

Correction – Part 1

For some of these questions, you will have your own ideas and suggestions. If you want to discuss any of these, you can leave a message in The Forum, join in the scheduled live chats or look at the transcripts from previous sessions.

Mistakes of form from Mistakes & Correction by Julian Edge. Pearson Education (1989). Chapter 2.

Why do students make mistakes?

Julian Edge suggests that students make mistakes for four particular reasons. In the first place their own first language may 'interfere' with English and produce errors. Secondly students make mistakes because they have learnt a rule but use it too widely. These 'developmental' mistakes are part of the learning process.

He also suggests that students sometimes make mistakes almost deliberately because the one thing they want to do is to get their message across, however correctly or incorrectly.

Finally, he suggests that people make mistakes because they are in a hurry – being careless.

What different kinds of mistakes do students make?

Julian Edge makes a distinction between slips, errors, and attempts.

Slips are the 'careless mistakes' that students make because they haven't thought enough, but which they could correct themselves if they wanted to.

Errors are those mistakes which students couldn't correct even if they were pointed out – they would need them explained.

Attempts are the mistakes caused when students try to convey meanings where they don't yet know the correct way of doing so.

Causes of error (Julian Edge's examples)

Language interference mistakes (when the student's own language provokes English mistakes)	Developmental errors (when students make mistakes because they over-generalise; mistakes that are a natural part of the learning process.
e-stars (for 'stars') Have you fire?	He growed up in Canada Your room is more tidier than mine.



Teacher Development Pack Suggested Answers

To correct or not to correct? By Mandy Lavezzo & Helen Dunford. Modern English Teacher 2/3 (1993)

To correct or not to correct?

The article discusses whether or not correction is appropriate, especially in fluency-type activities.

What situation is Mandy Lavezzo describing?

Mandy Lavezzo talks about courses in which 'teachers of English from outside Great Britain (and whose first language is not English) go to the UK to take teacher training courses given by 'native-speaker' trainers.

Helen Dunford is not in favour of correcting in one particular situation. What is it?
She is especially unhappy about interrupting a fluency activity.

Helen Dunford's five reasons:

- Research suggests that correction doesn't necessarily help;
- Correction can embarrass students in front of their peers;
- Correction interrupts the flow of a fluency activity;
- Not all errors are easy to correct;
- It depends on the kind of session taking place.

What do you understand by 'delayed action correction'?

Delayed action correction is the name given to a situation where teachers make a note of mistakes they hear, and then bring them up later. This has the advantage of giving the participants thinking time, and of allowing many different kinds of feedback.

Mistakes 1 by Mario Rinvoluceri. Modern English Teacher 7/3 1998

Are mistakes good or bad?

Mistakes are neither good or bad. They just are! All learners make mistakes as part of the process of learning.

What do you understand by

A Community language learning: according to Mario Rinvoluceri, when a student wants to say something she tells the teacher who then tells her how to say it in the target language so that she can communicate with the rest of the group. Mistakes are not corrected.

B Lathophobic aphasia; this is the term Earl Stevick borrowed and used to describe a situation in which students don't want to speak a foreign language because they're scared of making mistakes. This leads them to avoid situations where they might have to use the language.

The concept of 'sin'.

Mario Rinvoluceri describes the opinion that making a mistake is somehow bad or 'sinful'. Some learners feel there is something almost immoral about making a mistake. Teachers use words like 'howler' (in the UK) and 'grave mistake' (in Germany) to talk about mistakes. Grave (serious) mistakes lose more marks than less serious ones. A mistake is almost like a sin against the teacher who has spent so much time teaching the particular point which the student gets wrong.

In what three situations does Mario Rinvoluceri refuse to correct students? What are his reasons for this?

Mario Rinvoluceri refuses to correct when involved in a free-writing letter exchange with his students. He does not correct the diaries that students write. His reasons are that 'talking to yourself' in a foreign language is intimate and personal; that trying things out in your own mind should be unjudged; and that some students have strong intra-personal intelligence and need language practice to develop it. Correction would interfere with this.

Correction – Part 2

Feedback during oral work from *The Practice of English Language Teaching* by Jeremy Harmer. Pearson Education (2001).

What is the difference between accuracy and fluency and how should the different stages be corrected?

Accuracy work is when both teacher and students are concentrating on the form of the language, trying to get it exactly right, whereas fluency stages are those where the students are trying to communicate as effectively and fluently as possible. It is suggested that whereas correction can be fairly intense and immediate during accuracy stages, in fluency work it should be less intrusive, and should not, in general, interrupt the activity by suddenly focusing back on accuracy work.

What is the value of communicative activities?

According to Swain they force students to think carefully about how to express themselves. Ellis thought that might act as a 'switch' helping learners to transfer language from the 'learnt' part of the brain to the 'acquired store.'

