

**Effective Strategies of Error Correction in EFL Classes**

Research project

Submitted to the department of English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of B.A in English Language

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# **Certification**

This is to certify that (Bzhar Faruq and Tavga Khasraw) have worked under my supervision on their graduation paper entitled (Effective Strategies of Error Correction in EFL Classes) as partial fulfullment for the degree of bachelor in English language at Salahaddin University – Erbil / College of Education / English department.

**Lec. Dr. Bandar A. Muhammed**

**The supervisor**

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# **Dedication**

This research paper is sincerely devoted to our loving family, who helped us carry out this study by supporting and inspiring us. They have been by our sides the entire way, giving us courage and hope whenever I considered giving up. They give us a lot of energy and persistence to keep going since without their support and love, this research would not have been feasible.

# 

# Acknowledgment

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Abstract in Kurdish

**Abstract**

It is ok for students to make mistakes and errors when they are learning a second or foriegn language. As a teacher, we need to give instructuion on how to correct them. Some errors need to be corrected, some other need to be neglected. Some errors need to directly corrected, some others indirectly. self correct, peer correction and correction by the teacher are all strategies of error correction. The aim of this graduation paper is to find which errors need to be corrected all the time and which technique or strategy needs to be used by the teacher. For data collection, separae questioinanires are designed and distributed on students and teachers of Salahaddin University -Erbil/ College of Education / English Department. The aim is to get the views of students and teachers about strategies of error correction. The most interesting findings of our research are that not every error needs to be corrected and indirect error correction techniqeu is the most effective.

# Section one

# Introduction

Error correction has developed into one of the key teaching techniques in the study of foreign languages. Error correction is an inseparable component of teaching and learning another language.

## 1.1. Problems

Not every error needs to be corrected. Teachers have different ideas about what kinds of errors need to be corrected and how to correct them. Some techniques are more useful and effective than others. As a teacher, you must understand that students differ, and teachers must select the best strategy for error correction for individual students.

## 1.2. Aims

The main aim of our paper is to identify the causes of students’ errors in learning a second or foreign language. In addition, it is aimed at finding a list of errors that teachers need to correct because not every error needs to be corrected. The last aim is to investigate the correction styles that are found to be effective with most of the students .

## 1.3. Significance

This research is important for teachers to know how to behave with students' errors and how to correct them. It is also important for students to feel comfortable with error correction because psychological relief is the key to acceptance of error correction. This graduation paper can be used as a guide for educators and syllabus designers to dedicate time to work on students’ errors.

## 1.4 Methodology

In this section, data collection and analysis are addressed. For data collection, a questionnaire is designed to get feedback from teachers and students about error correction. The analysis of the data will show us the causes of error-making and the errors that need to be corrected. It also shows us the best styles of error correction according to the teachers' and students' responses.

# Section two

# Theoretical Background

## 2.1. Error and Mistake

The terms "errors" and "mistakes" are frequently and interchangeably used in discourse. However, there are a few minor variations between the two. Errors are those faults in learners' speech caused by a lack of proficiency in the target language, whereas mistakes are those inaccuracies caused by stress or worry in learners. According to Corder (1967), mistakes are the product of the learner's low verbal competence, whereas errors are simply slips of the tongue or memory lapses during the speaker's performance. (Sener, 2020, p. 113). According to Brown (2000), a "mistake" is a performance error that results from improper use of a well-known system. An "error" is a clear departure from the adult grammar of a native speaker, demonstrating the learner's interlanguage proficiency. (Fang, Xue-mei,2007, P.11)

## 2.2 Error correction

Error correction involves swapping out learners' erroneous expressions for accurate ones. Any response from the teacher that "clearly alters, refers to or demands improvement of the learner's utterance" is considered error correction (Minh, 2003, p.1).

On the other hand, researchers like Truscott (1999) in his The idea of error correction is condemned by publications, who claim that "oral correction poses significant. ( Sener, 2020,p.113).

Error correction includes any process taken to deal with an error made by a learner in an educational setting. Error correction and detection has moved to technological devices as computers and mobile phones are now equipped with error ditection apps and they also propose some certain option for correct use of the terms. The applications now move past the spelling mistakes to grammatical structures. Error correction require skills in EFL classes as not all error need to be corrected and how to correct them is another issue.

## 2.3 Types of error correction

Allowing pupils to rectify their own mistakes with the aid of their teacher is the best strategy for correcting language learners' mistakes. Another strategy is to allow one of the students in the classroom to fix the mistake; alternatively, we ask the teacher to Rectify mistakes made by students in the target language. What is crucial is that errors should be remedied if the goal is to learn the target language, when it is essential to teach a second or foreign language, or when it hinders communication in the target language. The majority of linguists held the belief that feedback can be provided through error correction. Correction is seen as a form of feedback on mistakes. Murphy (1986) supported the idea that correction is a type of feedback to learners regarding how they are using the language. ( Khansir, Pakdel, 2018,p.192).

