
ПРОФЕСІЙНА ІНШОМОВНА ПІДГОТОВКА В ПРОЦЕСІ МІЖКУЛЬТУРНОЇ ІНТЕГРАЦІЇ

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CORRECTING MISTAKES IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

The article deals with the problem of finding out the most effective techniques and strategies of correcting students' mistakes in the English language teaching process. The research is aimed at the analysis of the concept "mistake" and defining its role in teaching English. It is stated, that communicative approach views mistakes as an inevitable and necessary aspect in studying a second language. Three types of mistakes have been singled out: slips, errors and attempts. It has been found out, that errors are indicators of what should be taught. It is also defined, that the main reasons of making slips are hurrying and carelessness, attempts are caused by students' desire of achieving the communicative goal, and only errors are viewed as gaps in students' knowledge. There also have been found out the most productive strategies of correcting mistakes by teachers. Nonetheless, according to the observation, teachers do not use all types equally often, a large number of correction cases is taken by recasts and elicitation, accounting for over a half of all feedback. It is stated, that peer correction and self-correction are not widely used, though the last should be taken into consideration by teachers as the productive and efficient strategies for successful English language acquisition.

Key words: *communicative approach, mistake, correction, self-correction, correction strategies.*

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КОРЕКЦІЯ ПОМИЛОК В НАВЧАННІ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ ЯК ДРУГОЇ МОВИ

Робота спрямована на дослідження ефективних технік та стратегій корекції помилок. Наукова розвідка передбачає аналіз поняття «помилка» та визначення його ролі у навчанні англійської, як другої мови. Визначено, що комунікативний підхід характеризує помилки як корисну складову навчання англійської мови, а їх корекцію як невід'ємну частину навчання. Проаналізовано типи помилок учнів та з'ясовані причини їх виникнення. Окреслені основні способи корекції помилок та найбільш продуктивні стратегії вчителя, які сприяли б ефективному навчанню англійської мови. Визначено, що на уроках вчителю слід надавати учням можливість для самокорекції.

Ключові слова: *комунікативний підхід, помилка, корекція, самокорекція, стратегії корекції.*

Language acquisition is a long process, during which the student inevitably makes a lot of mistakes. There are a lot of reasons and factors, which can influence making mistakes. So, the necessity of their correction, in order to achieve a high level of language competence is obvious. However, the role of a teacher in this process still remains under discussion, as well as the problem of finding out the best strategies and approaches to error correction.

Needless to say, that mistakes can be viewed from two perspectives: as a part of learning, and as a part of teaching process. Researchers often ponder on how to avoid them, and how to predict and correct them. Some of the scholars characterize errors, as disadvantage of teaching process (R. Ellis, S. Mitchell and F. Myles). L. Selinker admits, that making errors in foreign language depends on student's native language. A. Doff claims, that errors are indicators of what is necessary to teach. As for the Communicative approach supporters, they agree with these viewpoints. Additionally, there arises the question, which can be qualified as what role mistake plays in teaching and studying. This problem was investigated by J. Edge. R. Lyster and L. Ranta worked out effective

techniques of error correction and corrective feedback. There are other researchers, who are involved into investigation of this topic: S. Gaponova, R. Ellis, M. Bartram, A. Brown, N. Chomsky, S. Krashen, and R. Yoshida.

Consequently, in language teaching, mistakes cannot be avoided, and the first thing, a teacher has to cope with, is how to treat the mistakes. The topic of error correction has always brought controversy among many language teachers and researchers. Based on their own experiences on language learning, many teachers nowadays have very strong views about error correction, and some of them, being influenced by the latest teaching methods (communicative approach), are often ambivalent toward it.

So, **the aim** of the research is to find out the most effective techniques of correcting mistakes. The main tasks of the research are to prove or refute the effectiveness of corrective feedback, and to highlight the disadvantages of inappropriate error correction. The aim has defined the following objectives:

- to consider the notions “attempts”, “errors”, “slips” and the peculiarities of their correction;
- to highlight the reasons of making mistakes;
- to define the effective strategies of error correction.

