**Revue interafricaine de littérature,
linguistique et philosophie**

Particip'Action

LIGNE EDITORIALE

Particip'Action est une revue scientifique. Les textes que nous acceptons en français, anglais, allemand ou en espagnol sont sélectionnés par le comité scientifique et de lecture en raison de leur originalité, des intérêts qu'ils présentent aux plans africain et international et de leur rigueur scientifique. Les articles que notre revue publie doivent respecter les normes éditoriales suivantes :

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Volume : 15 à 16 pages ; interligne : 1,5 ; pas d'écriture : 12, Times New Roman.

Ordre logique du texte

- Un **TITRE** en caractère d'imprimerie et en gras. Le titre ne doit pas être trop long ;

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- Un résumé en anglais (**Abstract**) qui ne doit pas dépasser 8 (huit) lignes ; Ce résumé doit être traduit en français.

- **Key words ;**

- **Introduction ;** elle doit mettre en exergue la problématique du travail

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Les articulations du développement du texte doivent être titrées et/ou sous titrées ainsi :

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2.1. Pour le **Titre** de la première sous-section de la deuxième section

2.2. etc.

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Elle doit être brève et insister sur l'originalité des résultats de la recherche menée.

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Les sources consultées et/ou citées doivent figurer dans une rubrique, en fin de texte, intitulée :

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Volume, Numéro, Lieu et année d'édition, Indication des pages occupées par l'article dans la revue.

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La rédaction n'admet que des notes en bas de page. Les notes en fin de texte ne sont pas tolérées.

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Les auteurs qui souhaitent se faire publier dans nos colonnes sont priés d'avoir cette philosophie comme fil directeur de leur réflexion.

La Rédaction

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CORRECTING ERRORS IN BENINESE EFL CLASSES: CASE STUDY OF SOME SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This article attempts to explore EFL teachers' behaviours towards their learners when they make errors and mistakes during their learning process. Referring to the expected teacher's feedback, Long (as cited by Brown, 2001: 290) points out the importance of considering errors and mistakes positively. Beninese EFL teachers do not often take errors and mistakes positively and it is the general habit in Benin which prevents a lot of learners to take the floor and speak in front of their mates for fear of being taunted publicly. Mockery is so particularly frequent in Adjarra area that several learners usually fail in language successful learning. The objective of this study is to sensitise more these EFL teachers to alleviate their way of correcting mistakes in order to encourage Beninese English language learning. The results I have got from EFL teachers, inspectors, and learners reveal mostly that several EFL teachers are not professionally trained. Consequently, they usually frustrate their learners whenever they make errors and mistakes in classes or elsewhere while using the English language. I suggest that they should take into account learners' personality and encourage them to use English successfully.

Keywords: errors and mistakes, self, peer correction, feedback.

Résumé

Le présent article essaye d'explorer les comportements des enseignants de l'anglais, langue étrangère envers leurs apprenants lorsque ces derniers commettent des erreurs et des fautes pendant leur processus d'apprentissage. En faisant recours au feedback de l'enseignant, Long (comme cité par Brown, 2001: 290) signale qu'il est important de considérer les erreurs et fautes positivement. Le plus souvent, les enseignants béninois n'accordent

aucune place positive aux erreurs et fautes et c'est généralement leur habitude; ce qui empêche plusieurs apprenants de prendre la parole et de s'exprimer devant leurs camarades de peur d'être dénigrés publiquement. Les moqueries sont si particulièrement fréquentes dans la région d'Adjarra que beaucoup d'apprenants ratent d'habitude l'apprentissage de la langue anglaise. Cette étude a pour objectif de sensibiliser davantage les enseignants de l'anglais afin de soulager leur manière de corriger les erreurs et les fautes pour encourager l'apprentissage de la langue anglaise au Bénin.

Les résultats que j'ai obtenus des enseignants, inspecteurs et apprenants de la langue anglaise, révèlent surtout que plusieurs enseignants d'anglais n'ont pas de diplômes professionnels et ne sont jamais formés dans une école normale. Par conséquent, ils frustrent d'habitude leurs apprenants quand ils font des erreurs et des fautes en classe ou n'importe où pendant qu'ils utilisent l'anglais. Ma suggestion à leur égard, c'est de prendre en considération la personnalité des apprenants et de les encourager à utiliser l'anglais avec plein de succès.

Mots-clés: erreurs et fautes, autocorrection, pair correction, feedback.

1. Introduction

A learner may correct himself/herself as it is required when he/she is aware of the error she/he made, or one learner may be able to correct another learner. Many learners may also correct one another accordingly, and then it is important to distinguish, for example, self correction, and peer correction. This means that EFL teachers need to give their learners the opportunity to correct themselves or to correct one another.

