International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences
ISSN: 2278-6236
Impact Factor: 6.284

STUDENTS' PREFERRED ERROR CORRECTION

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Abstract: *This study on Students 'Preferred Error Correction used survey questionnaire and classroom observation to determine the freshman students' preference for error correction. Focus group discussion between and among the respondents was conducted to validate the result of the study.*

Data gathered were summarized, analyzed and cross-tabulated. Summary statistics like T-test, frequency and rank were likewise used to analyze the preferred error correction of the students. The major finding of this study reveals that the most preferred methods of correcting errors were for the teacher to point out the error and provide the correct form; to explain why the utterance is incorrect followed by to correct the error immediately, to give a hint which might enable the students to notice the error and self-correct, to present the correct form when repeating all or part of the students' utterance and to delay the correction of errors (after class) the least. Hence, treatment of errors in the classroom is a significant tool for teachers to consider in enhancing communication opportunities. It is then recommended that teachers avoid putting answers directly on students' errors, but adopt more implicit error identification techniques for students to reflect on and repair their own errors.

Keywords: *Error correction, error treatment, linguistic error, error correction method, interlanguage*

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Error treatment has been very controversial issue in language teaching (Allwright and Bailey, 1991). The way errors are treated differs in approaches and methods of teaching. Learner's age, proficiency level, and goals are some of the examples that determine how a teacher should treat errors. (Brown, 1994). From a teacher's and student's perspectives, there also appear to exist numerous factors involved in this regard. Some teachers might think that correcting errors would lead students to pay more attention to form so that students can gain accuracy to a greater extent in their interlanguage. Others may believe

that error treatment should be avoided because of their fear that it will certainly inhibit students from communicating freely.

On the other hand, some students might well be concerned about their linguistic performance in terms of correctness. They may have a preference for feedback from their teachers over no treatment. Other students may place priority on fluency so that teachers' frequent interruption would discourage them to get across what they mean in target language (TL). Therefore, when and how errors should be treated seems to be a challenging question (Kazuyuki, 2005).

Error correction has been treated differently. Celce-Murcia (1991) points out six variables that grammar teaching has to consider: age, proficiency level, educational background, language skills, register, and needs and goals.

Based on the six variables, ESL/EFL instructors would make a decision on the degree to which form is focused with a group of students. Murcia asserted that it would be safe to say that age is an important variable in that whether grammar should be taught implicitly or explicitly depend on the learner's age.

Ruin (1996) states that error correction certainly helps learners to find out differences between their own interlanguage and their target language. How teachers should treat errors, however, is a difficult and sensitive issue and there have existed both opponents' and proponents' view of error correction (James, 1998; Brown, 2000).

Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) maintain that due to the universal order of acquisition theory through learners' developmental stages, teaching inclusive of error correction cannot change the order of acquisition of L2 from. Thus, according to their argument, error correction can be viewed as a waste of time.

Truscott (1999) argues that error correction should be avoided. His claim is that error correction provided by teachers tends to be ambiguous and inconsistent so that learners have trouble in reacting to their teachers' feedback reliably. It might well be possible that learners are more confused after inconsistent error treatments by their teachers. Truscott provides some evidence for ineffectiveness of error correction. He pointed out that learners tend to overuse a particular form in contexts that require their use (Lightbrown, 1987; Pica, 1983; Weinert, 1987).

In response to Truscott's argument, Lyster, Lightbrown, and Spada (1999) express strong disagreement with his thought on oral grammar correction. They argue that teachers are expected to correct errors by integrating corrective feedback into meaningful interaction. They introduce a wide range of feedback types and provide evidence foe effectiveness and feasibility of corrective feedback.

James (1998) maintains that task difficulty determines whether or not teachers should intervene in students' utterances. If the degree of task difficulty goes beyond students' proficiency level to the extent, they cannot correct their own errors. The study of Cathcart and Olsen (1976) reveals that the students expected the teachers to correct their oral errors. From this perspective, teachers appear to have good reason for correcting learner's errors.

Cohen and Robbins (1976) claim that there is an evidence that shows that the correction of speech errors is necessary or even helpful in language acquisition although it is negative in terms of motivation, attitude, embarrassment, etc. even when done in the best of situations.

Pit Corder (1967) in his article entitled "The significance of Learner Errors" presented a completely different point of view. He contends that those errors are "important in and of themselves." For learners themselves, errors are 'indispensable,' since the making of errors can be regarded as a device the learner uses in order to learn. Systematically analyzing errors made by language learners makes it possible to determine areas that need reinforcement in teaching.

