Error Correction

Having known errors done by the learners, teachers should think what they are going to do. These questions probably can help the teachers (Hendrickson, 1981:5):

(1) Should learner's errors be corrected?

(2) If so, when should learner's errors be corrected?

(3) Which learner's errors should be corrected?

(4) How should learner's errors be corrected?

(5) Who should correct learner's errors.؟

First, **Should Learner's Errors be Corrected?.** It is suggested that before correcting student's errors, teachers need to consider whether the errors should be corrected at all, and, if so, why. According to Corder (1967), when students read over their compositions, they generally are unable to identify many of their errors. Therefore, they need some guidance in recognizing deviant forms and structures in their written work. A student cannot really learn in class without knowing when an error is made, either by him or by someone else. If he is unaware of his errors, his teacher will have difficulty in helping him to correct them.

Second, **When Should Learner's Errors be Corrected?.** Perhaps the most difficult challenge of language teaching is determining when not to ignore student's errors. Therefore, teachers must plan error correction strategies carefully and that one place to begin is to determine the cause of the error. Corder (1967) asserts that if a teacher knows what caused a given error, he can begin to search for and adopt learning materials that will lead students to discover appropriate solutions to their individual linguistic problems. However, over correction of young children who are learning their first language can produce stuttering. Over correction of adolescents who are learning their first language can produce stuttering. Over correction of adolescents who are learning a second language will produce silence. It was stated that because language learners take many risks in producing

incorrect utterances when communicating in a foreign language, teachers need to consider whether or not their corrective techniques still a feeling of success in students. She states that it may be well that students should not be corrected during communicative practice or that teachers should reserve their corrections for manipulative grammar practice. On the other hand, Burt and Kiparsky (1972) agree that some errors in students' speech and writing should be tolerated so that learners feel more self-confident about communicating in a foreign language. In other words, the students who had been surveyed believed that it was more important to communicate successfully in a foreign language rather than to try to communicate perfectly in it.

Third, **Which Learner's Errors Should be Corrected?.** The simplifies system proposed here for deciding which errors to correct includes the following four criteria (Walz, 1982:10). (1) Comprehensibility. Above all, teachers should correct errors that cause a misunderstanding or lack of comprehension. Because the main purpose of using a language is to communicate ideas, correcting for comprehensible forms is a reasonable goal. Teachers must be constantly on the look out for this type of error, particularly those who are experienced, because they have learned to understand students' interlanguage much better than a monolingual speaker of the target language. This is especially true if the teacher shares the native language of the students. (2) Frequency. This can mean errors that are made by an entire class or by individual students. A frequent error is usually made on a common point of grammar, so the carryover value of learning the correct form is greater than with an isolated mistake. Some writers have suggested keeping tally sheets for written and oral errors to beginning teachers who have greater difficulty in knowing which errors are the most frequent. (3) Pedagogical focus. Errors in forms that students have recently learned in class should be corrected. If a class spends time studying a particular grammar feature and then an error occurs and goes uncorrected, all of the students who hear it will begin to question their own understanding of the structure. This tendency is particularly relevant in the traditional classroom where students are motivated by and concerned about tests and grades. (4) Individual student concerns.

All good teachers get to know the students and to learn who are the most sensitive to correction. More capable students can profit from corrections of minor points. Adults probably profit from correction of grammatical features more than children. Some students want to be corrected all the time, while others are more easily inhibited.

Fourth, **How Should Learner's Errors be Corrected?.** Teachers need to create a supportive classroom environment in which their students can feel confident about expressing their ideas and feeling freely without suffering the threat or embarrassment of having each of their oral or written errors corrected. Furthermore, teachers should know the techniques of error correction, both in oral and written errors.

Techniques of Error Correction: Oral Work

Numerous scholars have recommended placing more emphasis on correction during drill communication activities. Several other researchers have stressed not interrupting the student too quickly because they need a certain time to correct their own errors. Moreover, the teacher should attempt to avoid errors whenever possible by making the direction clear, making drills interesting, and requiring repetition to reduce student's errors (Walz, 1982:15). In oral work, teachers can correct their students by using these techniques:

1. Pinpointing. This is the term used to describe the teacher's localizing an error without giving it away. It is suggested to repeat the student's sentence up to the error. The last word before the error should have a slightly exaggerated vowel length and trailing intonation for the student to catch the idea that the fragment needs to complete again .

2. Rephrasing question. It is used in order to reduce the number of words. This technique should be used when the student indicates a lack of understanding of the question but does not make a grammar error.

T: Why did you decide to come to this country؟

S: (hesitation(

T: Why are you here؟

S: I come here to learn English.

T: I.……….

S: I came here to learn English.

3. Cueing. The teacher gives the grammatical variations of a key content word. This is possible when a student indicated difficulty forming a specific word.

T: What did you bring to class؟

S: I……….

T: Bring, brought………

S: I brought my books.

4. Generating simple sentences. With this technique, the teacher provides several possible answers to the question just asked, thereby relaxing the constraints. Like rephrasing the question, this is a technique used when the student shows a lack of understanding of an entire question.

