital role whether learners become confident in usage or become intimidated. The most appropriate thing to do is to talk to your pupils about error correction and discuss when they like to be corrected. Over-correcting learners might result in pupils' losing motivation and the destruction of the flow of the class. This article is intended to discuss the function, objective and aim of correction as a language strategy in English language learning.

Errors and mistakes

Errors are regarded as a natural part of the learning process, with the teacher performing the role of facilitator, providing help when necessary and creating a supportive environment in which students can obtain a successful enhanced learning outcome. They are significant indicators of the learning progress showing what learners have attained and what remains to be acquired and provide the language teacher the necessary information about how to deal with the problems that may arise and give meaningful comprehensible feedback which proves to be beneficial in the long run. Furthermore, the teacher should

guide learners to use the appropriate meta- language needed to communicate ideas and beliefs about their learning process. In addition, educators should be sensitive and sympathetic toward the different learning capabilities present in their classes and try to avoid learners' "embarrassment" and encourage them to take risks using the language.

The influence of learners' age, level of proficiency and learning style leads them to react differently to error correction. In order to prevent students to feel misled and confused, teachers should avoid over-correction. Teachers should provide positive affective feedback, reduce the tension caused by error correction and encourage all their students to improve their works. Language anxiety may affect student' self-esteem, self-confidence, hamper proficiency in language acquisition, and hinder their achievement. Encouragement and non-threatening instructions are good ways to ease learner anxiety and strengthen their motivation.

In any communicative exchange, speakers derive from their listener's information on the reception and comprehension of their message. From the language teacher's point of view the provision of feedback is a major means by which to inform learners of the accuracy of both their formal target language production and their other classroom behavior and knowledge.

There has been a significant change in Foreign Language methodology and materials. There has also been a shift in pedagogical focus from preventing errors and it is not in vain that the word "error" has been associated with correction (The word "error" is derived from Latin "errare" meaning "to wander, roam or stray"). Education is becoming increasingly oriented toward meeting the needs and interests of individual learners. In first and second language acquisitions have important implications for teaching foreign language efficiently and for developing effective instructional materials. [3]

Though the first aim of learning language is to speak it, to make oneself understood and be accepted in the ethnic group, error correction also helps to master the language and enjoy all the benefits the language offers in the field of communication, written information, reading books, listening to news, writing or reading letters or messages, knowing the content of some notice etc. That is why at school, EFL teachers usually test their students on the basis of the learning skills improvement. The teachers' objective is to make their students speak, listen, read.[4]and write without making mistakes and errors. But, on the contrary, many students neglect all these notions and make errors.

"Errors are clues to inner processes, windows into the mind" Kroll and

Schafer (1978)

Errors and mistakes play a vital role during the learning process of a language, widening student' knowledge scope and becoming a learning opportunity which in its turn may help them gain autonomy. First let's state the difference between mistake and error.

A mistake is an accident or a lapse, something that your EFL/ESL students actually know and that they can most likely self-correct if given the chance. This can be a typo, using the wrong word, or a small grammatical mistake.

An error, on the other hand, is something that your students don't know because they haven't learned it yet or they have forgotten it. This is where your students need you the most, in order to correct their errors effectively and help them develop their language skills. [5]

Errors are important in learning and teaching a language. They are important for teachers as they show students' accomplishment, on the other hand, they are equally important for learners, as students can learn from these errors.

Error correction in writing and speaking

EFL teachers should not be afraid when their students are making errors. Some EFL teachers feel that students might learn their mistakes and so they must make sure that everything they say is correct. This attitude is not good and goes back to the earlier belief, influenced by the behaviorist model of learning, which maintains that the language can be learnt by repeating correct forms until they become automatic, that is why repeating incorrect forms is harmful. It is now widely agreed that language is not learnt this way: it is a system of rules that the learner has to acquire, that trying out language and making errors are natural and unavoidable parts of this process. Adrian (1993) explains that learners are applying rules from their own first languages and they are applying rules which they have internalized but they are in some way intermediate between their native languages (L1) and the target language (L2) In addition to the matter of activity instruction there are some teacher behaviors. [1]. EFL teachers should know that their learners get /feel angry when correcting his/ her mistakes too much. Wright (1976) expresses what follows: "Too much correcting of a student's mistakes or errors may discourage him." This simply means that EFL teachers should only correct the learners' serious errors by repeating the word or expression in a correct way and making the student repeat the correct variant automatically. In this way he/ she will bring the learners participate in English classes confidentially. [5]