As to who and how to correct errors made by learners in EFL classes, there are some different views (Harmer, 2007):

**Self-correction**: The teacher can assist the student in identifying his error or mistake and in making the necessary corrections.

**Peer-correction**: A student may receive assistance from a peer in recognizing and **fixing** a mistake or error.

**Class-correction:** The whole group can listen to pupils speak, spot their errors, and offer appropriate corrections.

**Teacher-Correction**: If a teacher notices a mistake that a pupil has committed, they may step in to fix it.

It is ideal if the teacher points out the students' errors. A teacher may turn to the entire class for correction if a student is unable to recognize their errors. The teacher may then correct themselves if other students are unable to recognize the error.

# Section three

# Data collection and data analysis

## 3.1 Introduction:

The aim of the whole study is to get the insights of students and teachers on the whole process of error correction. Hence, this section tackles the methodlogy of data collection and data analysis:

## 3.2 Data collection tool:

As mentioned earlier, the research questions in a nutshell arewhat kind of errors to be corrected in EFL classes and how to be corrected. To have reliable findings, students and teachers are taken as samples to obtain their views on the topic of error correction in class. Both views are obtained through a designed questionnaire for them (see appendix 1 & 2).

The study is quantative as the questionnaire follows Likert scale which is widely used to get the attitudes and opinions of participants in more detail compared to yes/No answers.

## 3.3 Population and samples:

To provide a scientific basis for the process of error correction in class, two separate questionnaires are designed: one for teachers and one for students. The participants, from teachers and students, are at Salahaddin university – Erbil / college of education / English department (morning and evening studies) for the academic year 2022 – 2023.

The number of students (first year to fourth year) is 420. However, we only took the third year students as samples for our study which were 103 participants. The fourth year students were working as interns at schools during the data collection process for our study, the first and second year students are not well acquanted with error correction yet. As such, they were excluded from our research.

The number of the teachers is 12 teachers. They are teaching different subjects (modules) and have different scientific titles ranging from assistant lecturers to proffessors (see appendix 3).

## 3.4 Data analysis procedure:

The data collected through the questionnaires are inserted into an excel sheet (Office 2010). The numbers are turned into percentages and pie charts are created to represent the data. The aim is to find the percentage of the responses of the participants.

**3.5: Findings:**

Based on the data we received from etacheres and students, we have received some different insights and they have different opinions on the topic of (error correction).

Fig1. Direct correction

Only (5%) of the students want to be corrected directly and immediately they make a mistake or error. On the other hand, a large proportion of the students (56%) think it is not a good idea to be corrected directly.

Fig2. Peer correction (students)

Error treatment or correction is a key component in the learning and teaching process. 40% of the students preferred to be corrected by a classmate or colleague rather than the teacher. This supports the idea that students learn from each other as much as they learn from their teacher.

Fig3. Self correction

Just (2%) of the students want to correct their errors by themselves, but on the other hand, a large proportion Sixty-three percent of the students (63) believe it is not a good idea to be corrected by themselves.

Fig4. Teacher correction

Only (5%) of students want their teachers to correct their errors, but a large incidence of students( 57 %) believe it is a bad idea to have teachers correct their errors.

Fig5 correct every error

Only (6%) of students want teachers to correct them for every errors they make; however, a large incidence of students (34%) think it is a bad idea.

Fig6 difficult to understand error

Only (7%) of students want their teachers to correct errors in their writing that make it difficult for others to understand. On the other hand, a large incidence of students (68%) believe that being corrected by teachers is a bad idea.

Fig7. Word choice correction

Only (5%) of the students desire to fix collocation mistakes. On the other hand, a sizable portion of students (49%) believe it is not a good idea to have the teacher correct their word choice.

Fig8 correction in private

Only (4%) of students want their mistakes corrected in private. However, a large incidence of students (62%) believe it is not a good idea.

Fig9 indirect correction

Even (2%) of students want to be corrected indirectly by teachers. However, a large proportion of students (73%) believe it is not good.

Only (7%) of students want to be correct their grammar errors, on one the one a large proportion of the students (54%) think it is not a good idea to be corrected by teachers.

Only (7%) of students agree to having their pronunciation corrected by a teacher. However, a large percentage of students (55%) believe it is not a good idea to have their spelling corrected by their teacher.

Only (8%) of teachers want to correct students' mistakes directly. However, a sizable proportion of teachers (75%) believe that being corrected directly is not a good idea.