Communicative approach is nowadays the most widespread method of language teaching. Rather than a method, it is regarded a universal approach to teaching. There are many aspects in communicative language teaching (CLT) that differ from those of the previous methods. The teachers are no longer seen as a key aspect of the learning process. Instead, they should appear to be nothing more than participants of communication, which should cause lessening of tension and remove the barrier between a student and a teacher. A learner is encouraged to be more independent, and interaction among all learners in the class is supported. Most importantly, errors are not seen in such a negative way as before and are generally more tolerated. To sum up, the most important difference is that CLT predicts that learners want to learn a second language in order to use it for communicative purposes. That means that a successful language learner should be one who is able to communicate without problems, rather than someone who has no errors in written exercises. It is a well-known fact, that CTL regards an error as something inevitable and natural in the process of language learning. A. Doff has managed to accurately illustrate the positive side of errors in his work. He claims that:

“Students’ errors are a very useful way of showing what they have and have not learnt. So instead of seeing errors negatively, as a sign of failure, we can see them positively as an indication of what we still need to teach. Obviously, if we try to prevent students from making errors we can never find out what they do not know”[2].

According to Julian Edge, there are three categories of error: slips, errors and attempts. Slip refers to the situation when the student knows the language point, and is capable of correcting the mistake. Native speakers also make this type of errors. The second category is called errors. Students cannot correct these mistakes by themselves. The third type of errors usually occurs during free speaking practice and free writing practice. The student has an idea, what he wishes to express, but doesn’t know the corresponding language item. J. Edge refers to this as an attempt.

Slips can appear, because of learner’s tiredness, nervous or angry mood. The slip is the mistake, which shouldn’t be corrected by a teacher, but students can correct it by themselves. Errors are the result of incomplete learning and linguistic incompetency of the learners, and errors cannot be self-corrected. That is why errors should be explained by a teacher.

Researchers in the field of applied linguistics usually distinguish between two types of errors: performance errors and competence errors. Performance errors are those errors, made by learners, when they are tired or hurried. Slips can be included in this type of errors. Competence errors are more serious than performance errors, since competence errors reflect inadequate learning. In this connection, it is important to note that researchers distinguish between mistakes which are slips in performance and errors which reflect inadequate competence.

Other researchers distinguish local and global errors. Local errors don’t interrupt communication and they don’t change the meaning of utterances. On the other hand, global errors are more important and serious; they can interrupt communication and change meanings. Local errors involve noun and verb inflections, and the use of articles, prepositions, and auxiliaries. Global errors involve wrong word order in a sentence [1, p. 44–46].

All in all, language learning errors involve all language components: the phonological, the morphological, the lexical, and the syntactic.

According to the forms of students’ activity, mistakes can be also divided into general two types: oral and writing errors. Oral mistakes appear while students do speaking tasks, and writing errors, connected with the activities, developing writing skills.

At this stage of the research it would be logical to look into the reasons of mistakes. One of them is the influence of the speaker’s native language. It can provide both local and global mistakes including grammar, phonological, lexical, syntactic and others.

The second cause of mistakes comes from the fact when students think that they know the rule, but actually, they don’t know it perfectly.

Thirdly, people can say things that they know are not correct. But the importance of getting the message across is more urgent than rules. Fourthly, mistakes can happen because someone is tired or in a hurry or simply thinking about something else.

It is quite easy to think of possible causes of mistakes, that students make when speaking a foreign language, but it is very difficult indeed to say in any one case exactly what caused a particular mistake to occur. The student might be in a hurry, influenced by the words and structures of his/her native language, and also trying to apply a rule of English which may not be correct [4, p. 75–80].

So, it can be concluded, that mistake is an important part of the learning process. If students do not make mistakes, they will not be ready for more difficult topics, tasks and structures to work with. It is important to choose the material, which is challenging, but manageable for special class and then correct mistakes in positive ways. The teacher should bear in mind, that he should correct errors, but not attempts, unless they cause a breakdown in communication.

Most researchers agree that pupils should not be interrupted in their speech to correct an error, made by that particular pupil. Especially, teacher should not interrupt the student during fluency activity. If a teacher over-corrects, the students might get frustrated, because they don’t have the opportunity to express themselves without teacher’s interrupting. The other situation take place, when correction is not necessary: students make systematic errors or mistakes, which appear, when students haven’t learnt the rule yet. (for example, “*Yesterday I goed...*”)

Nonetheless, if the aim of activity is accuracy, teacher should deal with all mistakes in the target language immediately.

As well as with oral work, teacher should consider the aim of the activity of written work. If it is controlled writing practice, e. g. a gap-fill exercise on recently-studied language point, teacher needs to correct all errors.

Thus, both in oral and written work, it is important to find the aim of activity. Secondly, teacher should know the objectives.

As for creative or extensive writing, it is possible to correct some, but not all errors. How to correct errors in a piece of creativity or communicative writing, should be considered very carefully, because it can be very frustrating for students to have their work returned, covered in corrections. Teachers, as a rule, make special notes on the margins indicating the type of an error.

