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“ERROR CORRECTION APPROACHES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON L2  
CLASSROOM”.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The profession of teaching has become the essential part for the transmission of learning experiences from one generation to another and it helps to develop the right competences to be successful in different professional areas. The learning process should be meaningful for students in order to make it last forever. It is the key for human development in sciences and technologies. For this reason, the main purpose for teachers has to be to encourage students in a positive way to develop their skills by taking into consideration the different error correction techniques used by the teachers.

Due to the recent deficiencies seen in the past regarding error correction techniques, this paper seeks to present the reader an overview of the error correction processes and techniques used by teachers at the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador. This document also suggests specific recommendations for the development and improvement of policies and procedures to guarantee a better use of correcting steps so they can result in improvement on the learners' side. In this way we close an important door for frustration and negative thought that may arise along with learning. Therefore, this will motivate learners to seek an improvement on a daily basis.

The present paper includes information regarding the approaches and techniques used in to correct error during learning processes on L2 environments. This also presents a justification that backs up the importance of the topic under study as well as the main objectives of the report.

## **II. OBJECTIVES**

### **a) General Objective:**

-To carry out a bibliographical research based on error correction strategies and their effect on L2 classroom environment.

### **b) Specific Objectives:**

-To study error correction approaches and strategies used in the different L2 classroom environments.

### **III. JUSTIFICATION**

Every teacher has areas of opportunity to improve their teaching practices for the benefit of the organization he works for, his students and himself. Unfortunately, these areas of opportunity can be hardly seen by a teacher himself. There are cases in which he may need an external source of feedback to realize about the effectiveness of his current practices. Sometimes, feedback coming from a different source can be key to make a teacher consider the need of changing certain error-correction practices.

The present essay seeks to provide an insight of the most common error correction techniques used by teachers in L2 classrooms as well as their effect and possible negative effects in learners. Moreover, the researchers present alternate error correction techniques and approaches that can be applied in different courses, depending on the particular differences presented by the class. The use of the appropriate techniques will give L2 teachers enough flexibility to get the maximum potential of their students' skills, knowledge and experience, and apply them in the learning of a second language.

With this essay, the researchers intend to present to un-experienced teachers a new set of complete ideologies behind the concept of error correction techniques and newer tendencies like the "corrective feedback". It also seeks to persuade well-experienced teachers to reconsider the effect of their current practices in their students, create customer indicators of the effectiveness of these, and change them according to the needs presented by their class.

Finally, this paper intends to present to the teachers at the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador the researcher's personal experiences regarding the topic under study, and how this impacted them either positively or negatively, as well as suggestions for improvement in the error correction approaches used at this Department of the University of El Salvador. It is also expected to benefit the students of the same Department that work as teachers of English as a foreign language in different schools and institutes across the country by proposing alternate error correction approaches and techniques that can be applied according to the particular differences of their class.



#### **IV. METHODOLOGY**

The present topic is of relevance for the teaching practice improvement in regards to the error correction techniques used in L2 classrooms. The researchers consulted different trustable sources of information, most of them written material from well-known authors, in order present a bibliographical research to supports alternate ways to correct errors in L2 classrooms. The researchers went deep into written documentation from different authors to support their own point of view based on their personal experiences and principles.

The firsts step in the writing of the present paper was the selection of the topic to be researched. Different ideas and topics were proposed by the researchers. The researchers agreed on one broad topic: error correction. The topic was then narrowed to a more specific area of the error correction: techniques and approaches. The topic was narrowed even more by describing in detail the effects on L2 classrooms. This topic was considered of much interest due to the researchers' personal experiences during their instruction process in regards to the error correction techniques used by teachers. A new proposal, they considered, would be useful for current teaching practices.

The next step was the search of literature. At this point, different sources of information were consulted, mostly written books, with the purpose of going deep into authors' ideas related to the topic under study. The information was selected and organized in order to accomplish the purposes of the paper. Skimming and scanning reading techniques were applied in order to identify the fundamental principles that supported the arguments to be

presented by the researchers.. After gathering a good amount of written material, the researchers began discriminating the information with the purpose of getting the relevant parts for the project.

The process continued with the literature survey. In this phase, the researchers created a logical and defensible argument on error correction approaches that would supported the principles given by the different authors. The information gathered for the different bibliographical material was the basis for this task.

The following step was the critique of literature. In this stage, the researchers interpreted the understanding of the topic. They also considered different perspectives of the topic under study with the purpose of finding any possible argument gaps, or principles that could be questioned by the readers. The main task was giving an answer to the research question/statement.

After the completion of the last stage, the researchers started working on the development of the argument. In this part, the researchers presented the foundations of their thesis by arranging their claims in the most logical way possible. This was based on the relevant data that was gathered from the evidences presented by their personal experience in combination to the supporting literature provided by different authors in relation to the topic under study.

The final step of the process was the writing of the paper. The researchers composed, molded and re-designed the structure of the paper several times. The final paper was re-edited, re-written and re-auditioned upon the feedback given by different readers.