The rationale for this study is the fear and frustration some learners have in the appropriate use of the English language nowadays in Beninese EFL classes. Besides, many steps should be taken to curve this fear and foster EFL teaching and learning no matter the degree of the learners' errors and mistakes.

The main objective of this study is to make EFL teachers become more aware of the errors and mistakes their learners make, and draw their attention more to what extent the teacher can correct such errors without frustrating these learners.

The second objective is to establish more confidence among learners, and favour spontaneous speech.

My two research questions are presented as follows:

1- What strategies can Beninese EFL teachers use to correct their learners' errors and mistakes?

2- What can be the impact of errors and mistakes' correction on EFL learners in Beninese classes?

This study has been subdivided into four (4) sections: literature review which points out some works related to this topic; methodology of the study where I have mentioned the instruments used and the sample population; discussion of the results and finally implications and suggestions.

2. Literature Review

The difference between 'error' and 'mistake' is in the context in which they are used. A 'mistake' is usually accidental, you know it is wrong. But an 'error' is usually made due to the lack of knowledge and is more formal than 'mistake'. "Machines never make mistakes, but rather they make errors. Unlike machines, human beings usually make both mistakes and errors. Machines have no knowledge of things and consequently no knowledge of mistakes.

As Brown (2001) states the Audiolingual Method makes a great effort to get students to produce free error utterances; the Natural Approach focuses on meaning, not on form, so error correction is banished, unless they are global errors- errors that really impede understanding- and the Communicative Approach sustains the concept that language is often created by the individual through trial and error. Through this opinion, I can understand that it is not necessary to correct errors when learners are speaking the English language provided that the audience get the information well. I can also add that always

correcting learners' mistakes can disturb them and they will get confused and lost especially when they are communicating orally.

Consequently, EFL teachers may listen to such learners carefully and even ask their mates to take notes of the errors and mistakes made, and after they have finished speaking, they could draw their attention on these errors and mistakes. However, I do not agree with this author when he says that error correction is banished. Error correction cannot be banished in any case but an amount of time should be given to those who are making errors and mistakes. In such a way, they could become aware of these errors and mistakes in order to grasp the different corrections accordingly.

Krashen (2009:27) expresses that "The use of an L1 rule allows the performer to 'outperform' his competence, to meet a practical need in L2 communication". If L2 poses such a problem, then English as a foreign language in Benin should pose more difficulties to its learners. All these aspects could be taken into account so as not to blame and frustrate Beninese EFL learners no matter the errors and mistakes they make in this language. But what is usually noticed in Beninese secondary schools is far from encouraging EFL learners to use this language successfully. It is not surprising to hear EFL teachers complain about their learners everywhere as though they never make any errors and mistakes themselves. I totally agree with those who complain and I do complain regularly as well but these complaints should be taken with a pinch of reservation.

Long (1977) has introduced the concept of "*error detection* or *knowledge of result"* according to which teachers are concerned with error detection, and is regarded as the previous stage to teachers' feedback. According to Long, it is up to EFL teachers to care about their learners in order to detect the latter's errors and mistakes, or with the help of other learners. Beninese EFL Teachers' responsibilities are tremendous in the teaching and learning process.

Kathleen Bailey (as cited in Brown, 2001: 291) recommends the following taxonomy to deal with error treatment. The selection and use of a

combination of any option and a suitable possible feature depends on the group of students and the different moments of the teaching situation:

Basic Options

1- To treat or to ignore

2- To treat immediately or to delay

3- To transfer treatment (to say, to other learners) or not

4- To transfer to another individual, a subgroup, or the whole class

5- To return, or not, to the original error maker after treatment

6- To permit other learners to trigger treatment

7- To test for the efficacy of the treatment

As stated above, EFL teachers' responsibilities are tremendous because they are the ones to decide to react or to ignore their learners' errors and mistakes. Whether this treatment should be transferred or not, EFL teachers are the ones to make such a decision provided that their learners are not frustrated. Some learners may not want their mates to discuss their errors and mistakes publicly, so it is up to their teachers to identify such learners and manage the class accordingly.

3. Research Methodology

The methodology I have used for my study has respected quantitative and qualitative approaches and has taken into account the following: the respondents of the questionnaires addressed to twenty (20) EFL teachers and forty (40) learners of the secondary schools aged 16-20 years old, both girls and boys of exam classes (form four and upper sixth) I have randomly selected in Adjarra, a region of Ouémé department. I have interviewed EFL qualified teachers and secondary school inspectors directly and indirectly that is to say by phone calls and the use of SMS. I have also observed some classes without forgetting the Internet use. The data of the questionnaire addressed to teachers have taken time to be collected since I have been to those schools of Adjarra many times. I have distributed 27 questionnaire sheets and succeeded in collecting 20. The ones addressed to learners have been collected on the spot. The interviews have been conducted mainly by phone calls and SMS. I

have also collected data through the use of the Internet. During the classroom observations, I have got the opportunity to fill appropriately in the classroom observation grids that I have formerly conceived and brought to the classes.