When marking, teacher indicates the spot at which there is a mistake and puts the corresponding symbol on the margin. The students can attempt to correct the errors themselves. For high-level students teacher can put the symbol on the margin without indicating, where the error exactly is. The important feature is to give students a chance for self-correction. This approach also teaches students to review their works [5, p. 60–64].

After correcting any work, it is possible to give students time in order to review, what they have done and to consider teacher's feedback. This will also give students the opportunity to ask some questions, if they are unable to find the correction themselves.

In order to observe teacher's correction the model proposed by Lyster and Ranta was used. They focused on phonological, grammatical, and lexical errors and came up with a model of corrective feedback types such as recasts, explicit correction, elicitation, clarification, repetition of error, and metalinguistic feedback [6, p. 37–66].

Types of error correction with examples from the lessons are described below.

1. Explicit correction: Clearly indicating that the student's utterance was incorrect, the teacher provides the correct form.

S: there was some milk in fridge.

T: + in the fridge"

2. Recast: The teacher implicitly reformulates the student's error, or provides the correction without directly pointing out that the student's utterance was incorrect.

S: he like pop-music.

T: yes, he likeS pop-music

3. Clarification request: The teacher indicates that the message has not been understood or that the student's utterance included some kind of mistake and that a repetition or a reformulation is needed by using phrases like «Excuse me?».

S: there aren't many /hotuls/ in this town.

T: again?

4. Metalinguistic clues: The teacher asks questions like "Do we say it like that?" or provides comments or information related to the formation of the student's utterance without providing the correct form.

S: I seed it yesterday.

T: Is seed the past tense of see?

5. Elicitation: The teacher directly elicits the correct form from the student by asking questions (e.g., «How do I ask somebody to clean the board?»), by pausing to allow the student to complete the teacher's utterance (e.g., «He is a good...») or by asking students to reformulate the utterance (e.g., «Can you say that again?»).

S: there are a few books in my /librari/

T: in my...?

6. Repetition: The teacher repeats the student's error and changes intonation to draw student's attention to it.

S: How much money do you have in your /pakit/?

T: /pakit/?

S: /pokit/

T: yes

The teachers don't use all types equally often, that's why in order to increase the accuracy of the research, teacher interactions were observed and the results yielded the percentage distribution of the six feedback types as: recasts 55%, elicitation 14%, clarification requests 11%, metalinguistic clues 8%, explicit correction 7%, and repetition of error 5%. Recasts were by far the most widely used technique, accounting for over half of all feedback.

It should be pointed out, that most teachers prefer direct correction, because it is quick, though not always efficient. A middle stage between direct and indirect methods is giving a chance for students. It has three ways of realization. The first way is using a signal at the moment of mistake (for example, face expression). The student notices, that he has made a mistake and tries to correct it. But the disadvantage is that he doesn't know, where the mistake is.

The next way is isolation, or as it was previously said, metalinguistic clues for grammatical area (the student says, "Yesterday I goed..." It is possible to say "Past" in order to show the mistake of the tense with irregular word).

The last way is focus. It means, that teacher can focused on the wrong word, "I GOED?" intonation rises.

Additionally, in correcting mistakes there always the chance for self-correction and peer-correction. The more students are involved in correction, the more they have to think about the language used in the classroom [3, p. 22–30]. A useful way of organizing peer-correction is the creation of correction groups.

Teacher divides the class into some groups. Every week, students get some tasks and every week there is one correction group and two groups of writing. Teacher checks students' task, but he only makes correction codes on the margins but does not correct mistakes. Correction mistake is the task of correction group. And at the end of each lesson, student from correction group explain their classmates their error. The role of teacher is to move around the class and help students with correction and explanations [3, p. 53–55].

There is another technique, correction competition, when students correct mistakes, which the teacher offers them. The basic idea of this activity is to give students some fun while they are focusing on accuracy.

So, all things considered, several conclusions can be made. There is a quite difference among mistake, error and slip. Each of these notions have causes, classification and area of existing. The most important sort of mistake is a mistake that leads to misunderstanding. There is no point in learning to say correct sentences in English if they don't contain a message. It is more

important to correct mistakes which affect the meaning of several sentences, than to correct small grammatical points inside one sentence. Many things, which are called mistakes and viewed as problems, are in fact signals which prove students' successful language acquisition. Correction is a way of giving information or feedback to students. Its main function is to support their learning. Sometimes it is possible to ignore mistakes, when it is more important to give student a chance for communication. It is always necessary to give student a chance of self-correction. The more students are involved in correction, the more they have to think about the language used in the classroom. Yet, peer correction is not a common practice in language classes but it could be quite effective.

The perspectives of this research lie in finding out new productive strategies in correcting students' mistakes.

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