Another element of EFL teacher behavior is humiliation. In a word, humiliation and insults must be avoided because they lead the learners to have feeling of inferiority and this can generate their dislike of the language. Teachers should not humiliate their learners by telling them that they are not good. As a result, they may not be genuinely interested in his/ her courses; they may not also be showing any respect to him/ her and they will just consider the English lessons as an empty thing. In order to have a good attitude towards EFL learners' error correction, EFL teachers must know the learners who are sitting /seated in front of them. They should know about their different learners, their origins, their problems in real life, as each student is a unique individual who has never been before and will never occur in future. When this fact is observed in the class, learners feel more comfortable and self-confident, they trust their teacher and now they can easily be corrected without a feeling of stress. This approach is not something to neglect. When it is combined with the other teaching dimensions such as Academic and Methodological dimensions, teaching becomes very pleasant and both teachers and learners are no more confused but show interest in the teaching and learning process. They interact well and learn from each other. It is up to us, teachers to make an effort to practice this method as a tool for teaching, correcting errors/ mistakes and grading papers.

Taking into consideration what was said above, it can be noted that EFL teachers need to know the students / learners they deal with and for whom they are responsible to avoid frustrating situations since they are individuals having different backgrounds.

The teacher's main aim is to prevent pupils' errors. There is a good rule – “correct the mistakes before they occur”. In spite of much work done by the teacher, pupils make them anyhow. Speaking, writing, grammar and spelling mistakes are practically unavoidable in the learning process. It is a natural process as with errors come corrections. And with corrections come learning, the more learners make mistakes the more correction is done. The more correction is done the more learning takes place. [1] Pupils most often learn more often from their mistakes than from their success. Obviously, students need to be corrected as a part of the learning experience. However, pupils also need to be encouraged to use the language. It is true that correcting students while they are trying their best to use the language, can often discourage them.

The manner in which teachers correct pupils plays a vital role whether students become confident in usage or become intimidated. Correcting students

as a group in sessions at the end of activities and letting them correct their own mistakes help in encouraging pupils' using English rather than to worry about making too many mistakes. Of course, there are a number of types of corrections that teachers are expected to do during the course of any given class. When a pupil makes a mistake, it is usually counter-productive to say "No!", "That is wrong!", "Are you serious!", "How long have you been studying English!" etc. It is often kinder to say: "Not bad!", "Nearly!", "Good try!", "Let's try it again", "That is an interesting mistake! Can you correct it yourself?" etc.

Before planning systematic error correction practices for the classroom, the teacher needs to consider the context in which pupils in the early stages of cognitive development and language acquisitions need to be encouraged to produce language that communicates meaning, error correction techniques that elicit student-generated repairs are clearly more appropriate for the more cognitively mature and second language proficient learners. The teacher should always bear in mind that his students may well be more than he thinks. If he gives time and provides appropriate clues for the learner to self-repair, it will be more efficient and more productive than to interrupt and correct all the time. At least effective technique for correcting student's incorrect language is simply to give them the right answer. E.g.

St. - "Yesterday I go to the cinema".

T. - "O, I see, You went to the cinema yesterday. And what was the film about?"

According to James (1998) in order to correct effectively EFL learners' errors, EFL teachers should follow the three principles in error correction: Firstly, his/ her techniques involved in error correction would be able to enhance the students' accuracy in expression. Secondly, the learners' affective factors should be taken into consideration and the correction should not be face-threatening to the students, but it should be indirect correction. [3] EFL teachers should encourage students to do self-correction in heuristic method or present the correct form, so they couldn't feel embarrassed. Let us compare the two situations below:

(1) St.- "What means this word?"

T.-: "No, listen, what does this word mean?"

(2) St.-: "What means this word?"

T.-: "What does it mean? Well, it is difficult to explain, but it means...

It is obvious that teacher's remodeling in (2) is more natural and sensible than the direct interruption in (1).

