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HOW SHOULD STUDENTS GRAMMATICAL ERRORS BE TREATED IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The paper presents theoretical information for incorporating grammar in writing classes. It deals with the problem of treatment of student errors. The consequences of over-correcting as well as the lack of error correction have been analysed. The study investigates the process of developing of editing strategies and techniques which can be various for different students. The explanation to this variety has been given, the dependence of the choice of editing strategies and techniques on learners' level of grammatical competence, teacher's knowledge and experience in pedagogical grammar and the writing context has been identified. The article suggests the three activities which can be useful when connected with linguistic accuracy. The stages of feedback on student writing have been presented and the purpose of each has been explained. The article also draws attention to a conference as another effective method to help students cope with grammatical errors. Conferences have been presented as a means of developing special strategies and techniques for a definite student taking into account their individual difficulties with grammar in writing. The objective of the study is to help EFL teachers find a solution of how to view and treat grammatical errors and how to give students the feedback without damaging their motivation.

Key words: grammatical errors, error correction, writing, editing strategies, teacher feedback, stages of feedback on writing.

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ЯК ВИПРАВЛЯТИ ГРАМАТИЧНІ ПОМИЛКИ СТУДЕНТІВ В ПРОЦЕСІ НАВЧАННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ ЯК ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ

У статті представлено теоретичні засади використання граматики в процесі навчання письма. Розглянуто питання виправлення граматичних помилок студентів. У роботі досліджуються стратегії редагування, які залежать від рівня розвитку граматичної компетентності студентів, від знань і досвіду викладача у сфері педагогічної граматики а також від контексту. Метою статті є допомогти викладачам знайти відповіді на питання, зокрема, як ставитися до граматичних помилок студентів і як надати студентам зворотній зв'язок, вказуючи на їхні помилки, але не знижуючи при цьому рівень їхньої мотивації.

Ключові слова: граматичні помилки, виправлення помилок, стратегії редагування, зворотній зв'язок з викладачем, етапи зворотнього зв'язку у навчанні письма.

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КАК ИСПРАВЛЯТЬ ГРАММАТИЧЕСКИЕ ОШИБКИ СТУДЕНТОВ В ПРОЦЕССЕ ОБУЧЕНИЯ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ КАК ИНОСТРАННОМУ ЯЗЫКУ

В статье представлены теоретические основы применения грамматики в процессе обучения письму. В частности, рассматривается вопрос исправления грамматических ошибок студентов. В работе исследуются стратегии редактирования в зависимости от уровня грамматической компетенции студентов, знаний и опыта преподавателя в области педагогической грамматики, а также от контекста. Цель статьи – оказать помощь преподавателям в поиске ответов на вопросы, а именно, как относиться к грамматическим ошибкам студентов и как предоставить студентам обратную связь, указывая на их ошибки, но не снижая при этом уровень их мотивации.

Ключевые слова: грамматические ошибки, исправление ошибок, стратегии редактирования, обратная связь с преподавателем, этапы обратной связи в обучении письму.

Introduction. One of the main problems for those who teach English as a Foreign language (EFL) is error correction. It's always difficult to know when and if to correct students and how to go about it. The problem of over-correcting is that students can lose motivation and an activity may be destroyed changing into a boring process of correcting every single mistake. The other extreme is to allow students to use a foreign language and not to correct any mistakes trying not to demotivate learners. If correction gives a basis for improvement, most students do like to have some of their mistakes corrected. EFL teachers have different viewpoints on this question and various ways of correcting their students and it is a matter of finding out what both a teacher and a student feel comfortable with.

Grammatical errors can be found in spoken and written English. In contrast to writing, students have very little processing time when it comes to speaking, so it is not surprising that grammatical errors often occur in oral communication. When writing students do not have the chance to rephrase or clarify what they are saying. Their message must be clear the first time. Written errors are also less tolerated than spoken ones. Therefore, as we can see the approaches to dealing with grammatical mistakes in the processes of

speaking and writing are both quite important and should be different. In our study we are going to concentrate our attention on the treatment of grammatical errors in writing.

Therefore, *the aim* of this study is to help EFL teachers find a solution of how to view and treat student grammatical errors and how to give learners the feedback without damaging their motivation.

Materials and methods. Methodologists offer several ideas of how to deal with grammatical errors when developing writing proficiency. They explore the ways in which students use language in different text types to create meanings and connections and focus their attention on how their findings can help learners develop their linguistic recourses and get a better understanding of how to use them. They have tried to incorporate grammar in writing classes and emphasize selection of grammatical features based on text analysis (Byrd P., Reid J., 1998); discuss how teachers can prepare themselves to treat student errors and describe error correction options as peer editing (Ferris D., 2011); offer practical suggestions and activities for the writing classroom underlying the role of grammar in writing instruction for various stages of writing processes (Frodesen J., Holten C., 2003); analyse grammatical and lexicogrammatical structures important for academic writing instruction (Hinkel, E., 2004); show how grammatical features construct texts such as the academic essays (Schlepperegell M., 2004)

The investigation of grammar in writing has got the multidimensional characteristics and form-focused instruction does not necessary center on errors. Grammatical problems relating to errors do exist and it is an undeniable fact that students appreciate assistance in improving their language accuracy. However, some students may regard the need for linguistic accuracy as relatively of no importance and rely on teachers to correct their grammatical error. So it is significant to discuss with students at the very beginning why accuracy in grammatical structures is vital in an academic as well as professional contexts.