5. Explain key word. This can be done by writing a difficult word on the board or by acting it out.

6. Questioning. If the student uses a word that the teacher does not understand, the teacher should ask a question about it. The student should reveal the meaning of the word without making an obvious correction.

S: I am studying to be (incomprehensible word(

T: Why do you want to do that؟

S: I like to help people.

T: How will you help them؟

S: They can see better.

T: Yes, an optometrist does that.

7. Repetition. Teachers should ask a student to repeat the sentence containing the error. In order to realize that an error has been made or where it is, teacher says the target language word for "Repeat" or "Again" with a question look, so the message would be clearer. It is a technique to try with the better students in class who need a challenge.

8. " No" It is by shaking one's head from side to side. It can be used if the class were concentrating on a particular point of grammar, especially an "either-or" choice, the students would understand.

9. Grammatical terms. Localizing an error by mentioning what function it plays in the sentence (e.g., 'verb') can have limited use. This practice eliminates destroying the student's chain of thought in the middle of a long sentence. Obviously, it is only useful with students who understand the vocabulary and who are fairly proficient. It should be noted that this technique does not focus on communication but rather on form or linguistic correctness.

S: I came to the U.S. on plane in 1978.

T: Preposition؟

S: By plane. I came by plane .

10. Gestures. Under certain circumstances, errors can be corrected nonverbally. The great advantage of using gestures is that there is no additional verbal input to confuse the student. Furthermore, gestures often take less time than verbal correction, teachers may find several of these gestures useful.

    a. Yes-no. Nodding or shaking the head will get a student to continue or stop an utterance.

b. Continue. Rolling the hand in a forward circle at the wrist will encourage a student who hesitates for fear of having made a mistake or let a student know that the sentence is not complete.

C. Stop. Holding the palms toward a student will stop an unwanted interruption or an unnecessary lapse into the native language.

d. Syntax. Flipping one hand over the other will let a student know that the word order is wrong.

T: Do you want these books؟

S: Yes, give them me.

T: (gestures(

S: Give me them.

e. Number. Singular can be indicated with one finger; plural with several.

f. Stress. On the extended index finger of one hand, the teacher taps out the rhythm of the word with the other index finger, using a more forceful tap on the stressed syllable.

g. Elision. In languages where forms are elided, a gesture can indicate this type of error. The teacher puts the two palms parallel to each other and then moves them closer together in a pushing motion.

h. Missing word. The teacher holds up all finger and points to each one as the student repeats the sentence. When the student arrives at the missing word, the teacher exaggerates the gesture to indicate that word.

i. Tense. A gesture of the hand can indicate that a sentence should be in the past (thrown over the shoulder) or the future (moved forward). To be more clear, the teacher could accompany the motion with the name of the tense until the students learn the meaning.

Techniques of Error Correction: Written Work

Jain (1975) points out that the teacher should choose corrective techniques that are most appropriate and most effective for individual students. He lists five techniques for correcting written errors:

1. The teacher gives sufficient clues to enable self-correction to be made؛

2. The teacher corrects the text؛

3. The teacher deals with errors through marginal comments and footnotes؛

4. The teacher explains orally to individual students؛

5. The teacher uses the error as an illustration for a class explanation.

The following techniques may be used no matter which philosophy a teacher follows:

1. Symbol and abbreviations. The most frequently suggested method to motivate grammatical term (e.g. T=Tense, sp=spelling). The symbol can be written in the margin and then the specific error may or may not be pointed out by underlining.

2. Reference to grammar rules. It was mentioned briefly the possibility of indicating a specific rule of grammar in the textbook when a student breaks that rule in written work. On the other hand, one should not attempt to send a student ahead in a book to a rule that has not been studied in class.

3. Checklists. Several writers have prepared checklists that students can use as reminders when they write compositions. Robinett (1972) developed a long list of frequent error made by ESL (English as Second Language) students . Donley (1978) provides a list of 26 ideas to help essay writers Knapp's check list (1972) serves as a sort of syllabus for the students.

Fifth, **Who Should Correct Learners' Errors?** While few would deny the language teacher an active role in correcting errors, it has been suggested that the teacher should not dominate the correction process. Corder (1967) proposes that once students are made aware of their errors, they may learn more from correcting their own errors than by having their teacher correct them. Peer-correction or self-correction with teacher guidance may be a more worthwhile investment of time and effort for some teachers and learners.

References:

Burt, Marina K. and Kiparsky, Carol. 1972. The Crooficon. Rowly, Massachussets: Newburry House Publisher, Inc.

Corder, S.P. (1967). The significance of learner's errors. International Review of Applie Linguistics, 5, 161–170.

Hendrickson, James. 1981. Error Analysis and Error Correction in Language Teaching. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

Jain, M.P. 1975. "Error Analysis: Source, Cause and Significance." Error Analysis. Ed. Jack Richards. London: Longman Group Limited.

Sari, R.(2001) Error Analysis And Error Correction In Foreign Language Teaching, Nigeria: University of Malang.

Walz, Joel C. 1982. Error Correction Techniques for the Foreign Language Classroom. Washington: Center for Applied Linguistics.