When correcting written work, it's better to focus on major mistakes first, that way the teacher won't overwhelm a student with too much red ink. The teacher had better to give full explanations and corrected versions—that's common sense—so the learner knows and understands where he/she went wrong. For example, if someone's work has poor grammar and spelling, the teacher is better to correct the grammar first and not to make a big issue out of an odd letter misplaced here and there. One must keep an eye on the spelling over time and correct only when the grammatical mistakes have been eliminated. [2]

EFL teachers should be aware of when to correct errors, it is determined by the type of errors committed. For instance, if they are pronunciation or grammatical errors, especially when they can occur in the text again, immediate correction is preferable, for post-correction cannot make learners remember anything. Furthermore, the overall situation in the classroom is also important. When the whole class is familiar with a word, but only one of them is singled out for being corrected, he or she would feel awkward. So, when to correct is very complicated. Both the teachers' intuition and the feedback from the learners are equally important.

In Foreign language learning four skills should be developed:

1. Aural comprehension or hearing
2. Speaking (monologue and dialogue)
3. Reading (oral and silent)
4. Writing (words, sentences, dictations, written reproductions, etc.).

While developing these skills pupils make a lot of mistakes that need to be corrected:

- Grammatical mistakes, that is mistakes of verb tenses, prepositions, articles
- Vocabulary mistakes, that is incorrect collocation, idiomatic phrase usage
- Pronunciation mistakes, that is errors in basic pronunciation, word stress intonation, rhythm and pith
- written mistakes, that is grammar, spelling and vocabulary choice mistakes in written work,

If error correction by the teacher results in a more adult grammar it is

possible that correction in terms of communication requirements might be more fruitful than any other kind since this seems to be important to students. Errors that interfere with the meaning of the message should be corrected more promptly and systematically than any other. However, native speakers of the target language would have difficulty establishing standard criteria for distinguishing communicative errors from non-communicative errors because these teachers often have learned to interpret to their own students. Learners will anticipate or correct their errors according to the response they expect from the person who is listening to them or who is reading their work.[4]

Error correction techniques

In the classroom, we use a mix of teacher correction, peer correction and self-correction. Sometimes we need to correct learners. Sometimes we indicate to them that there is a mistake and they are able to correct themselves or other learners can help them. Sometimes we ignore learners' mistakes. We choose what is appropriate for the learning purpose, the learner and the situation.

- Self-correction: After the student recognizes what is incorrect in his/her response, he/ she should be able to correct himself/herself. Self-correction is the best technique, because the student will remember it better.
- Peer correction: If the student cannot correct himself/ herself, the teacher can encourage other students to supply correction. This technique is to be applied tactfully, so that the student who originally made the mistake will not feel humiliated. In the case of errors, it is useful if after peer correction the teacher goes back to the student who made the error and gets him/her to say it correctly. According to Edge (1990) peer correction has the following advantages: [2]
 - It encourages cooperation, students get used to the idea that they can learn from each other;
 - Both learners (who made the error and who correct) are involved in listening to and thinking about the language;
 - The teacher gets a lot of important information about the learners' ability
 - If students learn to practice peer correction without hurting each other's feelings, they will do the same in pair-work activities.

However, it may happen that whenever the teacher asks for peer correction from the whole class, it is always the same students who answer. In this case the teacher has to make sure that other students are involved as well.

- Teacher correction: If no one can correct, the teacher must realize that the point has not yet been learnt properly. In that case the teacher can re-explain the problematic item of language, especially if the teacher sees that the majority of the class has the same problem. There might be more repetition and practice necessary.

EFL teachers must not forget that the main aim of correction is to facilitate the students to learn the new language item correctly. That is why it is important that after correction the teacher has to ask the student who originally made the error or mistake to give the correct response.

The most satisfactory solution of all is to make correction in activity. Correction can be used a follow-up to any given class activity. However, Correction sessions can be used as a valid activity in and of themselves. In other words, teacher takes up an activity during which each mistake should be corrected. Students know that the activity is going to focus on correction, and accept that these activities should be kept in balance with others, more freeform activities which give students the opportunity to express themselves without having to worry about being corrected every other word. Finally, some techniques should be used to make correction not only as part of the lesson, but also more effective learning tool for the pupils.[3]

These techniques include:

- differing correction to the end of an activity,
- taking notes on typical mistakes made by many students,
- correcting only one type of error,
- giving students clues to the type of error they are making but allowing them to correct the mistakes themselves,
- asking other students to remark on mistakes made and then explain the rules by themselves. It is a great technique for pupils to become “teacher’s pet”. However, this method should be used with caution.

