

The Use of Corrective Feedback and Suitable Techniques of Providing Corrective Feedback to the Secondary Level English Language Learners in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Necessity, function, mode, extent and applicability of corrective feedback have been constant issues of discussion and dispute in the field of ELT. In teaching a foreign language, providing requisite corrective feedback is considered essential for teaching the language accurately. Error correction must be conducted in such a manner that can facilitate language learning. In the Communicative Approach, which has been used in Bangladesh for English education from the primary level up to the higher secondary level, addressing learners' learning problems and errors, and providing corrective feedback to learners are regarded as preconditions for successful education of English. Nonetheless, in learning English, Bangladeshi learners are often seen to suffer from the deficiency of proper feedback on their performance. Therefore, it is felt, the process and quality of teachers' feedback intended for correcting errors in teaching English demand thorough investigation and evaluation. This paper intended to explore the use of corrective feedback in the classroom, the role and significance of corrective feedback, and the adverse impacts of inadequate feedback on Bangladeshi secondary level learners. A mixed-method research design was used for this study. The study found that the learners hardly receive adequate and proper reinforcement on their performance in using English in the classroom, particularly in the treatment of error correction. Ultimately, sundry measures are recommended for providing apposite and effective corrective feedback to the learners.

1. Introduction

In acquisition or learning a new language, feedback is fundamentally regarded as an important factor since the progress and success of the learners largely depend on the feedback they receive from their teachers in the classroom. Celce deems that, "positive reinforcement such as encouraging feedback at the end of each step of learning enhanced learning by motivating learners to continue their efforts".¹ Conversely, teachers are often seen to provide indiscriminate feedback to the learners, unaware of the types of errors occurring, which makes it impossible to provide suitable remedial work.² Teachers are generally required to treat learners' errors as a natural and indispensable part of the language learning process. Preoccupation with accuracy in language teaching may exert a negative impact on second or foreign language learning. On the detrimental effect of intemperate error correction, Rivers reflects, "Nothing is more dampening of enthusiasm and effort than constant correction when students are trying to express their own ideas within the limitations of their newly acquired knowledge of the language".³ "It has also been observed that lack of systematic approaches for attending to student errors contribute to less than optimal levels of proficiency in language of students".⁴

2. Statement of the Problem

Error correction forms a vital part of teaching and learning a new language accurately. Bangladeshi students, Rahman observes, commonly commit errors in verb forms, sentence structure, and prepositions, which need to be addressed by teachers while teaching English

language. She avers, “EFL learners make errors in the academic writing tasks due to the structural and cultural difference between their mother tongue and the target language”.⁵ In this context, Hossain and Ashikullah illuminate, “L1 interference, ignorance of rules, limited knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary, carelessness, and lack of motivation of the students are the major sources of errors”.⁶ Hence, they promulgate that teachers should impart a thorough knowledge of English syntax and vocabulary to Bangladeshi EFL learners. The learners ought to be provided with adequate and explicit corrective feedback. In the Communicative Approach, accuracy deserves importance in teaching English because inaccuracy can hinder successful communication. In the same way, the teachers are also required to promote fluency in language use. However, the secondary English language teachers of Bangladesh, Hasina remarks, are mostly found to be paying more attention to teaching their students correct spelling, grammatical structures and functions of the English language than fluency. Additionally, the teachers rarely get adequate opportunities to offer requisite feedback to the learners on errors, and fortify learners’ uptake in the brief time span of the English language classes.⁷ Consequently, majority of the learners are found to develop either too much concern for maintaining accuracy and overlook the need to attain fluency in using English, or indifference towards identifying and correcting errors. This drawback not only triggers disappointments and bitterness in many young learners for failing to learn English effectively but also bulldoze their future career. Hence, the issue of selecting and utilizing suitable corrective feedback for teaching English successfully must be regarded of prime importance in the context of ELT practice in Bangladesh. Therefore, this paper sought to study and unfold the modes, frequency of use, functions and impacts of error correction as a prominent mode of feedback in teaching English as a foreign language at the secondary level in Bangladesh.

