

Sound Bites for Better Teaching

Error Correction: Not all errors are equal

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It is a fact that all learners of L2 will make mistakes in their oral and written production of L2. It is also true that most native speakers of a language make mistakes, i.e., no one has a perfect command of their own language. When approaching error correction, teachers need to consider what mistakes to correct and how to correct them. Focusing on every error will frustrate and discourage even the most dedicated of students. Error correction strategies differ according to the goal of the particular lesson: achievement-type drill work leading to the learning of vocabulary and grammar demands accuracy and should be corrected at the time, but proficiency-type activities leading toward fluency demand only selective error correction. In the latter, errors that cause incorrect facts, misunderstanding, and miscommunication, i.e., global errors, must be corrected immediately, but local errors, i.e., minor errors of gender agreement, mispronunciation, etc., can be worked on at a later time.

Self Evaluation (no right or wrong answers)

When correcting written work, do you insert the correction in red on the paper or do you indicate the type of error and where it is so that the students can correct their own mistakes?

Do you distinguish between form-focused and meaning-focused errors?

Do you believe that overcorrection is more harmful than beneficial to the student?

Do you encourage peer-correction opportunities between your students?

When correcting written work, do you use a holistic method or do you correct only the grammatical errors?

Do you expect your students to have a more accurate command of L2 than they have of their own language?

Do you understand Krashen's Affective Filter Theory? Do you agree with it? Explain.

Do you encourage students to go beyond what they know in both oral and written work? If so, do you hold them responsible for any errors they might make?

TIP

Expect students to correct their own mistakes according to editing guidelines such as the following:

v	vocabulaire; ce n'est pas le bon mot	tv	temps du verbe
a	il faut mettre, enlever, ou changer l'accent	ort	le mot est mal épilé
f	forme: bon verbe, bon temps, mauvaise forme	()	il faut ajouter un mot
↔	il faut changer la place du mot dans la phrase	/	mot inutile, pas nécessaire
ang	anglicisme; c'est un mot ou une syntaxe anglaise	???	je ne comprends pas ce que tu dis
acc	L'accord n'est pas juste: masculin, féminin, singulier, pluriel		

Example:

J'aimes me lever tard_samedi. Je prends des oeuf pour mon déjeuner. Mon frère jeune joue avec ses video games.