Errors tell the teacher about the progress of the learner, and therefore what remains to be learnt. They supply evidence of how a language is acquired and what strategies the learner employs in learning a language. Errors are indisputable to the learning process because making errors is regarding as a device the learner uses in order to learn. [4]

Some overview on personal experience

Whichever way you go about correcting your students, try to keep the experience positive for the learner. Being corrected constantly can be a really de-motivating, as every language learner knows. As you are listening out for your students' errors, make sure you also listen out for really good uses of language and highlight these to the group too. In the case of language learning we really do believe the classic saying, 'you learn from your mistakes'.

Nobody can deny today that the ways teachers correct students' errors or mistakes has either positive or negative impacts on EFL teaching/learning. Unfortunately, what we really notice through this study is that most of teachers have problems correcting students' errors in EFL classes. In fact, this is a serious problem which should be thought about in order to find adequate solutions to solve it. Indeed, this study is undertaken to make EFL teachers correct thoroughly students' errors with effective strategies. It is also meant to point out the effective strategies that a teacher can use for error correction as far as EFL teaching /learning is concerned. To achieve this goal, we have tried to expand our knowledge about the topic under consideration by reading the work of some scholars interested in the difficulties related to the use of effective strategies to correct students' errors and their suggestions to find out solutions to these difficulties. While reading, we have noticed that some factors are preventing EFL teachers from using appropriate strategies to correct their learners' errors. In fact, we have discovered the lack of teachers' pre-service training as the main cause of this problem. Thus, teachers should be trained before starting teaching since training offers them adequate strategies or techniques which will help them deal with students' errors when they occur. Moreover, we have discovered some types of errors. These are language transfer or interlingua interference, different learning strategies, lexical error and the psychology of pronunciation errors. We have also found out some causes of students' errors. In fact, we have noticed that carelessness, first language interference and translation are the basic causes of students' errors.

During our research, we have discovered the moment when errors should be corrected, the types of errors which should be corrected and the way they should be corrected. Some effective strategies for error correction have been found out as well. For example, teachers should use delay correction strategy to correct their students' errors. Here, he/she makes a list of students' errors and at the end of the activity he/she will correct them by making the students correct themselves or each other. To further the development of our study, we have

chosen a sample from the population of teachers and students as the main human resources involved in the pedagogical system. In fact, to obtain reliable data, we have distributed questionnaires to one hundred teachers and to two hundred and eighteen students from ten different secondary schools. Interviews and classroom observations were also carried out. This methodology helps us to collect data about our topic. Indeed, after the analysis of the data collected, it is important to conclude that the majority of EFL teachers we have sampled face the problem of error correction. Thus, they are not experienced enough in English language teaching. In addition, they are doing teaching job without any professional qualification, meaning that they are not trained. Furthermore, this analysis of data clearly shows that errors correction has many causes such as the lack of teachers' pre-service training and the large size classes. In fact, error correction creates reluctance in the students and then the teaching/learning process becomes ineffective. In order to solve the problem of error correction, we have some suggestions. We have then invited EFL teachers to pay attention to their learners' errors and to use adequate strategies to deal with them when they occur. We have also invited students to attend English clubs so that they improve their speaking skill. Moreover, they should avoid speaking native language in class. Eventually, we think at this stage of our work that it will not be left without any more improvement from other researchers. Schools need endeavors from all the citizens and we hope that we have given my modest contribution through this work and that this piece of work may open new paths for other researchers in the same field.

As an English language teacher, we use a lot of methods and options to correct them. For example, when correcting grammatical errors as a novelty we use the folder method. Each student has his/her own folder that serves as an assistant. Students write the correct version of their mistake on colored papers and keep them in a folder. Each color has its meaning. For example, they write the errors related to the tenses on a green paper, errors related to prepositions on a red paper, errors related to articles on a yellow one and etc. At the end of the term, students open their folders and ask questions to each other. This method provides communication between students, develops visual memory and helps students to learn from their own and from their friend's errors.

***"To err is human, to admit it, superhuman."** - Doug Larson.*

To sum up there appear to be a consensus among many language educators that correcting three types of errors can be quiet useful to second language learners: errors that impair communication significantly, errors that

have highly stigmatizing effects on the listener or reader and error that occur frequently in students' speech and writing. A great deal more research needs to be conducted to determine the degree to which errors actually impede communication, which error carry more social stigma than others and which ones pupils produce often.

