Classroom Practice: Error Correction at Tertiary Level

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Abstract. Feedback is generally defined as a process of sharing observations, concerns and suggestions with intention of improving both personal and organizational performance. The importance of feedback in language learning/teaching is a matter of debate among practitioners. The research into the effects of feedback is far from conclusive. Teachers’ and students’ expectations toward feedback are found to be opposing, and the most frequent reason given is its negative impact on students’ confidence and motivation. The most common feedback refers to error correction either in writing or speaking. Recent theory on language acquisition claims that not all errors should be corrected. This is based on the fact that errors are normal and unavoidable during the learning process. The reasons for errors are numerous: interference from the native language, limited knowledge of the target language, its complexity, or even fossilization at a certain level of competence in the second language. This paper examines learners’ attitudes toward feedback in various class activities and ongoing changes of their opinions, if any, at tertiary level. The results have demonstrated that feedback is a helpful tool for linguistic development. Learners particularly appreciate error correction in writing activities, but not so much in speaking activities. Contrary to some teachers’ beliefs of error correction being ineffective and undermining learners’ self-esteem, students support just the opposite view. The oral, paper-written and electronic feedback to various classroom activities is discussed.