



TEACHING METHODOLOGY

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CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN ELT CONTEXT

The present paper addresses one of the most controversial issues in English language classroom, error correction. Recently there has been so much discussion in English language teaching (ELT) on the dangers of overreacting to learners' errors or overcorrecting them that exercising corrective feedback in the classroom may appear to be an act of "unnecessary bravery". The research questions the validity and effectiveness of error correction and identifies the most successful ways of administering it. It explores differences across lapses, errors and mistakes and identifies the demarcation lines between global and local mistakes. The research also shares the concept of "glocal" errors, a term used to describe a combination of global and local errors. Based on their teaching experience, the authors debunk the myths that corrective feedback should be dismissed on the grounds that it demeans sensitive learners, and share some painless but at the same time effective ways of error correction.

Keywords: *corrective feedback, EFL, types of errors, error correction techniques.*

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Introduction. Errors of students and their corrective feedback are one of the complicated and disputable issues in the theory of foreign language teaching methodology. Considerations and speculations related to error correction are different and they are summarized but not limited to the following points:

1. The extent to which corrective feedback can contribute to successful foreign language teaching.
2. The necessity of correcting every single error.
3. The importance of considering the type of corrective feedback respective of the level of students' language proficiency.
4. The fact that error correction may sometimes be perceived as criticism.
5. Whether it is only the teacher who can administer error correction.
6. The idea that error correction can at times be disruptive.

The research will mainly target the types of errors that are common in ELT classrooms in the Armenian context and the techniques of corrective feedback that should be reasonably exercised to achieve the highest level of students' uptake.

Literature Review. According to the academic definition, corrective feedback is described as "any teacher behavior following an error that minimally attempts to inform the learner of the fact of error"¹, or "any indication to the learners that their use of the target language is incorrect"². Corrective feedback requires the teacher's intervention as "an utterance in a learner's language is deviant and that a change or a correction is needed to make it more target-like".³ A wide range of research has been addressed to the investigation of the types of corrective feedback. Specifically, Lyster and Ranta distinguish the following types of error correction:⁴

1. Explicit feedback: teacher provides the correct form and clearly indicates that what the student said was incorrect.
2. Recasts: the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance, minus the error.
3. Clarification requests: question indicating that the utterance has been misunderstood or ill-formed and that a repetition or reformulation is required.
4. Metalinguistic feedback: the teacher's comments, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of the student's utterance, without explicitly providing the correct form.
5. Elicitation: teachers try to elicit the correct form by asking for completion of a sentence, or asking questions, or asking for a reformulation.
6. Repetition: the teacher's repetition, in isolation, of the erroneous utterance.

¹ Chaudron, C. (1988). *Second language classrooms. Research on teaching and learning*. Cambridge University Press.

² Lightbown, P.M., Spada N. (1999). *How languages are learned*. Oxford University Press.

³ Profozic, M. N. (2013). The effectiveness of corrective feedback and the role of individual difference in language learning: A classroom study. *Peter Lang*, p. 15.

⁴ Lyster, R., Ranta, L. (1997). Corrective feedback and learner uptake: Negotiation of form in communicative classrooms. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*. 20, 37-66.

Among the enumerated techniques, Lyster and Ranta also proposed translation strategy as a subtype of recast, generated in response to a learner's ill-formed utterance in a language other than the target language.⁵

Yet another technique of error correction is supported by Ellis, namely paralinguistic signal exercised by the teacher in the form of a gesture or facial expression to indicate that an error has been made in the student's utterances.⁶

Within the framework of corrective feedback theory, a term "uptake" is commonly circulated which means "a student's utterance that immediately follows the teacher's feedback and that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher's intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student's initial utterance".⁷ In addition, the uptake quality may prompt the teacher to understand the effectiveness of feedback types that can be divided into two categories: "repair" and "needs repair".⁸ In this sense, the student's uptake serves as a kind of guidance for the teacher to work out the ways to correct the given error.

