

## **ERROR CORRECTION IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*While learning foreign languages, correcting errors has already been considered to be one of the curtail aspect of teaching processes. But in fact, many teachers do not know much about error analysis and some related theories. They often have so negative perception toward errors made by their students that they could not tolerate any errors and they are willing to correct them as soon as they could encounter any. Consequently, although it seems for them to have been working hard enough and spend much time and energy working on correcting errors, their efforts in correcting errors is not effective and the students do not believe they have benefited a lot. On the other hand, the students often feel discouraged, as they have thought that there is a great gap between themselves and their teachers in dealing with errors and understanding of correcting errors. As it is necessary to have an understanding of dealing with errors in the article the development of the theory related to the concept would be briefly reviewed.*

**Keywords:** error correction, Contrastive analysis, interlanguage, intralanguage, structural behavioristic school, transformational generative grammarians, Error analysis.

### **АННОТАЦИЯ**

*При изучении иностранных языков исправление ошибок уже считается одним из второстепенных аспектов учебного процесса. Но на самом деле многие учителя мало что знают об анализе ошибок и некоторых связанных с ним теориях. Они часто настолько негативно относятся к ошибкам своих учеников, что не могут терпеть никаких ошибок и готовы исправлять их, как только обнаруживают их. Следовательно, хотя кажется, что они достаточно усердно работали и тратили много времени и энергии на исправление ошибок, их усилия по исправлению ошибок неэффективны, и студенты не верят, что они принесли большую пользу. С другой стороны, учащиеся часто чувствуют себя обескураженными, так как считают, что существует большой разрыв между ними и их учителями в том, как справляться с ошибками и понимать, как их исправлять. Поскольку*

*необходимо иметь представление о том, как работать с ошибками в статье, будет кратко рассмотрено развитие теории, связанной с концепцией.*

*Ключевые слова: исправление ошибок, контрастный анализ, интеръязык, внутриязык, структурно-бихевиористская школа, трансформационно-генеративные грамматики, анализ ошибок.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

So as to analyze the errors made by the learners in a proper way, it is essential to distinguish “mistake” and “error”. Brown (2000), states that a “mistake” is closely connected to a performance error in that the students fail to utilize the bits of the language correctly that they have already learnt. While, an “error” refers that the learners deviate from the adult grammar of a native speaker which reflects the interlanguage competence of the learner. This accepted process is followed by the process of describing errors. Learners’ sentences are compared with the correct sentences in second language, and here errors can be found. Then the route is taken the next step—where the teacher explains the errors finding their sources of. A great deal of interlingual transfer from the native language is an inevitable characteristic feature which can be found in the early stages of learning the target language. In the early stages, the only linguistic system by which the learner can draw their understanding is their native language. These kinds of errors can be seen in all aspects of language learning. Intralingual transfer (within the target language itself) is also a significant factor. At an intermediate level, learners’ early experience and existing knowledge begin to impact on the structures within the target language itself. Most frequently, deviated intralingual transfer or overgeneralization can be seen and these kinds of errors are considered developmental errors. It is found that overgeneralization arises significant necessity to study the psychological process of language learners.

## **DISCUSSION AND RESULTS**

Correcting errors is considered to be a kind of feedback that the teacher gives on the language use of the students. It is undeniable that mistakes made by students while they are speaking or writing tend to be one of the most challenging tasks in teaching languages. So, it is pivotal for every teacher and instructor to consider the following issues with regard of error correction such as;

- the distinction between a mistake and error
- to what extend the teacher should deal with correction
- at what stages the teacher should correct the mistake

•how the teacher can cope with error correction without discouraging the students

Here, the thing one should focus on is that whether the language being learnt is first language or second language. The teacher should consider what happens in human's mind in the process of learning languages. With regard of that issue, two concepts have been differentiated by the American linguist Krashen (1987), who precisely distinguished between: first language acquisition and second language learning. Various schools appeared in linguistics and psycholinguistics who aimed at analyzing errors made by learners and to find the reasons. The schools among which structural behavioristic school and transformational generative grammarians should be mentioned. Behavioral scientists believe that the source of almost all learning failures can be identified if teachers analyze both the *internal conditions* (prerequisite skills) and the *external conditions* (instructional events) of learning. For example, if one of your learners can't seem to master writing a short paragraph, is it because he hasn't learned how to make up sentences? If he is having difficulty learning in writing, has he learned the bits of language such as subject, verb, object, attribute and adverbial modifier of time, place or tenses? If he hasn't learned parts of speech, can he make up sentence? At no point would the behavioral scientist conclude that the learner lacks ability or intelligence. If the teacher analyzes and probes deeply enough, eventually she can identify the source of the problem and teach or reteach the skills necessary for learning to continue.