## **V. ERROR CORRECTION APPROACHES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON L2 CLASSROOM**

Through centuries, the teaching – learning process has been considered by humans as the principal element for culture preservation and human development. Due to this fact, great importance has been given to the way learning is conducted. The way learning is transmitted, improved, and corrected has a considerable impact in every society. This last aspect represents the main focus of this paper. According to some specialists in the matter, such as R. Duskin Feldman, “there are two main approaches about correcting learning errors in a second-language environment” (Duskin Feldman, 2005)

The main focus of the first approach has to do with giving explicit correction and directly telling that a student’s utterance is merely incorrect. On the other hand, the second approach consists of not directly considering that the utterance is wrong, but instead, it gives students an opportunity to reconsider his/her utterance may have a better response. By doing this a student will not only practice self-correction but also will encourage himself/herself to increase his/her analytical skills. These are extra-linguistic aspects that will develop our students not only in a second-language classroom environment but in all other types of learning.

As in any teaching learning process, errors on the learners’ part arise as a problematic situation. These errors can occur as the result of the combination of learners’ previous knowledge with the new one being taught by the tutor. Correcting errors, however, is not the main end of the instruction process, but the means to get to learn a new knowledge.

For this reason, a variety of teaching strategies are used as well as error correction techniques.

## ERROR CORRECTION VS CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN CONTEXT

There is a terminology in the area of correction being used nowadays. It has come up as a new way to approach learners towards correction. The term “correction” refers more to the action of correcting. This means an active action from the teacher to the student, in order to eliminate a particular pattern or behavior. However, some psychologists and specialists in education are changing from “correction” to “feedback”. Lyster, R. & Ranta, L. (1997) present corrective feedback as a passive action from the teacher when correcting students. It intends to let students take ownership of their errors. Instead of saying directly that student’s utterance is incorrect and give him/her a straight correction, feedback does not merely does it. A teacher can give “hints” of possible errors on the learners’ side. This way learner will have the opportunity to monitor themselves and think about possible errors they have made. In addition to identifying the wrong utterance, they are encouraged to find a correct or more accurate utterance. These types of practice help students not only to correct themselves when encountering errors but also to promote the development of problem solving skills through more analytical thinking. Obviously, this does not benefit the acquisition of a second language only but any other kind of learning to be acquired.

## TYPES OF CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

According to Lyster and Ranta (1997), there are six major error correction techniques or feedback to be used in a classroom environment. These can be applied according to the students' individual differences such as age, based on the professional judgement of the teacher. These techniques are the following:

1. Explicit correction. By clearly indicating that the student's utterance was incorrect, the teacher provides the correct form.
2. Recast. *Without* directly indicating that the student's utterance was incorrect, the teacher implicitly reformulates the student's error, or provides the correction.
3. Clarification request. By using phrases like "Excuse me?" or "I don't understand," the teacher indicates that the message has not been understood or that the student's utterance contained some kind of mistake and that a repetition or a reformulation is required.
4. Metalinguistic clues. *Without* providing the correct form, the teacher poses questions or provides comments or information related to the formation of the student's utterance (for example, "Do we say it like that?" "That's not how you say it in French," and "Is it feminine?").
5. Elicitation. The teacher directly elicits the correct form from the student by asking questions (e.g., "How do we say that in French?"), by pausing to allow the student to

complete the teacher's utterance (e.g., "It's a...") or by asking students to reformulate the utterance (e.g., "Say that again."). Elicitation of questions differs from questions that are defined as metalinguistic clues in that they require more than a yes/no response.

6. Repetition. The teacher repeats the student's error and adjusts intonation to draw the student's attention to it.

These types of error correction techniques are suitable in almost any kind of classroom environment. The use of them will depend on the judgment of the teacher in order to approach specific situations in his/her personal case. This is why it is repeatedly advised to use corrective feedback depending on the students' personal interests and personality as well as the course aims. Knowing these facts may be the key for a successful correcting process in a class.

#### EXTRA-LINGUISTIC ADVANTAGES OF CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

According to some psychologists such as Ruth Duskin (2005), the mind of learners acquire not only the learning itself, but also the connotation behind it. For example, Latin-American culture is well known for having, as an overview, a general level of low self-esteem. According to some experts in the field like the "Organizacion Pensamiento Iberoamericano", by the age of four, kids' most common word is "NO", meaning that it limits their willingness and motivation to achieve ambitious goals in later years. Besides, this kind of people has a tendency to consider the obstacles towards a goal, instead of the possible ways to reach it.

It is a fact that a teacher's approach towards error correction causes an important and definitive impact on learner's cosmivision of the educational process. Depending on the ways and techniques how a teacher addresses learning issues will lead their learners to focus on improvement or get desperate for quitting. The corrective feedback could potentially be an important driver to deliver a powerful change in our learners' way of thinking. This can increase motivation towards learning as well as the motivation towards the use of more analytical skills and self-correction. Katherine Strasser, in her book **Psicologia de la Educacion** (Psycholofy of Education)(1999) supports the thesis that proper coaching will not only affect the learning itself but also the way our students think and see things.