According to Corder (1967), error treatment has two objects: one theoretical and another applied. The theoretical object serves to "elucidate what and how a learner learns when he studies a second language." And the applied object serves to enable the learner "to learn more efficiently by exploiting our knowledge of his dialect for pedagogical purposes."

The investigation of errors can be at the same time diagnostic and prognostic. It is diagnostic because it can tell us the learner's state of the language (Corder, 1967) at a given point during the learning process and prognostic because it can tell course organizers to reorient language learning materials on the basis of the learners' current problems. Corder identified three sources of errors: language transfer, overgeneralization or analogy, and methods or materials used in the teaching (teaching-induced error).

A traditional notion is that the teacher or materials provide a correction of every learner error, while more current view would emphasize the importance of learners obtaining feedback and possible correction only when the meanings they attempt to convey are not understood. The feedback though should be a natural outcome of the communicative interaction (often between learners).

The provision of feedback or correction does not mean that the information provided must be stated in formalized grammatical or other descriptive terms. The teacher has many options available from simply indicating lack of comprehension, or otherwise signaling the fact of an error, and getting the learner to self-correct his own error (Allwright, 1975; Chaudron, 1977; & Long, 1977).

For instance, one form of collaborative repair is correction, either of an error of form (e.g. pronunciation, grammar, and word choice) or content. Researchers also found that self-correction is preferable to other correction, i.e. being corrected by the partner.

Repair covers a wider range of behavior than simply correction. It may involve the need to clarify a word or expression which is correct and appropriate, but happens to be unfamiliar to other person (Allwright, 1975; Chaudron, 1977; Long, 1977).

Apparently, to commit errors is inevitable in learning a second language. Hence, results of this study will enlighten language teachers to treat errors with tact and understanding to avoid a stigmatic effect on the learners. Thus, it is important to know how linguistic errors be handled by language teachers as preferred by their students.

Findings of this study will also help principals, head teachers, chairs of departments and administrators to evaluate language teachers on the variety of strategies they use in the classroom to create active participation in class activities.

In addition, results of this study would be of benefit to the students. The development of communicative competence hinges on the teacher's teaching strategies. The tasks/activities provided the students would stimulate critical thinking thus creating opportunities for communication and interaction.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There have been a range of approaches to error correction in language teaching and learning. According to the behaviorists, untreated errors would lead to fossilization and therefore required rigid and immediate correction if bad habits were to be avoided (Skinner,

1957). According to Corder (1967), errors provide evidence of progress, while Selinker (1972) argued that errors are a natural part of the learner's developing interlanguage. Krashen and Terrell (1983) proscribed error correction, since they believed it had no place in a Natural Approach to learning language which should be developed in the same way as children learn their first language.

Lyster and Ranta (1997) point out that the research that has focused on the issue of error treatment in second language classrooms in the past 20 years has continued to pose the questions framed by Hendrickson in his 1978 review of feedback on errors in foreign language classrooms. These questions are:Should learners' errors be corrected?When should learners' errors be corrected?Which errors should be corrected?How should errors be corrected?Who should do the correcting?

Appearing on the surface to be simple and straightforward, these questions have been explored by scholars over the past two decades in a variety of L2 classroom settings and have been found to be quite complicated. Recent work by Lyster and Ranta (1997) in Canada, however, may help to provide some practical advice for teachers. Lyster and Ranta's work is of particular interest because it combines different types of error treatment, or corrective feedback, with student responses to that feedback, or "learner uptake". They were especially interested in finding what types of error treatments encourage learners' self-repair. In other words, what types of corrective feedback lead students to correct their own errors with an eye toward grammatical accuracy and lexical precision within a meaningful communicative context?

Similarly, Fanselow (1977), in an analysis of the corrective techniques of 11 teachers in adult ESL classrooms, found that feedback was confusing to learners in that the latter often received contradictory signals simultaneously with respect to the content and the form of their utterances. Among the 16 types of verbal and nonverbal teacher reactionsto learner errors, the most common was the teacher's provision of the target language form (i.e., recasts); as a result, opportunities for self-repair were minimal.

Chaudron (1977) developed a comprehensive model of corrective discourse, based on the data from his study of immersion classrooms. Its level of detail gave due credit to the complexity of the phenomenon of error treatment in a classroom setting. Chaudron's model was a significant step forward in attempting to identify various corrective techniques as well

as serious attempt to look into the relationship between type of error, feedback, and learner repair. He found that the most common type of feedback used by teachers was reformulation of learner utterances, accompanied by various features such as emphasis, reduction, and negation, as well as expansion or unaltered repetition. In examining the relationship between feedback and immediate learner repair, Chaudron found a positive effect for repetitions with change (i.e., recasts) plus reduction and emphasis, whereas repetitions with change (i.e., recasts) plus expansion resulted in a low rate of learner repair.

