

EFFECTIVE ERROR CORRECTION IN ELT

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Abstract. This paper deal with analysing various correction methods in ELT. Three types of students' mistakes, namely slips, errors and attempts, are presented in the paper. Both immediate and delayed error correction methods are discussed. A variety of factors, such as level of students, teachers' intentions, type of activities and tasks, the amount of time allotted for a particular task should be taken into account while choosing an appropriate method of error correction.

Keywords: ELT, error correction, mistakes, accuracy, fluency.

INTRODUCTION. Error correction remains one of the topics sparking controversy among teachers of ESP. According to J. Scrivener (2011), errors are an important aspect of learning a foreign language. "Errors often show us that a student is experimenting with a language, trying out ideas, taking risks, attempting to communicate, and making progress. Analysing what errors have been made clarifies exactly which level the students have reached and helps set the syllabus for future language work" (Scrivener, 2011: 285).

RESULTS. J. Harmer notes that students' mistakes are divided into three types. "**Slips** are mistakes which students can correct themselves, once the mistake has been pointed out to them. **Errors** are mistakes which they can't correct themselves – and which, therefore, need explanation. **Attempts** are mistakes that students make when they try to say something but do not yet know how to say it. The way we give feedback and correct such mistakes will be heavily influenced by which type we think the students are making" (Harmer, 2010: 96).

Thus, it is of utmost importance for teachers to look for techniques that not simply give students answers on a plate, but help them make their own corrections. J. Wingate (Wingate, 1998) suggests the following list of methods of correcting mistakes:

1. Immediate correction.

2. On the spot reformulation or self-correction elicited by the teacher.
3. Peer-correction when learners correct each other. Peer correction helps in thinking about the language when two learners are actively engaged in deciding which is the best form of language. Listening to others' ideas helps in testing one's own knowledge (Edge 1989).
4. The teacher writes down your mistakes on a card and lets students correct them after the activity.
5. The teacher doesn't correct all the mistakes, only the ones which are really "bad" and does correction as a whole class activity: e.g. writes out the sentences to correct on the board and invites the students to correct them.
6. The teacher creates extra activities on the basis of some mistakes the students make in class.
7. Students keep a diary of mistakes and go through them regularly.
8. After the activity (e.g. retelling the text) the student fills in a self-evaluation reflection form and/or the teacher gives some feedback, including error correction.

Hendrickson (1981) mentioned that based on the empirical evidence, and when to correct second language errors, teachers are argued to tolerate a greater degree of errors in their students' speech and writing. Regarding the correction of writing, students find it demotivating when teachers correct all the mistakes in their work. According to J. Harmer (2010: 120), "one way of avoiding the 'over-correction' problem is for teachers to tell their students that for a particular piece of work they are only going to correct mistakes of punctuation, or only spelling or only grammar, etc. This has two advantages: it makes students concentrate on that particular aspect, and it cuts down on the correction".

Before starting an activity, teachers should bear in mind whether they are concentrating on accuracy or fluency. "For a class discussion for example, fluency would be appropriate. However, if students have had time to prepare a role-play and are then going to perform it you may want to encourage accuracy. Be clear of the aims of the task and make sure students are aware of what you expect from them.

Don't present an activity as a fluency task and then pick them up on every single mistake" (Budden, 2008).

CONCLUSIONS. The choice of a method of correction depends on many factors, including the level of students, the type of task they perform, the type of skill being practiced, the amount of time that the teacher can afford for this type of work, etc. Teachers can be helpful to students as a guide in improving the ability of the students to correct written or spoken English errors in the ELT classroom. The errors which interfere with communication or impede the intelligibility of a language deserve top priority and should be corrected.

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