3. Literature Review

“Error correction”, Johnson and Johnson uphold, “is a form of feedback”.⁸ Ur explicates that “in the context of teaching in general, feedback is information that is given to the learner about his or her performance of a learning task, usually with the objective of improving this performance”.⁹ Therefore, feedback can be distinguishable components based on assessment and correction. Ur adds that in assessment the learner is simply informed as to how well or badly s/he has performed. However, in a correction component, some specific information is provided on certain aspects of the learner’s performance: through explanation, or provision of better or other alternatives, or through elicitation of these from the learner. On the other side, responses of students to the feedback offered by teachers are identified as “learner uptake”.¹⁰ Moreover, Murphy views errors as essentially neutral that may denote success or failure because language in use draws on both form and function. It may be concerned with accuracy or fluency. Making correction, the teacher attempts to help and improve learning, whereas, learners are reported to want correction and find it useful.¹¹

According to Edge, error correction as a mode of feedback may serve as a reminder to learners. It should be informational and helpful to learners. Reflecting on the function of correction in language learning he comments, “correction is a way of reminding students of the forms of Standard English. It should not be a kind of criticism or punishment”.¹² He further suggests that correction, a way of giving information or feedback, should be offered to the learners only when it will support their learning. In addition, Richards propagates selective and moderate use of error correction. He argues that error correction can be liberally applied in order to benefit students.¹³ In this context, Corder, who is renowned as the father of Error analysis in ELT, has mentioned several benefits of identification and correction of errors. For instance, errors may provide feedback to teachers by informing them about the effectiveness of the teaching materials and the teaching techniques, and show them what parts of the syllabus have been inadequately learned or taught and need further attention. Moreover, they will enable the teachers to decide whether they must dedicate more attention to the item/s they have been working on. Above all, in terms of broader planning and with a new group of learners they provide the information for designing a remedial syllabus or a programme of re-teaching.¹⁴

In a study on providing effective corrective feedback, Li, Swanto, and Said deduce, “written corrective feedback provided by the teachers with regard to English language forms in English writing is effective in improving the accuracy of students”.¹⁵ They further hypothesize that direct corrective feedback is more beneficial to learners’ long-term development than indirect corrective feedback. Nonetheless, they discourage excessive and indiscriminate use of corrective feedback by the English language teachers because “excessive corrective feedback from teachers to students may shock down students’ self-confidence”.¹⁶ Hence, they suggest that English teachers should master the degree of corrective feedback while providing corrective feedback on learners’ performance. In addition, teachers should combine oral and written corrective feedback. They promulgate, “combining, different methods of providing corrective feedback saves time and energy to spare more time on English teaching contents”.¹⁷ They have identified ‘interlingual error’ and ‘intralingual error’ as the two main categories of errors. They further add that these errors may be grammatical, lexical or pragmatic.

Hossain and Ashikullah conducted an Error Analysis (EA) of Bangladeshi Tertiary level EFL learners with a Bengali medium background. They sought to identify the kinds and frequency of writing errors made by the learners. They discovered, “most of the students have errors in their writing, and the most commonly committed errors are in subject-verb agreement, spelling, fragment, word order, punctuation, prepositions, tenses, and articles”.¹⁸ They hypothesized that Bangladeshi teachers require more initiative in providing feedback to secondary as well as higher secondary level learners. They also pointed out that teachers largely assist the class as a whole, which may not be effective and sufficient for English language learning. Therefore, they should also assist each student individually by providing them with necessary corrective feedback.

In a research paper, Rahman investigated into the types of grammatical errors commonly made by Bangladeshi tertiary level learners due to the grammatical challenges encountered by them in academic writing and the modes of providing suitable feedback to the learners on writing tasks. Her study disclosed that Bangladeshi teachers should focus on addressing common errors, motivating students, using contrastive analysis techniques, providing formative feedback and clear explanations of grammatical errors. On the basis of the findings of the study, she propounded that teachers can incorporate collaborative learning strategies and should ensure students’ active involvement in the classroom to develop Bangladeshi learners’ writing skill.¹⁹

3.1 Theoretical Developments: Error Correction as a Crucial Form of Feedback

Providing feedback or reinforcement on the learners’ performance, particularly error correction, is regarded as a significant part of effective English language teaching. It is also essential for the teachers to monitor the kind of feedback their students receive at the different stages of the learning process and provide them proper kind of feedback which will facilitate successful language acquisition. Student feedback can be either positive or negative. In this connection, Lepper and Hoddell assert that feedback which is perceived as informational will be likely to enhance motivation, whereas feedback which is perceived as controlling will have the opposite effect.²⁰ Accordingly, positive feedback, such as a reward, a positive comment or praise generally proves more effective than negative feedback in learning. It serves as confirmation to the students that they have performed correctly. Good and Brophy point out that usually low-achieving students receive proportionately less positive feedback than the high-achieving students. They are more likely to receive negative feedback.²¹ Hence, English language teachers are expected to pay attention to the means they provide feedback to the learners, who receive the feedback, and the corpus of learners’ uptake in the classroom. In this connection, Krashen speculates, “If error correction aims at learning,... we should focus our students on form, and correct their errors, only when they have time and when such diversion of attention does not interfere with communication”.²²