Slimani's (1992) observational study of classroom interaction was not designed specifically to investigate error treatment, but its findings are relevant to the issue of feedback because of its innovative procedure of asking young adult students to complete recall charts on which they were to claim language items that they had noticed during ESL lessons.

However, Slimani found that the instances of error correction thatpassed unnoticed had occurred when teachers reformulated learnerutterances implicitly, without any metalanguage or further involvement from students.

In addition, Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) state that people cannot learn language without first systematically committing errors. They point out that learner errors are "learning steps". Similarly, some researchers such as Bartram and Walton (1991), and Widdowson (1990) affirm that errors are evidence of how much learners achieve their goals in the target language. Therefore, current thinking regarding second language acquisition (henceforward referred as SLA) has recognized that making errors is an inevitable and natural part of the second language learning process (Nunan& Lamb, 1996). At the same time, language teachers have become more tolerant of errors in that their approach towards strict correction is more relaxed.

Truscott (1999) reviewed more than 100 relevant studies from 1971 to 1995 and concluded that grammar correction was ineffective and should be abandoned in the second language writing classroom. Cohen & Robbins (1976), Hendrickson (1981), Semke (1984), Robb et al. (1986), Kepner (1991), and Sheppard (1992) all found that error correction could not significantly improve students' writing accuracy, fluency, or general language proficiency. However, as pointed out by Ellis (1998), several recent classroom studies on grammar correction have begun to show that "negative feedback in the context of communicative activities may promote interlanguage development" (Ellis, 1998). Manley & Calk (1997)

examined the effect of communicative grammar instruction on reducing students' composition errors and found drawing students' attention to specific grammar points in the communicative learning context could successfully reduce their composition errors. Similarly, Doughty and Varela (1998) found that in their communicative content-based science class, providing students corrective feedback on their oral presentation and written reports could significantly promote interlanguage development.

Along with the debate on the effectiveness of error correction, much has been written about the best methods of making error correction. Lalande (1982) claimed to have relative effect on his error code correction compared with the traditional teacher correction (directly providing the correct forms). Robb et al. (1986) compared the effectiveness of error correction and found no significant differences among groups. Lee (1997) and Makino (1993) both found that learners have the linguistic competence to correct their errors; teachers may not need to write each correct form for them. Makino claimed that "it is important for teachers not to correct learner errors or give the right answers to them immediately; giving cues to the students so they can correct their own errors will further activate their linguistic competence" (Makino, 1993). Lee also suggested that "conferencing is a particularly useful technique to be used in conjunction with the correction code" (Lee, 1997).

According to Bartram and Walton (1991), different ways of treating students' errors will have different learning outcomes for students, and teachers need to build up a trusting and confiding relationship with their students. Students need to know from the beginning of the class that making errors and mistakes while they are learning a language is some sort of necessary process, and there is no need to feel ashamed of or embarrassed.

Hendrickson (1978) and many linguists claimed that it is better not to stop or interfere students in a middle of a conversation or speech just because of some errors. The corrections which are done through breaking up students' thoughts do not really have sufficient results; instead students feel less motivated and upset from the correction (Lyster, Lightbown&Spada, 1999).

Collectively, errors are customarily a demonstration of originality, creativity and intelligence. Errors demonstrate that students are driven to learn new things. Students who commit errors are not only creative; they also exhibit that they are intelligent learners. Students'

errors come from positive and negative transfer from the mother tongue. They come from false analogy and overgeneralization of rules and patterns. They come from attempts to simplify the input to reduce the strain of working memory. In short, errors are the apparentindicator of an inwardly active mind.

How teachers treat errors in language classroom affect students' performance negatively or positively. Hence, teachers should help students understand the process of language skill development in several ways: a) focus on interlanguage as a natural part of language learning; remind them that they learned their first language this way; b) point out that the systematic nature of interlanguage can help students understand why they make errors. They can often predict when they will make errors and what types of errors they will make; c) keep the overall focus of the classroom on communication, not error correction. Use overt correction only in structured output activities; d) teaches students that errors are learning opportunities. If a teacher maintains the attitude that errors are a natural part of learning, he will create a supportive environment where students are willing to try to use the language even though their mastery of forms is perfect.

Essentially, this study presented the theories on error treatment. It analyzed the recorded classroom proceedings and questionnaire to determine the preferred error correction strategies of students. The recorded classroom proceedings became the basis for the analysis of the students' preferred error correction. Responses on the questionnairewere analyzed on the preference of students in the correction of errors.