3.1. Research Instruments

3.1.1. Questionnaire

The teachers' questionnaire comprises eight items. First of all, I have asked them whether it is necessary to correct errors. Next, I have wondered if they should drop error correction. Then I have asked them if they are compelled to make immediate error correction. The other question is to know if they need to correct their learners' errors later on. Other questions are to know whether it is good to signal one learner's errors to other students or not; to check the performance of error makers after correction, or not; to give opportunity to other learners to correct their peer; and finally to test for the performance of the whole class after appropriate correction.

3.1.2. Interview Schedule

The six questions I asked the learners selected were to inquire:

- whether they usually make errors
- if they like the way their teachers correct their errors
- if they want their teachers to correct them
- how they can avoid errors
- whether they taunt their mates when they make errors

3.1.3. Class Observation

After reassuring the whole class about the objectives of my presence in order to make them feel secure, I checked whether the teacher signalled a learner's

- errors to another individual or not.
- errors to a subgroup or not.
- errors to the whole class or not.

The above research instruments have yielded the following results:

3.2. Results and Data Analysis

3.2.1. Teachers' Responses

Table 1: Appreciating Error Correction

Statements	Yes/%	No/%	Total/%
Necessity to correct errors	17/85%	03/15%	20/100%
Dropping error correction	02/10%	18/90%	20/100%
Immediate error correction	16/80%	04/20%	20/100%
Later error correction	03/15%	17/85%	20/100%
Signalling to other students	11/55%	9/45%	20/100%
Checking the performance of error makers after correction	10/50%	10/50%	20/100%
Opportunity for other learners to correct	15/75%	05/25%	20/100%
Testing the performance of the whole class	17/85%	03/15%	20/100%

This first table shows the numbers and percentages of the respondents and the statements about error corrections. The total number of teachers who have responded is 20. It points out the way teachers usually react to errors and mistakes.

Table 2: Controlling Students' Moods about Error Correction

Statements	Yes/%	No/%	Total/%
Learner frustration depends on their teachers.	18/90%	02/10%	20/100%
Teachers should avoid frustrating learners	17/85%	03/15%	20/100%
Teacher should notice learners' moods	10/50%	10/50%	20/100%

Table 2 shows the total number of the respondents (20) who have given their position through their different selections as far as the consequences of error correction on learners are concerned.

3.2.2 Class Observation Data Analysis

During the class observations, I have noticed that out of the five (5) teachers I have observed, three (3) of them have frequently signalled errors to another learner; to a subgroup of learners; and two (2) of them have signalled errors to the whole class.

3.2.3 Students' Responses

I have interviewed forty (40) learners globally. Among them, thirty-five (35) that is to say eighty-seven point five percent (87.5 %) have recognised that they usually make errors while speaking English. Five (5) out of the forty (40) students, twelve point five percent (12.5 %) have not told the truth. Whereas thirty-eight students out of forty (95 percent) have confessed that they do not like the way their teachers correct their errors, the five remaining students have not given their position. All these thirty-eight students have said that they do not want their teachers to correct them. Twenty students out of forty (50 percent) have said that they can avoid errors by caring more about what their teachers say and their good way to rate learners. Thirty-three (82.5 percent) out of forty students have said that they usually taunt their mates when they make errors, and their teachers even encourage them to do so.

4. Interpretation of Data

The results I have got from the teachers' questionnaire, the students' interviews and the class observations are very revealing: The teachers who find it necessary to correct errors are 85% and 15% think it is not necessary. To my mind, it is necessary that teachers correct learners' errors. Only 10% of them have said they should drop error correction, and 90% have confessed that teachers should not drop errors. Dropping errors means that they should not be corrected at all which can be highly negative for EFL teaching/learning process. 80% teachers have preferred immediate error correction, and 20% of them have preferred errors to be corrected later on. This way of correcting either immediately or later on is up to each teacher. 55% teachers have advised to signal errors to other students but 45% of them (9) haven't. As far

as checking the performance of error makers after correction is concerned 50% teachers have given positive answer and 50% have rejected. Whereas 75% teachers think teachers should give opportunity to other learners to correct, 25% teachers have rejected. 85% teachers have said they need to test the performance of the whole class but 15 % do not find it necessary.