What reason does Tony Lynch give for correction being 'as late as possible'?

Tony Lynch suggests that when teachers intervene to correct they take away the students' need to negotiate meaning –which is itself an important learning experience.

What, if any, are the dangers of student-student correction?

The danger is that the student being corrected might be humiliated if they thought they were the only one who didn't know the answer.

What do you understand by the term 'gentle correction'?

Gentle correction is correction offered with considerable tact and discretion. It is non-intrusive and non-aggressive. It's the kind of almost sotto-voce correction that many teachers put in during fluency activities.

What technique is suggested for both accuracy and fluency work?

Re-formulation.

How might teachers keep a record of student mistakes?

- Teachers often write down the mistakes they hear.
- They can fill in charts divided into columns which represent different categories of mistake.
- They can record their students on audio or videotape.
- They can transcribe (parts of) the tapes.
- They can also have students listen for and/or record errors made by their peers.

What suggestions are given for 'after the event'?

- Teachers can give feedback to the group about the success of the activity.
- They can write mistakes on the board or write correct and mistaken phrases and have students correct them or choose which is which.
- They can also write individual notes to students with suggestions about where they can go for the 'right answer'.



Teacher Development Pack Suggested Answers

Mistakes 2 by Mario Rinvoluceri Modern English Teacher 7/4 (1998).

What does the teacher write on the 'could be better' and 'brilliant' cards? What happens then?

The teacher gets cards and writes excellent uses of English he or she hears on some of them and mistakes on the others. At the end of the activity the students have to decide where to put the cards on the board – which has been divided into 'could do better' and 'brilliant' columns. The teacher then indicates if the cards are in the right place.

What do the two angels do while students A & B are talking?

Where two students (A & B) are working in pairs in some fluency activity, they each have two students monitoring them, a 'kind angel' who writes down all the especially good English they hear and a 'harsh angel' who writes down all the bad English they hear. When the pairwork activity is finished the angels share what they have heard/written down with their student (either A or B).

In what way does Mario Rinvoluceri suggest 'democratisation' where 'parental' correction is involved?

Parental correction is Mario Rinvoluceri's term for the relationship between teacher and student when the teacher corrects. He suggests giving the students the option of saying if they want to be corrected or not – something they can indicate with the picture of a teacher either crossed out (= I don't want to be corrected) or not crossed out (= yes, I do want correction).

Correction – Part 3

Correction procedures from Teaching Writing Skills by Donn Byrne. Pearson Education Ltd (1988).

According to Donn Byrne which is more beneficial; 'correct all mistakes' or 'correct mistakes selectively'? Why?

Donn Byrne suggests that correcting selectively is more beneficial than correcting every single mistake. In the latter case the work comes back covered in red ink, and the students learn nothing from it, whereas by correcting selectively teacher and students can focus on specific writing points that either students need help with or the teacher thinks should be dealt with at this stage.

What is the reason for using correction symbols? What procedure is suggested when using them?

The reason for using correction symbols is firstly so that the piece of written work is not covered in teacher writing, and secondly so that students have to identify the mistakes and correct them, thus making them aware of the kind of problems they are having.

Donn Byrne suggests a five stage approach which starts by indicating the mistake and putting the symbol in the margin, and then continues on to underlining the mistake without a symbol, putting a symbol in the margin and the student has to find the mistake, putting a cross in the margin for each mistake or just putting a cross against any line where there's a mistake (but not saying how many mistakes there are in the line).

What three other actions can teachers take in order to communicate English problems to their student writers?

- Teachers can also explain a mistake in a written comment at the end of a piece of work;
- Tell students to come and see the teacher about a mistake(s);
- Use mistakes for remedial teaching.



Teacher Development Pack Suggested Answers

Responding from Process writing by Ron White and Valerie Arndt. Pearson Education Ltd (1991).

What is the difference between correcting a student's written work and 'responding' to it, do you think?

Correcting written work means 'marking' the English the student uses and assessing how good it is, pointing out mistakes etc. Responding, on the other hand (especially for a first draft) is more concerned with meaning and purpose – and with making helpful comments which will help students as they go on to the next draft,

Who, apart from the teacher, can respond to a student's written work?

Students should be trained to respond to each other's work as 'readers' - that is responding to the meaning and purpose of the writing. Such responding tasks actually help them to be better writers too.

What qualities should a teacher display when responding to a student's work?

When responding to a student's written work, the teacher must be supportive and helpful, accentuate the positive, and exercise self-control.

What are the responses (to Gabriel and the Indonesian student) designed to do? Is the teacher commenting on a final version of the composition or on a work in progress?

The responses to Gabriel and the Indonesian student are designed to help them re-draft their work so that it comes back better. The teacher is commenting on a first draft of an essay.