The role of corrective feedback in EFL classroom is still disputable. For example, Krashen calls error correction "a serious mistake" primarily because "error correction has the immediate effect of putting the student on the defensive"⁹ making the student avoid the use of complex constructions and long sentences thus attempting to minimize the number of errors. Nonetheless, Krashen states that some error correction directed at simple rules (such as third person -s) is permissible, as it enables students to monitor their production when the conditions allow it. Ellis also states that corrective feedback should be directed at marked grammatical features or features that learners have shown they have problems with¹⁰.

The role and level of efficacy of corrective feedback is sometimes measured by learners' reaction and their feedback. It is believed that if the students react to the feedback, it is assumed that they have consciously noticed it. However, the learner may not have noticed the error, but simply repeat what the teacher is saying, or a learner may not respond, while understanding the error.¹¹

Besides all the mentioned factors involved in the efficacy of corrective feedback, learners' age is mentioned as an influential effect, as younger learners seem to be more sensitive to corrective feedback and, therefore, benefit from it more than older learners¹².

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ellis, R. (2009). Corrective feedback and teacher development. *L2 Journal*, 1(1). <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/2504d6w3.pdf>

⁷ Lyster, R. Ranta, L. (1997). Corrective feedback and learner uptake: Negotiation of form in communicative classrooms. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*. 20, 37-66.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Pergamon Press.

¹⁰ Ellis, R. (2009). Corrective feedback and teacher development. *L2 Journal*, 1(1). <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/2504d6w3.pdf>

¹¹ Lochtmann, K. (2002). Oral corrective feedback in the foreign language classroom: How it affects interaction in analytic foreign language teaching. *International Journal of Educational Research*. 3, 271-283.

¹² Lyster, R., Saito K. (2010). Oral feedback in classroom. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 32 (2), 265-302.

Research Methodology. The current study evaluates the impact of error correction in EFL classroom in the context of institutions of higher education of the Republic of Armenia and the extent to which all the techniques of corrective feedback like explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, repetition, translation are popular in the Armenian setting both with students and teachers. Based on some practical examples, it also attempts to reveal the advantages and drawbacks of each error correction technique to increase the efficacy of corrective feedback in EFL classroom. A quantitative analysis was conducted in an intensive Business English course over one-month period at Armenian State University of Economics (4 groups) and Yerevan State University (4 groups) during October 2019. The data were collected through classroom observations during which the corrective feedback was exercised only in cases of verbal communication. In addition, a survey was conducted among English language educators (50 teachers) representing different higher educational institutions in Armenia to identify students' reaction receiving corrective feedback, which, in its turn, is related to cultural peculiarities, as well as to define which error correction techniques Armenian teachers prefer.

The data were also analyzed in terms of the frequency of occurrence based on corrective feedback classification proposed by Lyster and Ranta¹³. The research has used such data collection methods as surveys, classroom observations, informal interviews and quantitative analysis of statistical modelling.

Analysis. In terms of error correction methodology, it seems appropriate to define error and identify how different it is from inaccuracies like a mistake or a lapse. While a lapse is defined as a mistake that is made because of a temporary lack of attention to something, and a mistake as an action or decision that is wrong or produces a result that is not correct or not intended, a lapse is considered to be an unintentional deviation from accuracy, truth or a fixed set of rules¹⁴. The etymology of the word "error" shows that the word derives its origin from the Latin verb "errare" that means "wandering" towards inaccurate or incorrect actions¹⁵.

Methodological research suggests distinguishing between global and local errors. While global errors impede with the listener's comprehension and are more important to correct, local errors do not hinder communication and understanding the meaning of the message¹⁶. An example of a global error can be the wrong order in the sentence, subject-verb agreement, the wrong use of prepositions, or mispronouncing a word, etc. For example, *|students who is, I must to do this, I had lunch in my desk|* and so on.

¹³ Lyster, R., Ranta, L. (1997). Corrective feedback and learner uptake: Negotiation of form in communicative classrooms. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*. 20, 37-66.

