The Harms of Overcorrection in Second Language Acquisition

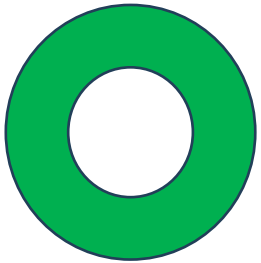
…and team teaching strategies to overcome it and encourage speaking

Do We Need Corrective Feedback in First Language Acquisition?

Poll Question: "Do you think corrective feedback is necessary in the acquisition of a first language?"

Example of Corrective Feedback:

- Child: "I goed to the park."
- Parent: "You went to the park. Did you have fun?"



YES

NO

Is Corrective Feedback Necessary in First Language Acquisition?

First Language Acquisition (FLA):

•The natural process by which children learn their native language.

•Occurs without formal instruction.

•Involves exposure to language in everyday interactions.

Supporting Theories:

1. Noam Chomsky's Theory of Universal Grammar:

Chomsky's theory suggests that children have an innate ability to acquire language, driven by internal mechanisms rather than external correction.

2. Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis:

Krashen emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input over explicit correction.

Distinguishing First Language Acquisition (FLA) from Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

First Language Acquisition (FLA):
- **Natural Process:** Occurs organically through everyday interactions.
- **Implicit Learning:** Children acquire language without formal instruction.
- **Universal Stages:** All children go through similar stages of language development.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA):
- **Conscious Learning:** Often involves formal instruction and conscious effort.
- **Interlanguage:** A transitional linguistic system developed by learners of a second language (Selinker, 1972).
- **Risk of Fossilization:** Errors can become ingrained without corrective feedback (Long, 1996)

Interlanguage

Interlanguage Theory (Larry Selinker)

Interlanguage theory posits that language learners develop an evolving linguistic system that reflects elements of both their native language and the target language. Errors are a natural part of this developmental process. Overcorrection can interfere with this natural progression, causing frustration and potentially leading to fossilization (the premature stabilization of errors).

Key Characteristics of Interlanguage (with Japanese L1 examples):

1. Systematic and rule-governed
   Ex: Consistently using "Is" for questions ("Is you happy?")
2. Dynamic and constantly evolving
   Progress from "Book red" to "The book is red"
3. Permeable to new linguistic input
   Gradual adoption of English word order (SOV to SVO)
4. Exhibits language transfer from L1
   Omitting articles ("I bought new car")
5. Contains unique forms not found in L1 or target language
   Overuse of "-ing" ("I am playing tennis yesterday")

The Importance of Corrective Feedback in SLA

Impact of Corrective Feedback:

- **Prevents Fossilization:** Helps learners refine their interlanguage and reduce persistent errors (Lyster & Ranta, 1997).
- **Enhances Accuracy:** Increases the likelihood of producing grammatically correct sentences (Doughty & Varela, 1998).

Risks of Overcorrection:

- **Demotivation:** Overcorrection can discourage learners and reduce their willingness to communicate (Doughty & Varela, 1998).
- **Lowered Confidence:** Excessive correction can lead to anxiety and lack of confidence in speaking (Lyster & Ranta, 1997).

Theories Supporting Corrective Feedback in SLA

Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996):

- **Key Idea:** Interaction and communication with others facilitate language learning.
- **Role of Feedback:** Interactional modifications, including corrective feedback, help learners notice gaps in their language use and improve accuracy.

Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990):

- **Role of Feedback:** Corrective feedback helps learners notice the correct forms and integrate them into their language use.
- **Key Idea:** Conscious awareness of language forms is essential for learning.

Effective Corrective Feedback Techniques:

- **Recasts:** Reformulating the learner's error into the correct form within the conversation (Lyster & Ranta, 1997).
- **Metalinguistic Feedback:** Providing comments or information about the form without explicitly providing the correct answer (Lyster & Ranta, 1997).
- **Elicitation:** Prompting the learner to self-correct by asking questions or giving hints (Doughty & Varela, 1998).

Overcorrection vs. Corrective Feedback

Corrective Feedback:

- Targeted responses to specific errors
- Aims to improve language accuracy and fluency
- Can enhance language acquisition (Lyster et al., 2013)
- Examples: recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback

Overcorrection:

- Excessive or unnecessary error correction
- May interrupt communication flow
- Can lead to anxiety and reduced willingness to communicate (Krashen, 1982)
- Examples: correcting every minor error, focusing on form over meaning

Key Differences:

Frequency and timing of corrections

Impact on learner motivation and confidence

Focus on communication vs. perfect accuracy

The Harms of Overcorrection

Linguistics studies have offered several insights into the effects of overcorrection on ESL (English as a Second Language) learners' speech production. Here are some key points based on research and theoretical perspectives in the field of second language acquisition:

- **Affective Filter Hypothesis** **(Stephen Krashen)**
  - Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis suggests that learners acquire language more effectively when they are relaxed and motivated.
  - Overcorrection can increase anxiety and self-consciousness, raising the affective filter and impeding language acquisition.
  - Students who fear constant correction may be less willing to take risks and speak, which can hinder their language development.

- **Focus on Form vs. Focus on Meaning & Communicative Competence (Dell Hymes)**
  - Research distinguishes between a focus on form (explicit correction of grammatical errors) and a focus on meaning (engaging with the content of communication). A balance is needed.
  - Excessive focus on errors can detract from the meaningful use of language. Techniques that integrate form-focused feedback into meaningful communication are generally more effective.
  - Overcorrection can disrupt communication and focus too much on form rather than meaning. It may also reduce opportunities for meaningful interaction.

Error Correction Strategies

- **Recasting:** Reformulating the error into the correct form in a natural context can help learners notice and self-correct without feeling criticized.