Furthermore, Khansir and Pakdel clarify that errors of the language learners in the traditional perspective, particularly in the Grammar-translation method and the Audio-lingual approach, were considered as serious blunders and the learners were not allowed to commit errors while

learning the target language. However, the Communicative Approach, which is founded on the Liberal approach to error correction, upholds learners' errors as an integral part of learning a target language.²³ This approach discourages the excessive preoccupation with accuracy in language learning. The proponents of this approach maintain that all errors may not deserve the same kind of attention and treatment from the teachers. In this connection, Edge remarks, "correction is a way of reminding students of the forms of Standard English. It should not be a kind of criticism or punishment".²⁴ He suggests that correction should be offered to the learners only when it will support their learning. In the same line, Richards propagates selective and moderate use of error correction. He argues that error correction can be liberally applied in order to benefit students.²⁵

3.2 Techniques of Amending Learners' English Language Errors

ELT scholars and researchers have suggested various techniques and strategies for correcting English language errors. "Error correction", Khansir and Pakdel maintain, "as one of language learning strategies depends on time, practice, interest, involvement of both teacher and learner in learning a target language".²⁶ Mackey explicates, "Techniques of correcting errors are some of the most important of classroom techniques. The teacher may first try to diagnose the cause of the error".²⁷ Furthermore, Lyster and Ranta recommend that teachers can practice a variety of feedback techniques because individual learners may well differ in terms of the particular error correction technique most appropriate for their unique language development needs.²⁸ In addition, teachers have to restrain themselves from instantly offering feedback on learners' errors and let them self-correct. If teachers provide learners sufficient time to process the information and appropriate cues to self-repair, learners will gradually become efficient in identifying and correcting their own errors. Similarly, Krashen proposes that errors have to be corrected under conditions that allow Monitor use and, thereby, will give the learner time to reconsider the particular rule that is violated by referring to his or her conscious knowledge.²⁹

3.2.1 Various Modes and Techniques of Providing Corrective Feedback

"Error correction", Khansir and Pakdel maintain, "as one of language learning strategies depends on time, practice, interest, involvement of both teacher and learner in learning a target language".³⁰ In his research work on feedback on errors in foreign language classrooms Hendrickson recommends that it is necessary to consider five issues related to corrective feedback, which are i) the necessity and benefits of error correction, ii) the proper time for the treatment of errors, iii) discerning the seriousness of errors and specification of errors for correction, iv) determining the method of error treatment, and v) opting the person/s suitable for conducting error correction.³¹

3.2.1.1 Explicit Correction Method vs. Implicit Correction Method

Occasionally error correction might involve either Explicit correction or Implicit correction. In the explicit mode of correction, errors are detected and corrected directly by the teachers as feedback to the learners' oral and written productions. The explicit mode of error correction has been also identified as 'Overt correction' by Holley and King.³² Contrastively, in the implicit mode of correction errors are amended by the teachers in an indirect way. Relating to the use of the Explicit mode of error correction, Krashen reflects, "some research shows that direct correction is not particularly effective; students who have had direct correction of their oral and written output in instructional programs did not produce fewer errors".³³ In this regard, Hendrickson suggests,

It may be more helpful for students and more efficient for teachers to correct selective written errors by using a combination of direct and indirect techniques depending upon the types and frequencies of errors that a student produces, and according to his or her language proficiency.³⁴

3.2.1.2 Other-correction Technique vs. Self-correction Technique

For correction of English language learners' errors, different modes of error correction are generally employed and recommended. Broadly, there are two techniques of error correction, namely i) Other-correction, and ii) Self-correction. Hence, error correction in learning a target

language can be accomplished with the aid of either Teacher correction or Student correction. Procedures of error correction, it is suggested by ELT scholars, should include both teacher correction and student correction for the benefit of the learners. Khansir and Pakdel recommend that “the best strategy to correct language learners’ errors is to let the students correct their own errors with their teacher’s help. Another strategy is to let one of the students in a classroom correct his/her errors; else, we request the classroom teacher to correct students’ errors in a target language”.³⁵

The method of Other-correction necessitates correction of errors in spoken or written productions by someone other than the learner or user of a language, who commonly functions as the interlocutor/listener or reader. In this mode of error correction, error correction is done usually by the teachers, which is known as Teacher correction. Besides, sometimes learners’ errors may be repaired by the co-learners or peers in the classroom. This form of error correction is termed as Peer correction.