¹⁴ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org>

¹⁵ www.etymonline.com

¹⁶ Burt, M., Kiparsky, C. (1978). Global and local mistakes. In J. Schumann, N. Stenson (Eds.), *New Frontiers in Second Language Learning*. Newbury House Publishing.

At the same time, 'He go to the store' versus "He goes to the store" is an example of a local error because comprehension is still possible despite the error.

Our classroom experience has allowed us to identify a new type of error, which is the combination of "global" and "local" error, which we have conveniently called a "glocal" error. A good example of a glocal error is when Armenian learners use the word "magazine" when referring to the shop. This mistake may not impede communication with an Armenian teacher who understands that the reason for the error is Russian language interference (магазин in Russian means "a store"), however it may cause some misunderstanding in communication with a speaker who does not know Russian. In the same way, the sentence "I have 18" when the speaker wants to tell their age might seem unclear to someone who does not know French or Italian (j'ai 18 ans| io ho 18 anni).

As we can see, the native language of learners plays a significant role in second language acquisition and can also affect our errors. Researchers identify the errors made under the influence of the native language with interlingual or transfer/ interference mistakes.¹⁷

It has been repeatedly stated by research that error correction reflects either an affective or a cognitive stance and any kind of interruption we teachers may make to address our learners' errors can be viewed from these two perspectives. That is why it is important to know when to intervene, the timing of error correction should be thoroughly considered. Obviously, if the teacher "intervened" with every error, little would be taught and students would feel very frustrated. To make sure that committing an error does not turn into "terror" for learners, the teachers need to ask themselves "what to correct" before practising error correction in the classroom.

It is typically much more important to intervene if an error is about the target language of that day's lesson. Incidental language is less important and may be disregarded especially if it does not include the items the teacher has not yet addressed with the learners.

Another factor that should be considered is whether the error is stigmatizing or not. If the student says "shit" for "sheet", or "bitch" for "beach", it may be important to intervene in this error because an error that sounds like "bad language" is embarrassing.

Ellis mentions the relevance of corrective feedback stating that teachers should not be afraid of correcting their learners' errors. Ellis believes this to be true for both accuracy and fluency.¹⁸ However, the timing of error correction matters when the activity focus is on accuracy rather than fluency. Every lesson should have an objective that focuses on a particular skill (speaking listening, writing, reading, etc.). Therefore, error correction should be focused on that objective for each class to limit the number of error corrections. If the objective

¹⁷ Lado, R. (1957). *Linguistics across cultures*. University of Michigan Press.

¹⁸ Ellis, R. (2009). Corrective feedback and teacher development. *L2 Journal*, 1(1).
<http://escholarship.org/uc/item/2504d6w3.pdf>

is related to speaking, it is errors in pronunciation that should be corrected. If the focus is on reading, then reading comprehension responses should be corrected, and not the grammar.

The issue of how to correct or what type of corrective feedback to choose still remains questionable for most teachers. What follows below are some tips related to each type of error correction:

1. Explicit feedback

As the name suggests, explicit correction calls explicit attention to the error. It is characterized by an overt and clear indication of the existence of an error and the provision of the correct reformulation of the student's ill-formed utterance. For example, a learner's wrong utterance "I have studied English since six years" can be directly corrected by the teacher as "You are wrong. You should say "I have studied English for six years".

In explicit correction, the teacher provides both positive and negative feedback by clearly stating that what the learner has produced is erroneous. However, it should be admitted that the explicitness of this technique can make the student feel bad and embarrassed. That is why this method of corrective feedback is probably more acceptable when introducing a new language element as explicit correction helps review the rules.

2. Recasts

Lyster and Ranta define recast as "teacher's reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance, minus the error".¹⁹ It involves modelling the correct form or the structure by the teacher. Recasts can include various types ranging from corrective/non-corrective recasts²⁰, full/partial recasts, single/multiple recasts, single utterance/extended utterance recasts to simple/complex recasts.²¹ For example, a learner's wrong utterance "I returned back the book to him." can be corrected by the teacher as "I returned the book to him."