- **Clarification Requests/ Elicitation:** Asking learners to clarify their meaning can prompt them to self-correct and become more aware of their errors.

- **Metalinguistic Feedback:** Providing comments or questions about the form of the error can help learners understand the rule without feeling discouraged.

Corrective Feedback and Co-teaching

Benefits of Co-Teaching:

• **Shared Responsibility:** Both teachers monitor and provide feedback, reducing the risk of overcorrection.

• **Diverse Perspectives:** Different teaching styles and approaches can cater to various learner needs
.
• **Supportive Environment:** Teachers can model effective feedback techniques for each other.

Strategies for Co-Teaching:

•**Coordinated Feedback:** Plan and agree on the types and frequency of corrective feedback.

•**Role Assignment:** One teacher focuses on content delivery, while the other provides immediate feedback.

•**Reflective Practice:** Regularly discuss and reflect on the effectiveness of feedback techniques.

Examples:

• **During Class Discussions:** One teacher leads the discussion while the other interjects with corrective feedback when necessary.
• **In Pair Activities:** Teachers circulate and provide feedback to pairs, ensuring all students receive attention.

Recasts: Subtle Correction Through Repetition

How to execute:

- Repeat the student's utterance, correcting the error
- Maintain natural conversation flow
- Use normal intonation

Team teaching approach:

- T1 (lead teacher) continues the conversation
- T2 (assistant) provides the recast

Example:

Student: "I go to Tokyo yesterday."

T1: "Oh, you went to Tokyo? How was it?"

T2: "Yes, you went to Tokyo yesterday. What did you do there?"

Metalinguistic Feedback: Guiding Through Grammar Rules

How to execute:

- Acknowledge the student's communicative intent
- Draw attention to the grammatical area needing improvement
- Ask guiding questions about the grammar rule
- Wait for student's self-correction attempt
- Provide gentle prompts if needed
- Confirm the correct usage and praise the student's effort

Team teaching approach:

- T1 (lead teacher): Initiates the feedback by identifying the error • Prompts the student to recall the relevant rule
- T2 (assistant): Provides additional examples or clarification • Offers support if the student struggles to apply the rule

Example:

Student: "I see three cat."

T1: "Good job. But remember! What happens to nouns when there's more than one?"

Student: "Cats?"

T1: "That's right! Can you try your sentence again?"

Student: "I see three cats."

T2: "Excellent! Can you think of other words that change when there's more than one?

Elicitation: Prompting self correction

How to execute:

- Pause to allow self-correction
- Use rising intonation to indicate an error
- Provide the beginning of the correct form

Team teaching approach:

- T1 attempts elicitation
- T2 provides support if student struggles

Example:

Student: "I am study English for 3 years.“

T1: "I am…?" (pausing with rising intonation)

T2: (if student struggles) "What tense do we use for an action that started in the past and continues now?"

Scenario 1

Situation: A student consistently makes errors with the past tense of irregular verbs. For example, they say "I goed to the park" and "She buyed a new car." The student seems frustrated when corrected directly.

Which strategy did your group decide to use and why?

Best strategy: Elicitation

- Elicitation allows the student to self-correct and reinforces their knowledge of irregular verbs without causing frustration through direct correction.
- T1 could say: "Yesterday, you...?" (pausing after "goed") T2 could follow up with: "And your friend...?" (pausing after "buyed")
- This approach encourages the student to think about the correct form and produce it themselves, which can be more memorable.
- If the student struggles, T1 or T2 could provide additional support, such as offering the base form of the verb

Scenario 2

A generally confident student is giving a presentation about their recent school trip. They are communicating their ideas well, but are making consistent errors with articles and prepositions. For example, they say, "We went to museum in Kyoto. It was near famous temple."

Best Strategy: Recast

- The student is confidently conveying meaning, and interrupting their flow with direct corrections or metalinguistic explanations could disrupt their presentation and potentially lower their confidence. Recasts allow for correction without interrupting the communicative flow.
- T1 could respond: "Oh, you went to the museum in Kyoto? Was it near a famous temple?”
- T2 could follow up with: "I've heard the museums in Kyoto are fantastic. Were there many people at the temple?”
- This approach subtly corrects the student's errors by naturally incorporating the correct forms (adding "the" before "museum," "a" before "famous temple") into the conversation. It maintains the focus on the content of the student's communication while providing accurate language input. The student may notice the corrections implicitly.
- If the errors persist, the teachers could use recasts consistently throughout the follow-up discussion, providing multiple exposures to the correct forms in a natural, communicative context.

Scenario 3

During a speaking activity about daily routines, a student is describing their typical day. They consistently make errors with the third-person singular present tense. For example, they say, "My sister wake up at 7 AM. She eat breakfast and then go to school. My brother also study very hard every day."

Best Strategy: Metalinguistic Feedback

- Metalinguistic feedback would be the most effective strategy since student is demonstrating a consistent pattern of errors with a specific grammatical point (third-person singular present tense).
- T1 could say: "You're describing your family's routines very well. Let's focus on how we talk about what other people do regularly. What happens to verbs when we use 'he,' 'she,' or 'it'?"
- T2 could follow up with: "Remember, for 'he,' 'she,' or 'it' in the present tense, we add something to the end of most verbs. Can you recall what we add?"
- **If the student struggles to remember, T1 or T2 could provide more guidance:**
- T1: "We add '-s' or sometimes '-es' to the verb. Can you try describing your sister's routine again?"
- T2: "Let's practice together. 'My sister...'?" (pausing to allow the student to complete the sentence)
- After the student attempts to correct their statement, the teachers could provide encouragement and further practice:
- T1: "Great job! Now your brother - how would you describe what he does?"
- T2: "Can you think of other people in your life and describe their routines using this rule?"

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