Contrastive analysis (CA) and error analysis (EA) have been considered as the two main cornerstones in the domain of second and foreign language learning. In general, as Keshavarz (1999, p. 11) claimed, "...there have been two major approaches to the study of learners' errors, namely Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis." He further argued that, "Error Analysis appeared with regard of demerits of Contrastive analysis which was widely approved way of describing learners' language in the 1950s and 1960s.

With regard of contrastive analysis it was explained by Paul Lennon that it is possible to define where the difficulty is in a particular foreign language which will be presented for native speakers of another language by systematically comparing the two languages and cultures. If the two languages and cultures are similar, difficulties in learning will not be expected, if they are different, then learning difficulties are to be expected, and the greater the difference are, the greater the degree of expected difficulty is. According to such analysis, it was believed, teaching materials could be tailored to meet the needs of learners of a specific first language

The process in Contrastive analysis involves the comparison of learners' mother tongue and the language being learnt. Based on those similarities or differences between two languages, assumptions were made on errors that learners would be likely or disposed to make as a result (Kim, 2001). In contrast Constructive Analysis which involves to describe differences and similarities of L1 and L2, James (1998 cited in Kim, 2001) claimed that, Error analysis aims at describing learners' interlanguage (i.e. learners' version of the target language) independently and objectively. He argued that what stands out in Error analysis is that is that the native language is not supposed to be mentioned for comparison. The aim of

Error Analysis is, in fact, to find " what the learner have acquired and have not" and to " ultimately makes the teacher to provide them not just with the information that their hypothesis is wrong, but also, vitally, with the right sort of information or instruction for them to form a more adequate concept of a rule in the target language" (Corder, 1974, p. 170).

Errors made by learners can be categorized onto two groups. According to Burt (1975) there are two distinctive categories of errors such as "global" and "local" errors. Global errors distract communication and they are hinders for the learner to understand some aspects of the message given by the interlocutor. On the other hand, only a single element of a sentence can be affected by local errors, but do not disturb a message from being comprehensible. In terms of Hendrickson' perspective (1980), It is necessary to correct global errors and they are generally held true. However, the expressions such as "a news", or "an advice" are systematic errors, and they have to be corrected. In dealing with pre-systematic errors, teachers can just give the form that is considered to be correct. With regard of systematic errors, as learners have already acquired the linguistic competence, they can understand their errors and make correction themselves. So what the teachers should do is just to remind them when and where they make such errors. So as far as considering what kind of errors should be corrected, it requires teachers' intuition and understanding of errors.

As far as error correction is concerned, the most argumentative issue is to correct them as soon as possible or to put off later. First, there is a concern with a dilemma—fluency versus accuracy. In communication, delayed correction is usually suggested otherwise the speakers can not concentrate their ideas. Some advanced students think that errors correction should be done considering determined type of errors committed. For instance, if they have pronunciation or grammatical errors, immediate correction is preferable, while within post-correction learners can not remember anything. Moreover, the overall situational context in the classroom should

not be underestimated. When the whole class knows a word, but only one of them may not be familiar with that word and needs to be corrected, he or she would feel awkward. So, it is complicated to decide when to correct the mistakes of the students. So it is concluded that both the teachers' intuition and the feedback from the students are equally important in correcting mistakes.

With regard of ways of correcting mistakes according to James (1998), it is advisable to follow the three principles while correcting errors. Firstly, the techniques employed in error correction would be able to improve the students' accuracy in their expression. Secondly, the students' reaction toward error correction should be taken into consideration and the face-threatening act should be avoided while correcting. It is believed that teachers' indirect correction is highly appreciated and suggested. Students are encouraged to do self-correction in heuristic method or presented the correct form, so that students couldn't feel embarrassed.

Compare the two situations:

(1) Student: "Where located the hospital?"

Teacher: "No, listen, Where is the hospital located?"

(2) Student: "Where located the hospital?"

Teacher: "Where is the hospital located? Well, it is difficult to explain, but it means..."

It is obviously seen that teacher's remodeling in (2) is more natural and sensible than the direct interruption in (1) that achieve both leading the student to produce accurate language units and prevent face-threatening act.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it is curtail to state that teachers should get an overall knowledge about the students' errors. In the process of learning foreign languages trial and error occurrence is inevitable. So the teachers are suggested that they should learn to tolerate some errors, especially when they are local errors. Moreover the teachers can be informed though the errors how far the learners has progressed toward their learning goal and consequently, what there is for him or her to learn. So students' errors are valuable guidance for the teachers by which some remedial teaching can be organized based on their errors. Learning involves the process in which success is achieved by taking advantage of mistakes and by using the mistakes and obtaining feedback from the teachers and the students the learners can fill the gaps in their knowledge.

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