However, some methodologists point out the inefficiency of recasts mentioning their indiscreetness may make them remain unnoticed'.²²

3. Clarification requests

Clarification requests are used as hints for students to pay attention to their errors by asking them to clarify the meaning of their ill-formed utterance. In contrast to explicit error correction or recasts, clarification requests can make the mistake "treatable" by giving the student a tool to repair it in the future. Depending on the relationship between the teacher and the student, if accompanied with the right and consistent body language this strategy might prove to be very effective and even funny. For example, the student's wrong utterance "He go to school last year" may be corrected by the teacher's gesture directing their hand back, behind the shoulders, thus instructing the student to

¹⁹ Lyster, R., Ranta, L. (1997). Corrective feedback and learner uptake: Negotiation of form in communicative classrooms. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*. 20, 37-66.

²⁰ Farrar, M.J., (1992). Negative evidence and grammatical morpheme acquisition. *Developmental Psychology*, 28, 90-98.

²¹ Ellis, R. (2009). Corrective feedback and teacher development. *L2 Journal*, 1(1). <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/2504d6w3.pdf>

²² Nicholas, H., Lightbown, P. M., Spada, N. (2001). Recasts as feedback to language learners. *Language Learning*, 51, 719-758.

use the past form, or wrongly used third person singular can be corrected by showing the student three fingers to help the learners to self-correct themselves.

4. Metalinguistic feedback

Lyster and Ranta define metalinguistic feedback as "comments, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of the student's utterance, without explicitly providing the correct form. Metalinguistic feedback may include metalinguistic comments, information and questions."²³ For example, a student's sentence "He work at the weekend" can be corrected by the teacher as "Third person singular which means...", thus providing the students with the necessary information to correct their own error.

5. Elicitation

Elicitation is a correction technique that prompts the learner to self-correct and may be achieved through a request for reformulations and the use of open questions and strategic pauses to allow a learner to complete an utterance.²⁴ This technique can be combined by a peer correction strategy, which is considered a student-centered approach encouraged by communicative method of teaching. Elicitation calls direct attention to the error, but wakes up the entire class and asks them to pay attention to the error. Depending on student relationships, this technique can support the student making the error when other students rise up in solidarity to support the student. In a competitive classroom or one with cliques, however, this approach to error correction can aggravate negative relationships.

At the same time, teachers practising elicitation in the classroom can also encounter problems with students who prefer to be corrected by the teacher and not their peers. It is important to note that peers should have a proper knowledge of English to be able to spot their peers' errors.

6. Repetition

This feedback is simply the teacher's repetition "of the ill-formed part of the student's utterance, usually with a change in intonation".²⁵ It can be described as a technique calling for less explicit attention to the error, and here the student is extended an opportunity to self-correct. Although this type of feedback is less communicatively intrusive, it is important for the teachers not to coat their question in sarcasm not to embarrass the student.

Research Findings. The survey on the usage and occurrence of the aforementioned types of corrective feedback conducted among 33 ASUE and YSU English educators has shown the following results. Explicit feedback is often administered by 36% of teachers, when 9% of instructors suggest never using it in the classroom. However, 54% of teachers find it quite common to practise it sometimes with their students. Recast is almost equally distributed between 48%

²³ Lyster, R., Ranta, L. (1997). Corrective feedback and learner uptake: Negotiation of form in communicative classrooms. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*. 20, 37-66.

²⁴ Panova, I., Lyster, R. (2002). Patterns of corrective feedback and uptake in an adult ESL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36, 573-595.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 584

of teachers who sometimes favour it and 45% of educators who often administer it in the classroom. About 2% of instructors never use it. Clarification requests prove to be quite effective corrective feedback with 69.70% of teachers practising it very often. About 61% of University teachers sometimes provide their students with metalinguistic feedback and 30% of educators often resort to this type of error correction, while only 2 % find it ineffective and never use it in the classroom. Among all the types of corrective feedback elicitation appears to enjoy the greatest popularity with 78.79% teachers who often use it and 20% of teachers who use it sometimes. The type of corrective feedback that implies the repetition of the student's utterance is often practised by 48% of teachers and sometimes by 27% of teachers. However, about 24% teachers prefer not to use it at all.