3.2.1.2.1 Teacher Correction

Ellis thinks that “the teacher has a traditional right to provide learners with feedback regarding the correctness or appropriateness of their responses”.³⁶ Richards points out that the method of Teacher correction is one of the common strategies in error correction. It is based on the traditional approach and stretches back to the time of the Audio-lingual approach and other teacher-centred methods of language teaching, which have been propagating that teachers should be responsible for correcting all errors of their students.³⁷ However, currently linguists and ELT researchers uphold a different approach to teacher feedback on errors in foreign language classrooms. Regarding use of the teacher correction technique, Tedick and Gortari assert, “The least effective technique for correcting a student’s incorrect language use is to simply give them the answer”.³⁸ Hence, Richards emphasizes that teachers must utilize the opportunity given to them to make decisions and to use the error correction liberally and should not ignore the role of students in error correction. Corder suggests that teachers should provide data and examples, and where necessary to offer explanations and descriptions and more importantly, verification of the teacher’s hypothesis about the target language.³⁹ Allwright further mentions that teacher correction could be effective on the grounds of illogicality, inconsistency and unproductiveness.⁴⁰

Reflecting on the techniques of proffering corrective feedback, Lyster and Ranta specify six different modes of teacher correction, which are i) Explicit correction (the teacher clearly indicates that the student’s utterance was incorrect and provides the correct form), ii) Recast (the teacher without directly indicating that the student’s utterance was incorrect implicitly reformulates the student’s error, or provides the correct response/s), iii) Clarification request (the teacher points out that the message has not been understood or that the student’s utterance contained some kind of mistake and that a repetition or a reformulation is required), iv) Meta-linguistic clues (without providing the correct form, the teacher poses questions or provides comments or information related to the formation of the student’s utterance. Meta-linguistic clues usually require a yes/no response from the learners), v) Elicitation (the teacher directly elicits the correct form from the student by asking questions, by pausing to allow the student to complete the teacher’s utterance or by asking students to reformulate the utterance), and vi) Repetition (the teacher repeats the student’s error and adjusts intonation to draw student’s attention to it).⁴¹ Teachers can discreetly select and employ any of these techniques of error correction considering the needs of learners and requirements of the academic setting.

3.2.1.2.2 Peer Correction

In Peer correction, teachers, who intend to avoid their direct involvement and interference, engage their students in correcting each other’s mistakes in the classroom. In this context, Edge recommends that ‘Peer correction’, the habit of detecting and correcting errors in the language class in pairs and groups without hurting each other’s feeling, can serve as an effective technique for error correction.⁴² Edge further mentions several benefits of using peer-correction for the learners as well as the teachers. For example, peer correction may facilitate thinking about the language when two learners are actively engaged in deciding the best form or the most appropriate use of the target language. Besides, listening to other learners’ ideas could help in verifying a learner’s own

knowledge. At the same time, the teacher will get opportunities to listen to the discussion and ascertain how far learners have succeeded in internalizing the grammatical rules or uses of the target language. Additionally, Peer correction would enable learners to lessen their dependence on teachers and rely more on their co-learners. The practice of using the target language in pairs and groups will undoubtedly contribute to making the classroom environment more open and friendly.

3.2.1.2.3 Self-correction Method

The role of a learner is also very important in error correction. “In the correction of errors”, Mackey points out, “there are three possibilities for the learners; he may hear his error and correct it; he may hear it and not correct it; and he may neither hear it nor correct it”.⁴³ In a language class, the teacher should create opportunity for the learners to correct their own errors. In the self-correction technique, the language learners making the errors are able to correct them alone without the direct involvement or interference of their teachers. In this context, Khansir and Pakdel comment, “Error correction has its total success when the language learners making the errors are able to correct them alone (self-correction)”.⁴⁴

In the research work on teacher feedback and learner uptake in Canada, Lyster and Ranta intended to combine different types of corrective feedback with student responses to that feedback. They have specifically attempted to discover what type/s of error treatment would encourage learners’ self-repair.⁴⁵ In other words, the types of corrective feedback, that can lead students to correct their own errors with an eye toward grammatical accuracy and lexical precision within a meaningful communicative context, should be prioritized by the teachers.