Several additional criteria have been suggested for establishing priorities of error correction. It has been suggested that high frequency errors should be among the first errors that teachers should correct in students' oral and written communication. Research is needed to determine which errors occur most frequently at various stages of second language learning among learners of varying native languages. The results of this research could serve as a basis for building hierarchies of language learning features. Students of all level of proficiency agree that pronunciation and grammar errors ranked highest, with pronunciation slightly higher than grammar errors.

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Ինչպես պետք է ուսուցիչները վարվեն սխալների ուղղման հետ

*Մարգարյան Կարինե
Մարոյան Հեղինե*

Ամփոփում

Հանգուցային բառեր. միջնորդ, սովորելու հմտություններ, նվաստացնել, տեխնիկա, ճանաչողական զարգացում և լեզուների ձեռքբերում, միջլեզվային միջամտություն, համարժեք ռազմավարություններ, թղթապանակ

Լեզվական սխալների ուղղումը միշտ էլ մեծ նշանակություն է ստացել այն պատճառով, որ սխալները վերլուծվել են՝ փորձելով սովորողներին և ուսուցիչներին տրամադրել համապատասխան տեխնիկա և ռազմավարություն՝ խուսափելու կամ վերջապես նվազագույնի հասցնելու սխալների թիվը օտար լեզուն վարելիս: Սխալները դիտվում են որպես ուսումնական գործընթացի բնական մաս, ուսուցիչը կատարում է միջնորդի դերը, անհրաժեշտության դեպքում տրամադրում օգնություն և ստեղծում օժանդակ միջավայր, որի ընթացքում սովորողները կարող են ձեռք բերել հաջողված ուսուցման արդյունք: Սխալները կարևոր են լեզու սովորելու և սովորեցնելու գործում: Դրանք էական նշանակություն ունեն ուսուցիչների համար, քանի որ ցույց են տալիս աշակերտների հաջողությունները, մյուս կողմից՝ դրանք հավասարապես կարևոր են սովորողների համար, քանի որ նրանք կարող են դասեր քաղել այդ սխալներից: Ուսուցչի հիմնական նպատակն է կանխել աշակերտների սխալները: Ուսուցիչների կողմից աշակերտներին ուղղելու ձևը կարևոր դեր է խաղում՝ արդյոք սովորողները վստահ կլինեն կիրառման մեջ, թե՞ ոչ: Առավել նպատակահարմար է սովորողների հետ խոսել սխալների ուղղման մասին և քննարկել, թե երբ են նրանք նախընտրում ուղղում կատարել: Սովորողներին չափազանց շատ շտկումը կարող է հանգեցնել նրանց մտփիվացիայի կորստի և դասի բնական հոսքի խանգարման: Այս հողվածը ուղղված է քննարկելու անգլերեն լեզվի ուսուցման մեջ լեզվական սխալների շտկման ռազմավարության գործառույթը, խնդիրը և նպատակը:

Как учителям поступать при исправлении ошибок

Саргсян Карине
Сароян Эгине

Резюме

Ключевые слова: *фасилитатор, навыки обучения, унижение, методы, когнитивное развитие и овладение языком, интерлингвальная интерференция, адекватные стратегии, папка*

Исправление языковых ошибок всегда имело большое значение, потому что ошибки решались путем попытки предоставить учащимся и учителям соответствующую технику, стратегии, позволяющие избежать или, в конечном итоге, минимизировать количество ошибок при преподавании иностранного языка. Ошибки рассматриваются как естественный процесс обучения, когда учитель выступает в роли фасилитатора, при необходимости оказывает помощь и создаёт благоприятную среду, в которой учащиеся могут добиться успешных результатов в обучении. Ошибки важны в процессе изучения и обучения. Они имеют важное значение для учителей, так как показывают успехи учащихся, с другой стороны, они могут учиться на этих ошибках. Основная цель преподавателя – предотвратить ошибки учащихся. Методы исправления учащихся со стороны учителей играют важную роль: будут ли они уверены в использовании знаний, или нет. Более уместно поговорить с учащимися об исправлении ошибок и обсудить, когда они предпочитают внести исправления. Чрезмерная коррекция учащихся может привести к потере мотивации, нарушив естественное течение урока. Цель этой статьи: обсудить функцию, проблему и цель стратегии языковой коррекции в обучении английскому языку.

Ներկայացվել է 04.02.2022 թ.

Գրախոսվել է 03.03.2022 թ.

Ընդունվել է տպագրության 27.05.2022 թ.