

ERROR CORRECTING TECHNIQUES IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract: Error correction is a crucial component of language teaching because it supports learners' linguistic accuracy, raises their awareness of target forms, and improves long-term communicative ability. This article examines theoretical foundations of error correction, types of errors, and major corrective feedback techniques. Approaches such as explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition are analyzed through the lens of second language acquisition research. The paper also discusses affective considerations, timing, and teacher–learner interaction. Recommendations for effective, research-based correction practices conclude the article.

Key words: Corrective feedback; error correction; SLA; recasts; elicitation; language teaching; learner errors; metalinguistic feedback.

Introduction. Learner errors are a natural part of second language acquisition (Corder, 1967, p. 167). Instead of being viewed as failures, errors provide evidence of

language development and internal rule formation. Teachers, therefore, need systematic and effective ways to respond to these errors.

Corrective feedback (CF) has been widely studied in applied linguistics. Research suggests that appropriate feedback can facilitate interlanguage development by providing learners with modified input, noticing opportunities, and form-focused attention (Lyster & Ranta, 1997, p. 37; Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 123). This article outlines major error-correcting techniques, drawing on both theory and practical classroom applications.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Errors and interlanguage

Corder (1967) argued that errors represent the learner's system at a given time—called **interlanguage** (Selinker, 1972, p. 214). Recognizing errors as developmental helps teachers respond constructively rather than punitively.

2.2 The role of corrective feedback

Corrective feedback serves several purposes:

- directing learner attention to problematic forms
- providing modified or correct input
- encouraging self-repair
- supporting long-term accuracy (Ellis, 2009, p. 11)

Empirical studies show CF can significantly improve grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and pragmatic competence (Li, 2010, p. 309).

3. Major Error Correcting Techniques in Language Teaching

3.1 Explicit Correction

The teacher directly provides the correct form.

Example: “You must say *went*, not *goed*.”

This method is clear and unambiguous but may interrupt fluency.

(Lyster & Ranta, 1997, p. 46)

3.2 Recasts

A recast reformulates the learner’s incorrect utterance without directly pointing out the error.

Example:

Learner: “He go to school.”

Teacher: “Yes, he *goes* to school.”

Recasts are common in classrooms but sometimes go unnoticed by learners.
(Long, 1996, p. 423)

3.3 Clarification Requests

The teacher indicates that the message was not understood or needs fixing.

Example: “Sorry, what do you mean?” or “Could you say that again?”

This prompts learners to self-correct.

(Lyster & Ranta, 1997, p. 47)

3.4 Metalinguistic Feedback

The teacher gives comments or clues about the nature of the error without supplying the answer.

Example: “Check the verb tense.”

Research shows this method strongly supports noticing and form understanding.
(Ellis, 2009, p. 15)

3.5 Elicitation

The teacher pauses or prompts the learner to produce the correct form.

Example:

Teacher: "Yesterday we... ?"

Learner: "...went to the park."

Elicitation encourages active learner involvement.

(Lyster & Ranta, 1997, p. 48)

3.6 Repetition of the Error

The teacher repeats the learner's incorrect form with rising intonation to highlight the mistake.

Example: "He go?"

This draws attention to the error without giving the solution.

(Lyster & Ranta, 1997, p. 49)

4. Timing of Correction

4.1 Immediate vs. Delayed Correction

- **Immediate correction** is useful for grammar, pronunciation, and accuracy-focused tasks.
- **Delayed correction** is preferred during communicative activities where fluency is the priority.

Nation & Newton (2009) note that delayed correction reduces anxiety and helps maintain natural communication (p. 65).

5. Affective Considerations

Learners differ in tolerance for correction. Overcorrection may increase anxiety or reduce participation. Brown (2007) argues that teachers must balance affective factors with accuracy goals (p. 306). Supportive, constructive correction promotes motivation and confidence.

6. Practical Recommendations

1. Use a **variety** of feedback techniques to suit different errors.
2. Encourage **self-correction and peer correction** when appropriate.
3. Avoid overwhelming learners with too much correction at once.
4. Use **recasts** during fluency tasks and **metalinguistic feedback** during accuracy tasks.
5. Provide feedback in a positive, non-judgmental manner.

1. Conclusion

Error correction is an essential pedagogical tool that supports learner development and accuracy. Research shows that corrective feedback—when applied thoughtfully—helps learners notice gaps in their interlanguage and promotes long-term improvement. Teachers should select techniques based on context, learner needs, and instructional goals, ensuring a balanced approach that respects both accuracy and communicative competence.

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