## SELF-CORRECTION

Self-correction is one of the most used techniques liked by teachers of foreign languages. Its main purpose is to give the student certain degree of responsibility and awareness of their own errors made during the instruction process. Even though this is more focused on students' side, the intervention of the teacher will lead towards a good and accurate self-correction.

Khrashen's monitor theory is closely related to this error correction technique. This author classifies learners depending on different stages within learning. The first one is when the learner "self-corrects" every single argument to be said. The second one has no self-



correction at all, and the third one has an even level of self-correction as long as it does not interfere with communication.

An active teacher must encourage his/her students to place themselves in any of these categories presented by Khrashen so they will see what are their areas of improvement, and therefore work on getting to a healthy level of self-correction. This way the learning will become more meaningful to them. After all, as said by S.E. Pies, a teacher should be the last one to correct learners.

Students can often correct themselves when they realize they have made a mistake. Sometimes the mistake is simply a 'slip' and they are aware of the correct version. A teacher should give students a chance and time to correct themselves. Often by just raising the eyebrows or repeating the mistake students will know what the teacher means and back track to correct the error themselves. Some teachers create all sorts of hand signals to indicate the type of error. Pointing behind the class is a classic way to indicate to students that they should have used a past tense in their last statement, for instance.

## **BASIS OF CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK**

These two approaches are different, and therefore different agents come across in the learning process. However, a combination of those can be used in an every-day classroom environment. According to our personal point of view, explicit correction should be considered as the last resource when correcting students' errors. Alternate ways of correction that do not merely identify the students' utterance as "wrong" should be given

priority. For this reason, a teacher should consider three main items when correcting his/her learners. These are the context of learning, student individual differences, and learners' interests/course aims.

As an individual human being, every person also has his/her personal way to see things, and therefore the way to approach certain situations. This principle is of great importance according to some psychologists in the process of correcting errors in a classroom environment. K. Strasser (1999) states that a teacher must consider students' individual characteristics to know the most adequate way to correct their learning process. Passive-personality students, for instance, would show a tendency towards soft error correction techniques. This means more reasoning instead of challenges. On the other hand, active students would prefer to be given more challenging tasks when learning. It is fundamental for a teacher to know how to approach his/her students depending on their personalities and behaviors.

Another aspect to consider before correcting students' errors is the course aims. Usually these objectives are driven by the learners' interests. English-teaching schools and institutions would usually offer courses with different focuses depending on the areas of development chosen by learners. Courses addressed to reading or grammar only, for instance, are an example of this. A teacher should know what learning areas are emphasized in his/her class to correct properly, according to S.E. Pies (2004). An instructor would need to focus on these areas when correcting errors in order to avoid overwhelming situations that could potentially end up in frustration in both students and teachers' sides.

The arguments previously presented indicate the importance of knowing the best way to correct learning errors on a L2 classroom environment. If an instructor takes this principles seriously into consideration learning may become easier, more accurate and more comfortable for both the teacher and the students. This way, the learning will be preserved in a pure and sensitive way while improving a positive connotation in our learners learning styles. This will significantly promote a healthy level of knowledge and self-esteem.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

Error correction in L2 classrooms is more than just giving the students a correct utterance. This involves the process of letting them explore and understand the reason why their utterance is not the most accurate as well as giving them the opportunity of formulating other possible utterances. These techniques and approaches can also be applied in the classrooms of the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador. It is recommended that students at this Department be guided by the professors, and given the opportunity to propose newer or different perspective on language utterances, and should not be corrected immediately by the teacher when they make present a wrong language utterance.

Error correction techniques can also be a good driver of motivation. Students are motivated to “produce” new knowledge. It is recommended that students be given the respect and attention to their newer proposals for possible language utterances. By doing this, the learners will feel more compromised towards their own learning, and this will result on motivation to continue giving their best in the class.

Error correction techniques and approaches need to be applied based on the particular needs of a class. These principles cannot be generalized for all L2 classrooms. It is recommended that teachers at the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador take into consideration their class’ particular differences in order to apply the most adequate error correction techniques.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the on-going graduation process, the researchers have come up with the following recommendations:

The graduation process does not have enough organization or guidelines to be followed when giving out grades for a particular course/assessment. Therefore, it is recommended that clear guidelines on the procedures to be followed should be established from the very beginning of the graduation process in order to provide transparency.

The procedures during the graduation process were unstable due to the constant changes in internal processes, changes in evaluation formats, and changes of class schedule. Therefore, it is recommended that clear guidelines on the evaluation criteria to be used by all advisors and coordinators should be clearly emphasized from the very beginning of every graduation process in order to have consistency when evaluating the students.

There was not consistency between the advisors and coordinators of the graduation process when evaluating the students' papers. This delayed the completion of the courses/tasks carried from the beginning until the end of the graduation process. Therefore, the schedules for these courses should be offered in appropriate schedules in order to create schedule flexibility.

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