ERROR CORRECTION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Annotation: This article is devoted to the study of the importance of how and when to correcting student’s errors . It also encompasses the difference between error and mistake and suggests options for correcting them.

Key words: fluency, accuracy, error, mistake, self-correction, peer correction.

One day we were observing an English lesson of the teacher who was new to the trade.The teacher didn’t correct her students’ mistakes .One of our experienced teachers was surprised at her action and asked me a question:”Don’t you correct your students’ mistakes?”

One of the most frequently posed questions in the language-teaching profession is the following: When and how to correct the speech errors in the classroom? At first let’s identify error and a mistake. Errors are regular mistakes coming from misconceptions. Mistakes are occasional ones which seem to be more random in nature. Mistakes are caused by the lack of passive knowledge of certain vocabulary or grammar items(when students cannot recognize or understand a certain word or a grammar structure)and the lack of a certain productive skill(when students know words or structures but cannot use them correctly in writing or speaking) .

Mistakes in form((when students use appropriate word or structure but mispronounce it or make mistakes in structure: I am agree instead of I agree);mistakes in meaning(word or phrase is used in a wrong context: I am interesting in books instead of I’m interested in books. Some teachers advise to treat them in the flow of speech and some don’t. Michael Long [2,288] suggested that this question has no simple answer. He says that teacher hesitates to treat it or not when he notices it.

Kathleen Bailey [1, 77]recommended error treatment options.

Basic options

1.To treat or to ignore

2.to treat immediately or to delay

3. To transfer treatment (to say other learners) or not

4. .To transfer to another learner, or the whole class

5. To return or not to the original error maker after treatment

6. To permit other learners to initiate treatment

7.To treat for the efficacy of the treatment.

Possible Features

1. Fact or error indicated
2. Location indicated
3. Opportunity for new attempt given
4.Model provided
5. Error type indicated
6. Remedy indicated
7. Improvement indicated
8. Praise indicated

Teacher must identify the importance of error. James Hendrickson (1980)advised teachers to try to find the difference between global and local errors. Once a learner of English was describing an old hotel in Europe and said:”There is a French widow in every bedroom (instead of window he pronounced widow).It is a local error and usually they needn’t be corrected if the message is clear. Teacher’s correction of local errors might interrupt the learner in the flow of speech, but global errors need to be treated since the message isn’t clear. As we know learners never learn what teachers teach. We often get irritated by our students making a lot of mistakes, because we think they should know this by now. Students make mistakes mostly when they want to tell something from their life, saying something spontaneously. In this case we mustn’t punish our student, we must be glad to hear this because students are trying to use the language for communication.

It’s quite clear that our students want and expect their errors to be corrected. We must give optimal feedback to the student’s error in order to be effective. Too many interruptions, corrections may lead learners to shut off their attempts at communication. They will be afraid to speak, they will not try language. Too much positive feedback isn’t also good .If we let errors go uncorrected, errors may become stable. The teacher needs to develop the intuition ,through experience and established theoretical foundations ,for ascertaining which option is appropriate at given moments. Teacher should recognize when the student is experimenting and support him or her. If student can self-correct we should give them an opportunity to self-correct. Peers also can correct mistakes. We mustn’t be afraid of our students’ mistakes ,because they learn from them.

Used literature:

1. D.Allwright, K.Bailey Focus on the language classroom.Cambridge University Press , 1985

2 .M.H.Long .Problems in SLA: Second language acquisition research , 2007