Specifically, this research sought to determine the students' preferred methods of correcting their errors.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study is quantitative in nature. It usedsurvey questionnaire and classroom observation to determine the students' preference for error correction. To validate the result of the study, a focus group discussion between and among the respondents was conducted.

Locale and Time of the Study

This study was confined to freshman students enrolled in English 12 in this university SY 2014. At least one class per degree program with a total of 613 students participated in the survey.

Data Collection Procedure

Collections of data were both electronic and manual in nature (Bailey 2006). Manual data collection was in the form of classroom observation and a questionnaire. Electronic data collection, on the other hand, was done with videotape recorder.

Results of the classroom observation both manual and electronic were analyzed. This procedure involved identifying selected bits of data as belonging to a certain class or category of behaviors.

Treatment of Data

Data gathered were summarized, analyzed and cross-tabulated. Summary statistics like T-test, frequency and rank were likewise used to analyze the preferred error correction of the students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Preferred Error Correction Method of the Learners

This section dealt with the students' preferred method of correcting their errors in the classroom.

Table 1presents the learners' preferred method of correcting their errors in class. It showsthat the students strongly agree for teachersto point out the error and provide the correct form with a mean score of 4.32.

Table 1.Students' preferred error correction method

CORRECTION METHOD	XW	DE	RANK	T-VALUE	PROB.
T corrects the error immediately	4.02	MA	3	24.843*	<0.5
T delays the correction of errors (after class)	2.19	SA	6	17.216*	<0.05
T gives a hint which might enable S to notice the error and self-correct	3.92	MA	4.5	26.275*	<0.05
T explains why the utterance is incorrect	4.18	MA	2	31.856*	<0.05
T points out the error and provides the correct form	4.32	MA	1	42.354*	<0.05
T presents the correct form when repeating all or part of the S's utterance	3.92	MA	4.5	25.415*	<0.05
*significant					

Ranked second is for teachers to explain why the utterance is incorrect with a mean of 4.18 followed by to correct the error immediately (4.02). The least methods of error correction were to give hint which might enable the student to notice the error and self-correct and

present the correct form when repeating all or part of the students' utterance with a mean of 3.92 each. Last in rank is to delay the correction of errors (after class) with 2.19.

Error correction has been treated differently. Ruin (1996) states that error correction certainly helps learners to find out differences between their own interlanguage and their target language. How teachers should treat errors, however, is a difficult and sensitive issue and there have existed both opponents' and proponents' view of error correction (James, 1998; Brown, 2000).

Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) maintain that due to the universal order of acquisition theory through learners' developmental stages, teaching inclusive of error correction cannot change the order of acquisition of L2 from. Thus, according to their argument, error correction can be viewed as a waste of time.

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The following examples show that teachers point out the error and explain why the utterance is incorrect. This means that the overall focus of checking the error in the classroom promotes communication, not just simply identifying the errors committed

In the following excerpts, the errors are underscored to facilitate easy identification of errors and corrections are also identified.

Example 1:

In this excerpt, the error is on subject-verb agreement.

S1: A man become strong when he have problems…

T: fine… but… there's something wrong in your sentence…anyone… who can check the error?...

S2: ehmm… the verb is wrong

T: What makes it wrong?

S3: ..it should be becomes…. Because…because…man is singular

T: alright…very good…any other error?..what else?

S4: have is wrong… it should be….has

The above example shows that the teacher gives a hint or cue that there is something wrong in the sentence. The teacher nominates "anyone? who can check the error in the sentence: "anyone who can check the error?" then student 2 identified that there is something wrong on the verb and corrects the error of the verb become to become because man is singular. Student 4 identified also the second error which is have to has because he is singular.

Example 2:

There is an error on the use of phrases in this excerpt. The teacher instructed the students to form an acronym of their names using phrases but one student used words.

T: This time, I would like you to describe yourself. You are going to use the letters of your first names. For example, my name starts with R. R means Responsible in many ways…

T: okey, who would like to read his work??? yes Wilson

S: W – wise in some ways
I – intensive caregiver
L – loving
S – sociable guy
O – open to all
N – natural

T: Thank you Wilson. However Wilson, I have two things … that I would like to emphasize: 'loving and natural'. The instruction is you need to have a phrase. So what would you have for loving, loving … loving… add some more words… loving…

S: loving son

T: ok, how about for natural? Natural… natural… what?

S: nature-lover

T: That's it. Thank you Wilson

The above example shows that the student did not follow the instruction of using a phrase to describe the letters in his name. The teacher pointed out two words "loving" and "natural".

