

ERROR CORRECTION AND FEEDBACK IN ENGLISH CLASSES

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Abstract: *Error correction and feedback are integral components of English language teaching, as they guide learners toward greater accuracy and fluency. Effective feedback not only draws attention to language errors but also encourages learners to reflect on their performance and develop self-correction skills. This paper examines different types of error correction, including direct, indirect, and peer feedback, and discusses their impact on learners' motivation and progress. It also highlights the importance of balancing accuracy with fluency, ensuring that feedback supports communication rather than discourages it. Practical classroom strategies are suggested to make error correction more constructive and learner-centered.*

Keywords: *Error correction, feedback, language learning, accuracy, fluency, classroom strategies, learner motivation.*

Error correction and feedback remain some of the most discussed and, at times, controversial aspects of language teaching methodology. On the one hand, many scholars argue that constant correction can disrupt the natural flow of communication, increase learner anxiety, and even lower self-confidence, especially in speaking activities. Learners may become overly cautious, focusing more on avoiding mistakes than on expressing their ideas. On the other hand, other researchers strongly highlight the crucial role of correction in preventing the fossilization of errors — that is, when incorrect language forms become habitual and resistant to change over time [1]. From this perspective, correction is not simply about pointing out mistakes, but rather about guiding learners toward more accurate and fluent language use.

In the context of English language teaching, teachers are often faced with the challenge of striking a balance between accuracy and fluency. If errors are ignored completely, learners may continue to repeat the same mistakes without improvement. However, if every mistake is corrected immediately, the communicative purpose of language learning is undermined. Effective teachers, therefore, carefully consider not only what to correct but also when and how to correct it [2].

Feedback should be understood as a multidimensional tool. It goes beyond error detection and serves as a mechanism for reflection, motivation, and learner development. Constructive feedback provides learners with information about their current performance and offers guidance for future improvement. Moreover, the type of feedback — whether direct correction, indirect hints, peer feedback, or self-correction — significantly affects learner outcomes. Teachers must also be sensitive to learners' proficiency levels, cultural expectations, and individual personalities, as these factors influence how correction and feedback are received [3].

Thus, error correction and feedback should not be perceived merely as remedial tools but as integral components of the learning process. When implemented thoughtfully, they contribute not only to the development of linguistic accuracy but also to learner autonomy, self-awareness, and long-term motivation. This makes them indispensable elements of effective English language teaching.

Errors are a natural part of second language acquisition, as they reflect learners' hypotheses about how the target language works. Researchers emphasize that errors should not be seen only as failures, but also as opportunities for learning [1]. Effective error correction allows learners to restructure their interlanguage and gradually approach more accurate forms. For example, if a student says "*She don't like apples,*" the teacher may correct it to "*She doesn't like apples,*" helping the learner internalize subject-verb agreement. Without such intervention, the mistake may fossilize and persist over time [4]

However, correction must be done in a way that does not demotivate learners. Over-correction, especially during communicative activities, can cause anxiety and discourage participation. Therefore, teachers should consider the context and learning goals when deciding whether and how to correct errors.

Different types of feedback serve different pedagogical purposes:

- **Direct feedback** provides the correct form immediately. For instance, when a student misuses tense, the teacher supplies the correct version. This is especially effective for beginners who lack the knowledge to self-correct.
- **Indirect feedback** signals that an error exists but encourages the learner to find the solution. For example, underlining an incorrect verb in writing (*He go to school*) without giving the correct form allows learners to notice and self-correct (*He goes to school*). This promotes autonomy and deeper processing [4].
- **Peer feedback** allows learners to evaluate each other's output. Studies show that learners often feel less pressure when corrected by peers and may engage more actively in reflection [5].
- **Metalinguistic feedback** involves giving clues or explanations about the type of error. For instance, instead of simply correcting "*He don't*", the teacher may remind the class: "*Remember, after 'he/she/it' we add -s to the verb.*"

For example: In a writing activity, a teacher uses **indirect feedback** by circling grammar mistakes in students' essays without correcting them. In the next class, students work in pairs to find the correct forms, encouraging collaboration and self-correction.

The timing of error correction depends largely on the activity:

Immediate correction is suitable for accuracy-focused tasks such as grammar practice, drilling, or pronunciation exercises. For instance, if the goal is to practice the past tense, the teacher may correct errors on the spot to reinforce correct structures. Delayed correction is recommended during fluency-oriented tasks like debates or role-plays. Here, the teacher notes errors while students speak, and later provides collective feedback. This method preserves communication while still addressing language accuracy.

Example: During a group discussion on environmental problems, a student says: “Pollution make life difficult.” The teacher does not interrupt but later, during feedback, writes the sentence on the board and asks the class: “What needs to change here?” Learners suggest corrections, leading to “Pollution makes life difficult.”

Feedback does not only correct language but also shapes learners’ motivation and confidence. Research highlights that positive reinforcement (e.g., praising correct usage) combined with constructive correction is more effective than focusing only on mistakes [6]. Learners who receive encouraging feedback are more likely to take risks in communication, which is essential for language development.

For instance, instead of saying “*Wrong!*” the teacher could say: “*Good attempt! Just remember we use the past tense: you should say ‘went,’ not ‘go.’*” Such feedback softens correction and supports learner confidence.

Error correction and feedback play a central role in the process of teaching and learning English. They serve as bridges between learners’ current abilities and their desired language proficiency. Research and classroom practice show that correction, when applied thoughtfully, does not harm fluency but instead fosters accuracy and prevents the fossilization of mistakes. Effective feedback should be constructive, timely, and adapted to learners’ needs.

Balancing accuracy with fluency is essential: excessive correction may reduce students’ confidence, while ignoring errors may slow down their progress. Therefore, teachers need to apply a variety of techniques—such as self-correction, peer correction, and teacher-led feedback—to maintain learner motivation and active participation.

In conclusion, successful English language instruction requires teachers to integrate error correction and feedback as natural parts of the learning process. By doing so, they not only improve learners’ linguistic competence but also build their confidence as independent and reflective users of English.

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