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Correcting spoken errors: what, when, why and how?

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Warm Up

1. Why do people think it is important for students to make mistakes?
2. What can teachers learn from students' mistakes?
3. What is the teacher's role in relation to students' mistakes?

I

- What do you correct?
- Who corrects?
- When do you correct?
- Why do you correct?
- How do you correct?

What?

- Grammar/lexis/pronunciation/register
- Whether or not you choose to correct depends on:
 - the student's attitude to correction (expectations)
 - the student's mood (and your mood!)
 - if it's an error or a 'slip'
 - if it impedes communication/irritates the listener
 - if it's appropriate given the learner's level
 - if we covered this point recently
 - the aim of the activity (accuracy vs. fluency)

Who?

- Self-correction
- Peer-correction
- Teacher correction

When?

- Immediately
- After the activity
- At the end of the lesson/beginning of next lesson
- On-going

Why?

- Students' expectations
- Part of the learning process
- Errors occur for various reasons:
 - **L1 interference**
e.g. *'He has 30 years'*
 - **False analogy**
e.g. *'plait'* rhymes with *'wait'*
 - **Overgeneralisation**
e.g. the use of *'will'* to talk about the future
- If such errors are left uncorrected, they may become fossilised.

How?

- Gestures/facial expressions
- Finger correction
- Echoing (whole/part of utterance)
- Reformulation
- Denial
- Cue word
- Concept questions
- Delayed correction

Correction techniques

| Example | Correction technique used |
|---|--------------------------------|
| I live Sheffield/I do not live in Manchester/He plays well football | Finger correction |
| I go to the cinema yesterday | Gesture |
| She like shopping/running/dancing | Echoing (part/whole utterance) |
| My father's a PHOtograher/I went in Poland | Cue word |
| I will meet John at 2 o'clock/I'm watching TV every day | Concept questions |
| Can you borrow me some money? | Reformulation |
| Where is going Sally? | Denial |
| I have lived here since 4 years | Delayed correction |

Practice

Work in groups of three. Look at the set of cards you are given. Each card has an error on it.

A: Take the role of the learner. Take a card and read out the error.

B: Take the role of the teacher. Correct A's error using an appropriate correction technique.

C: Take the role of an observer. Give feedback on the success of the correction strategy.

Rotate the roles.

Reflection

1. Should *all* mistakes be corrected? Should *any* mistakes be corrected? Why/Why not?
2. If you answered 'no' to the first question, which mistakes should be corrected?
3. Do you think you correct your students enough? Why/Why not?
4. Do you use any correction techniques – either for immediate or delayed correction- that have not been discussed that you would like to share?





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