The current study reveals the following:

- It is important for teachers to correct learners' errors either immediately or after, provided that errors are well-corrected and at the real moment teachers feel it is necessary. Error correction should not be dropped because this absence of correction can affect negatively students' learning process. Signalling some learners' errors to others may frustrate or not those who have made these errors, it depends on the way the teacher proceeds. Since they are used to being corrected in a given manner, they will not feel frustrated any more. Whenever they are given opportunity to correct one another, they will not be bothered in case their teachers or classmates draw their attention on errors and corrections. It will rather be helpful for everyone to correct or be corrected effectively. In addition, when the performance of the whole class is tested, this careful control of learners could encourage them to follow regularly teaching/learning process.

- I have observed five (5) teachers in their classes, and three (3) of them have frequently signalled errors. What is important is to care about learners' moods and comportment while signalling or not signalling errors to other learners. Bright students may also discover their mates' errors quickly and signal to other learners. It is then up to the teachers to know how to process and not disappoint both bright and weak learners.

- From the forty (40) learners I have interviewed thirty-five (35) that is to say 87.5 % have said to usually make errors while speaking English, which shows that anybody among them should get to know that they can make mistake at any time. Through these results, I can notice that learners are the best judges of teachers and they should

care about their teaching process properly. And it is obvious that these learners will not bear any kind of under treatment from their teachers. They are more interested in the teaching/learning process only if they are given value to, and not be taunted no matter the case.

- Strategies to correct learners' errors and mistakes

The opinion of Brown (2001) is that the Audio-lingual Method makes a great effort to get students to produce free error utterances; the Natural Approach focuses on meaning, not on form. I do agree with him that language meaning is important and need to be emphasised but the form is not needless either. Both meaning and form need to be rated as far as language teaching/learning is concerned. As I have already showed in my literature review, correcting learners' errors the very moment they are speaking may disturb them seriously. They may not find it easy and pleasant to follow the correction at that moment and other learners may not care about such errors and corrections at that moment. Nevertheless, this author is not totally right when he says that error correction is banished.

- When Krashen (2009:27) says that "*The use of an L1 rule allows the performer to „outperform" his competence, to meet a practical need in L2 communication*", I think that EFL learners can make use of their first language but they should mind the meaning and the nuance occurring in these languages so as not to distort the English language. Learners should also pay attention to false friends, while using English. Long (1977) has introduced the concept of "*error detection or knowledge of result"* according to which teachers are concerned with error detection, and is regarded as the previous stage to teachers' feedback. Long is right because before errors are corrected, they should be detected.

- The taxonomy of Kathleen Bailey (as cited in Brown, 2001: 291) to deal with error treatment is of great importance because it deals with the treatment of error correction or not, immediate treatment, transfer of treatment and the testing for efficacy.

- The impact of errors and mistakes' correction on learners: Beninese EFL learners are so sensitive that when they are not treated with affection and effective care, they will not be interested in the teaching/learning process. Some of them are really pampered by their parents at home and do not fear any difficult situations, relying on their parents' wealth and believe that they could overcome without the mastery of the English language. In addition, as Benin is next to Nigeria, such learners believe that they can succeed in life with broken English because they usually use this kind of English when they frequently go to Nigeria for their own business.

- According to Krashen (2009:74-75), the most serious flaw in error correction is its effect on the affective filter, that is to say error correction has the immediate effect of putting the student on the defensive. When the teacher frustrates a learner, his/her mates will share his/her feeling and may be ready to defend him accordingly. Error correction also encourages a strategy in which the student will try to avoid mistakes, avoid difficult constructions, and focus less on meaning and more on form. In my opinion, Beninese EFL teachers need to focus on the affective aspect of errors' and mistakes' corrections in order to avoid indiscipline and even violence in their classes.

5. Implications and Suggestions

Corder (1973) has stated that once learners are conscious of their mistaken productions and are given time to elaborate their corrections and reformulate their utterances, they may benefit more from self-correcting than by receiving teachers' correction. As far as I am concerned, I think that it is necessary that Beninese EFL teachers rate the way they should correct their learners' errors and mistakes, the moment to correct them, and the reasons for such corrections. That is the reason why EFL teachers' responsibilities are tremendous. Moreover, what is also fundamental for these teachers is to give their learners opportunities to identify their errors and mistakes by themselves

and in this case, they could correct themselves or one another during and after their learning process.

Conclusion

The current study is important in such a way that it has raised the problems faced by EFL teachers about error corrections. I have mentioned some authors who have dealt with the issues, and the methodology used has permitted me to obtain several data useful for adequate corrections that should be provided. EFL teachers have enormous and complicated challenges to face towards learners' error corrections, because bad ways of dealing with these errors can affect dangerously their students' learning process. All that is positive for the English language teaching and learning is the fact that all of the respondents have recognised the trustworthy prominence of the English language nowadays, the global language. Anyone who invests in the teaching and learning of this language cannot be disappointed but could contribute effectively to the development of Beninese societies.

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