Conclusion. Corrective feedback is a thorny issue in the theory of English language teaching. Its problematic nature is displayed in such factors as what types of error to correct, when and how. The present research comes to prove that each of the above-discussed techniques of corrective feedback has its advantages and drawbacks that should be considered before using them in a certain context. However, survey results have shown that the most common type of error correction is the technique of elicitation which is popular with the teachers in the Armenian setting. It may be because this type of corrective feedback is characterized by a low level of embarrassment it may cause to the student. Besides that, this type of error correction, especially when administered non-verbally does not seem to affect either communication or the classroom dynamics and extends students an opportunity to self-correct themselves.

The types of errors subject to correction should be well-considered and preplanned. While local and global errors seem to be minor cases to interfere with, global errors should receive appropriate corrective feedback when the focus is on accuracy rather than fluency. Corrective feedback is obviously a helpful tool in the hands of teachers, which, if used properly and aptly, can heavily contribute to the efficacy of the English language teaching methodology.

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ԼՈՒՍԻՆԵ ՀԱՐՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՅԱՆ

Հայաստանի պետական տնտեսագիտական համալսարանի
լեզուների ամբիոնի վարիչ, բանասիրական գիտությունների դոկտոր, պրոֆեսոր

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Երևանի պետական համալսարանի
միջմշակութային հաղորդակցության ամբիոնի ասիստենտ,
բանասիրական գիտությունների թեկնածու, դոցենտ

Սխալների ուղղումը անգլերենի դասավանդման համալսարանում.– Սույն հոդվածն անդրադառնում է անգլերենի դասավանդման մեթոդաբանության թերևս ամենավիճահարույց հարցերից մեկին՝ սխալների ուղղմանը: Վերջին շրջանում շատ է քննարկվում դասախոսի՝ սովորողների սխալները շտկելու և ուղղումներ կատարելու խնդիրը: Արդիական հարցադրումներից է, թե երբ, ինչպես և որ սխալներն է անհրաժեշտ շտկել: Հետազոտությունը բացահայտում է բացթողմների և սխալների միջև եղած տարբերությունը, ինչպես նաև սահմանազատում համընդհանուր և տեղական սխալները: Հեղինակներն առաջարկում են «գլոկալ» սխալների գաղափարը՝ տերմին, որը կիրառվում է համընդհանուր և տեղական սխալների համադրությունը նկարագրելու համար: Հաշվի առնելով դասավանդման սեփական փորձը՝ հիմնավորվում է սխալների ուղղման գործընթացի կարևորությունը անգլերենի դասավանդման գործում, առաջարկվում են մի

շարք հնարներ և դրանց կիրառման արդյունավետ տարբերակներ:

Հիմնաբառեր. սխալների ուղղում, անգլերենի դասավանդում, սխալների տեսակներ, սխալների ուղղման հնարներ:

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Исправление (коррекция) ошибок в контексте преподавания английского языка. – В данной статье рассматривается одна из самых противоречивых проблем в методике преподавания английского языка – исправление (коррекция) ошибок. В последнее время большое внимание уделяется вопросу исправления ошибок в процессе преподавания английского языка, в частности, когда, как и какие ошибки необходимо исправлять. В исследовании разграничиваются понятия «упущения» и «ошибки», а также устанавливается различие между глобальными и локальными ошибками. В работе рассматривается концепция «глокальных» ошибок – термин, используемый для описания комбинации глобальных и локальных ошибок. Основываясь на своем педагогическом опыте, авторы подчеркивают важность процесса исправления (коррекции) ошибок в преподавании английского языка, предлагают ряд приемов их исправления, а также определяют наиболее успешные способы применения данных методов.

Ключевые слова: исправление (коррекция) ошибок, преподавание английского языка, типы ошибок, приемы исправления ошибок.

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