It is important to emphasize that error treatment is a very complicated problem. EFL teachers need to be armed with some theoretical foundations. In his study Henrickson J. lists the five fundamental questions: 1) Should errors be corrected? 2) When should errors be corrected? 3) Which learner errors should be corrected? 4) How should learner errors be corrected? 5) Who should correct learner errors? (Henrickson J., 1978). Answering these questions with reference to grammar in writing it is necessary to develop some peculiar editing strategies and techniques, on the one hand, and concentrate proper attention on the teacher feedback on errors, on the other hand.

The benefits of focused work on eliciting errors and creating *editing strategies and techniques* can certainly vary for students. The explanation to this variety lies in the teacher's knowledge and experience in pedagogical grammar and the writing contest. But it is also worth mentioning that special editing strategies and techniques are extremely dependent on the students' levels and course objectives. Students can be helped with a number of activities which are very useful when connected with linguistic accuracy. The first activity is writing a diagnostic essay. It can help a teacher identify both individual students' errors and errors common to a group. This picture of typical grammatical errors can become the focus of explicit instruction during the course. The second activity deals with editing by students themselves. They can be given short texts with specific errors to be seen and corrected. Collecting examples of the same type of errors from students' writing and then asking them to find these mistakes when working in groups can be the third activity. For errors such as word choices the fourth activity can be suggested. These errors imply a great deal of variation, an EFL teacher can provide explanations of the common sources for such errors so that students can later assess if these sources are ones they may need to check in their notes.

It is urgent to mention that it takes considerable time and requires great effort to become a good editor. Teachers should remember if their students are not taught to do editing, they want benefit from classroom exercises as well as from individual conferences. A great number of strategies should help a teacher to encourage their students to choose the one they can be successful with.

Another significant question referring to grammatical errors is *teacher feedback on student writing*. There are some general guidelines and stages (see Figure 1) how to provide feedback on grammar in writing.

Figure 1

Stages of feedback on student writing

Stage	Activity	Purpose
Stage 1	error correction	to show students their result in writing
Stage 2	error-analysis sheet with error patterns; indirect feedback	to identify types and error pattern; to suggest a list of structural errors with Internet resources to consult for more information
Stage 3	drawing students' attention to areas of concern in early drafts	not to give all the error feedback again but make remember one's typical errors

At the beginning of teaching writing (Stage 1) it is important to collect students' papers (for example a diagnostic essay) and correct their errors so that they can understand the result of their writing. But it is essential to underline that it is not enough. Students should not only see their errors but also must be provided with an error-analysis sheet (Stage 2) which can demonstrate types and errors patterns. The feedback may be direct and indirect. According to James (James, C., 1998), it is sensible to follow the three principles in error correction. Firstly, the techniques involved in error correction would be able to enhance the students' accuracy in expression. Secondly, the students' affective factors should be taken into consideration and the correction should not be face-threatening to the students. Some scholars believed that teachers' indirect correction is highly appreciated. We totally agree that the indirect feedback is more effective and undoubtedly more preferred by students. It takes place when a teacher does the following: puts a check in the margin of the lines where errors occur; underlines or highlights selected errors; codes errors in the margins with definite symbols; attaches a sheet with a list of several structural errors to the student's draft.

It is necessary to emphasise that a teacher should not provide feedback on all errors in every draft. It can't be accepted by students properly and even can be demotivating. It is much better when a teacher focuses their attention on those errors which are worth student's attention because they most seriously affect written communication or because these errors are very frequent and rough. The decision which errors deserve more attention and should be included in a list to be attached to a student's draft is made by a teacher

and is usually very different for every student. The choice of errors to be pointed out is defined by a proficiency level and the instruction situation when a teacher focuses their attention on teaching peculiar grammar in class.

While the bulk of teacher feedback on errors should occur in Stage 3 it is not necessary provide students with a sheet of structural errors they may have already seen before. As it is widely known it takes a lot of time to get a new habit so that to be able not to forget one's typical errors. Therefore, a list of all errors is not given in teachers' feedback in the last stage of the course when writing is taught. Moreover, students find they lack sufficient time to address this list effectively.

It is necessary to draw attention to is another effective method which can be useful and can help students cope with their errors in writing. Conferences with students outside of class are excellent opportunities to provide individual assistance. When a teacher's aim is to demonstrate directly the difficulties with grammar in writing of a definite student, they can hold mini conferences with individuals or small groups in the classroom and act as a collaborator rather than an error corrector. In this case students are helped to identify errors that create reader confusion or misinterpretation, on the one hand, and they can select strategies for editing that best fit their learning styles, on the other hand. The choice of specific techniques can help students set goals for improvement and assess the following progress in these goals. Because during individual conference students can be given more attention they can be provided with the insight into the sources of errors such as interference from a third language or inaccurately formulated rule. It is very important to be able to analyse student error sources as it can help a teacher in the future to suggest effective editing strategies.

Results. Error correction in EFL classroom is constantly developing and improving. It continues to change because of the result of new research in this area of science. Given the important role of grammar as a source for effective communication, focus on form should be integrated in instructions in EFL classroom. In the case of error correction and feedback, EFL teachers should help students agree with the role of accuracy in written communication and encourage them to develop editing strategies that they can use outside the classroom.

Discussion and conclusions. Therefore, the article has convincingly demonstrated a great potential of grammatical error correction as soon as the process remains a positive experience for both the teacher and the learner. On the one hand, it is really necessary for teachers to be able to find the ways of coping with grammatically wrong language when students are not corrected constantly, but on the other hand, it is important to remember that students are those who learn from their mistakes and whose writing in a foreign language should be improved.

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