(25%) of the teachers agree that students’ errors should be corrected by classmates. However, approximately (67%) believe it is a bad idea.

While (58%) of teachers believe it is not a good idea, (42%) of teachers prefer to let pupils fix their mistakes on their own.

(42%) of teachers who are neutral prefer students' mistakes themselves. However,(58%) percent of teachers disagree.

Only (8%) percent of teachers want to fix each error students make. But for a large proportion of the teachers (59%), it is not a good idea to correct every student's error.

Only (8%) of teachers want to correct students' errors that make other students' understanding difficult. However, a large proportion of teachers (84%) believe it is not a good idea.

Only (8%) of the teachers want to correct word choice errors. However, many teachers believe that correcting errors in word choice is a bad idea.

Teachers are divided as to whether it is better to correct the students errors in private or in front of other students.

(18%) of teachers are neutral about correcting students' errors indirectly. However, majority of teachers (82%) believe that this is a bad idea

Eight percent of teachers are neutral about correcting students' grammar errors. But a large majority of teachers (92%) disagree with that view.

Just 8% of professors were impartial regarding their pupils' pronunciation'  Yet, a higher proportion of teachers (93%) disagree with this notion

# 3.6 Results and discussion

error correction isproblematic and it is also a skill that can be learnt. based on previous studies which are supported by our research and confirmed most of the findings. not all errors need to be corrected. certainly, not every pronunication, word choice and grammatical errors need to be corrected as stated by the studets and teachers.

however, understanding and communication is important. hence, only the errors that make it diffcult to udenrtsand others need to be corrected. direct correction and peer correction are not the preferred methods of error correction bby students and teachers

students and teachers are not very confident about the use of self correction because most of the students do not have the capability for self correction. peer correction is not good either because the students are sensitive especially in certain years of their age or when both genders are togther in the same class.

it is not always good idea to use indirect correction because the students will not know they made a mistake although we do not want to embarass students by direct correction of erros.

# conclusions

Error correction is a skill that can be improved and experience can be helpful. It is important to know that not every error needs to be corrected. As a teacher, you have to decide the situation requires immediate intervention or it can be delayed. In other word, direct correction is not always a choice based on the type of the error and the circumstance.

teachers are divided as to correct errors in class in front of others or in private after class. sometimes, an error is made by many students and you do not have time to talk with each individual. in that case, you better correct such an error in front of other and immiediately.

saying a few encouraging words can be helpful to avoid embarassment to the students who make the mistakes. you as a teacher can say (we are all here to learn!) (we all make mistakes) (i know englishis not your first language) the idea is correct mistakes indirectly and to clarify that the objective is learning.

it is imperative to correct only the errors that are relevant to your topic and can make understanding each other very difficult or to clear out a confusion made by some of the students' errors.

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# Appendix (1) Questionnaire

Dear students,

We are fourth year students and working on our graduation paper, which is entitled (Effective Strategies of Error Correction in EFL Classes). We would like to get your insights about the topic. Your sincere responses make the study more scientific.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Item |  |
|  |  |  |  |  | I would like to be corrected or informed that I made an error directly when I make one. | 1 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I would prefer my errors be corrected by a classmate rather than a teacher. | 2 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I would like to correct my errors myself. | 3 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I prefer that my teacher correct my errors. | 4 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I want my teacher to correct every error I make. | 5 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I want my teacher to correct the errors that make it difficult for others to understand me. | 6 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I want my teacher to correct errors in word choice / collocation. | 7 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I want my teacher to correct my errors in private. | 8 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I want my teacher to correct my errors indirectly. | 9 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I want my teacher to correct my grammatical errors. | 10 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I want my teacher to correct my pronunciation/ spelling errors. | 11 |

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# Appendix (2) Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

We are fourth year students and working on our graduation paper, which is entitled (Effective Strategies of Error Correction in EFL Classes). We would like to get your insights about the topic. Your sincere responses make the study more scientific.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Item |  |
|  |  |  |  |  | I would like to correct or inform directly when a student makes an error. | 1 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I prefer that students’ errors be corrected by a classmate rather than by me . | 2 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I would like students to correct their errors themselves. | 3 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I prefer to correct students’ errors myself. | 4 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I want to correct every error students make. | 5 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I want to correct students’ errors that make it difficult for other students to understand. | 6 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I want to correct errors in word choice / collocation. | 7 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I want to correct students’ errors in private. | 8 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I want to correct students’ errors indirectly. | 9 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I want to correct students’ grammatical errors. | 10 |
|  |  |  |  |  | I want to correct students’ pronunciation/ spelling errors. | 11 |

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Abstract in kurdish