The instruction given by the teacher was to use phrase. The teacher called the attention of the students after they gave their answers when the teacher said, "…, I have two things … that I would like to emphasize: 'loving and natural'. The instruction is you need to have a phrase. So what would you have for loving, loving … loving… add some more words… loving…" The student realized his wrong answer and corrected himself saying " loving son" and "nature – lover".

According to Lyster and Ranta (1997), repair refers to the correct reformulation of an error as uttered in a single turn and not to the sequence of turns resulting in the correct reformulation; nor does it refer to self-initiated repair. Repair can occur in the following forms: self-repair or peer-repair of error, and repetition or incorporation of feedback.

Self-repair occurs when teacher feedback, which does not include the correct form, prompts the student who committed the error to self-correct, whereas peer repairis provided by a student different from the one who initially made the error.

Self and peer repair follow elicitative types of corrective feedback such as repetition, clarification requests, and elicitation. Repetitionand incorporationusually follow recasts, explicit correction, or translation, because these feedback types include the target form, which can be repeated or incorporated in a longer utterance.

On the contrary, correcting students' errors immediately according to Brown (1987), has a stigmatic effect to the learners. Although this is not the least preference of the students, this means that students who make errors and mistakes while learning a language feel ashamed or embarrassed when corrected immediately by the teacher especially in front of many students. To some students, correction of errors can result to negative feelings and attitudes such as avoidance, hesitance, humiliation, low motivation, and embarrassment.

According to Long (1977), immediate correction of error may interrupt learner's practice and may be disruptive and eventually inhibit learner's willingness to try.

Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) state that people cannot learn language without first systematically committing errors. Also, they point out that learner errors are learning steps. Similarly, some researchers such as Bartram and Walton (1991), and Widdowson (1990) affirm that errors are evidence of how much learners achieve their goals in the target language. Therefore, current thinking regarding second language acquisition (henceforward referred as SLA) has recognized that making errors is an inevitable and natural part of the

second language learning process (Nunan& Lamb, 1996). At the same time, language teachers have become more tolerant of errors in that their approach towards strict correction is more relaxed.

The findings show that when the English teachers give out their feedbacks on errors, they are not judging but supporting their students. This means that when students' errors occur, they can remodel it by saying it correctly, paraphrase it by saying it in different ways, or prepare a grammar lesson at the end of a class for students (Mantello, 1997).

Hendrickson (1978) and many linguists claimed that it is better not to stop or interfere students in a middle of a conversation or speech just because of some errors. The corrections which are done through breaking up students' thoughts do not really have sufficient results; instead students feel less motivated and upset from the correction (Lyster, Lightbown&Spada, 1999).

Many linguists thought that teachers should first treat students' errors when they impede the communication (Bartram & Walton, 1991). In other words, when listeners have difficulty to understand the meaning of the message that students are trying to get across, teachers put their focus on making semantic feedback other than correcting syntactic ones (Hanzeli, 1975).

In a most practical and clearly written article on error correction, Hendrickson (1978) advised teachers to try to discern the difference between what is called "global" and "local" errors that learners make. Accordingly, global errors hinder communication; they prevent the hearer from comprehending some aspect of the message. Local errors, on the other hand do not prevent a message from being heard because they usually only affect a single element of a sentence. Hendrickson recommended that local errors usually need not be corrected since the message is clear and correction might interrupt a learner in the flow of productive communication. On the contrary, global errors need to be corrected in some way since the message may otherwise remain garbled.

According to Lim Ka Lang (1990), there are many factors why students still make mistakes/errors with the same grammar point right after the teacher has spent four or five times teaching it. The teacher might have taught as clearly as it was possible to teach but still there is a large percentage of the class who will not use the structure correctly.

Students' errors are signs of learning and depending on the types of errors and situations, teachers need to offer students the correct ways or usages of the language, and students have the rights to know. Teacher needs to know when, what, and how to correct a student's error, but it is also easy to get carried away and lose the focus.

Summary

The major finding of this study reveals that the most preferred methods of correcting errors were for the teacher to point out the error and provide the correct form;to explain why the utterance is incorrect followed by to correct the error immediately, to give a hint which might enable the students to notice the error and self-correct, to present the correct form when repeating all or part of the students' utterance and to delay the correction of errors (after class) the least.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

In connection with the findings of this study, it is concluded that treatment of errors in the classroom is a significant tool for teachers to consider in enhancing communication opportunities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the researcher recommends that teachers may avoid putting answers directly on students' errors, but adopt more implicit error identification techniques for students to reflect on and repair their own errors.

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