4. Research Questions

This study intended to explore the following research questions:

- What techniques of error correction are generally used by Bangladeshi secondary school teachers?
- What are the challenges associated with treatment of Bangladeshi secondary level English language learners’ errors in the classroom?
- What techniques and modes are suitable for providing corrective feedback to Bangladeshi secondary level learners?

5. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- to study and specify the techniques of error correction generally used by Bangladeshi secondary school teachers;
- to identify the challenges associated with treatment of English language learners’ errors in the classroom;
- to recommend measures for selecting and providing suitable corrective feedback to Bangladeshi secondary level learners.

6. Research Methodology

The study necessitated empirical investigation of the use of error correction and the challenges related to the treatment of learners’ errors in the secondary schools of Bangladesh to discern suitable and effective techniques and modes of providing corrective feedback to the learners. Considering the nature and purpose of this study, the survey method was chosen for the empirical study. The methods for data collection employed for the study were– 1. Students’ Questionnaire Survey, 2. Teachers’ Questionnaire Survey, and 3. Classroom Observation. The sample of the empirical study consisted of 250 participants. For questionnaire survey, 215 students and 35 teachers of the secondary level were selected from Rajshahi district. In addition, 12 English classes were observed with the permission of the teachers as well as the concerned authorities of seven educational institutions. A five-point Likert rating scale has been used in the survey.

7. Findings

7.1 Results of Students' Questionnaire Survey

Table no. 1

Results of Students' Questionnaire Survey

No	Statements	Results of Questionnaire Survey	
		Mean	SD
1	Your teachers focus on fluency in teaching English	3.47	0.70
2	Your errors are corrected by the teachers	2.87	1.22
3	Your teachers train you to strictly avoid errors in learning English	2.20	0.72
4	Your teachers correct your errors indirectly	4.20	1.23
5	Your errors are corrected by your peers	3.91	1.33
6	Your teachers encourage and allow you to learn English spontaneously without interruption to correct you errors	3.52	0.93
7	Your teachers correct your errors directly	1.52	1.11
8	Your teachers correct the errors you make immediately	1.94	1.17
9	You feel fluency is more important than accuracy in learning English	3.81	1.44
10	You receive negative feedback from the teachers on your errors	2.02	1.10
11	Your teachers help you to make self-correction of your errors	3.65	1.03
12	Your teachers correct the errors you make later in the feedback session	4.02	0.79
13	You need remedial feedback on errors	1.35	0.77
14	You receive positive feedback on your errors	3.98	1.10
15	You prefer to receive feedback from the teachers on your errors	1.84	0.93
16	You prefer to correct your own errors	4.15	0.96
17	You hesitate to seek corrective feedback from your co-learners on your errors	3.43	1.81
18	Your teachers focus on accuracy in learning English	1.98	0.95

The Table: 1 illustrates that in results of the students' questionnaire survey statements 4, 12 and 16 concerning the use of the method of implicit error correction, the use of the feedback session for learners' error correction, and the use of the self-correction method have 'very high' (above 4) Mean scores which indicate that learners' errors are barely corrected indirectly by their teachers, that the teachers rarely correct the errors their students make later in the feedback session, and that the learners are hardly oriented to the self-correction method. Statements 1, 5, 6, 11, 14 and 17 on the teachers' focus on fluency in teaching English, on the use of peer error correction method, on the preference of the teachers for the liberal approach to error correction, on the contribution of the teachers in cultivating inclination and efficiency in the learners to make self-correction, on the kind of feedback the students receive from their teachers, and on learners' preference for using the peer correction method have 'considerably high' (between 3 and 3.99) Mean scores, which suggest that development of learners' fluency is most often undermined in teaching English in the classroom, that learners' errors are infrequently corrected with the aid of their peers, that the teachers sometimes encourage and allow the learners to learn English spontaneously without interruption to make error correction, that the teachers seldom help the learners to make self-correction of their errors, that they sometimes receive positive feedback from their teachers in the classroom, and that they mostly hesitate to seek corrective feedback from their co-learners on errors. Statements 2, 3, 9 and 10 referring to the use of the teacher correction method, to the preference of the teachers for the traditional or restrictive approach to error correction, to the perspective of the learners towards fluency and accuracy in learning English, and to the type of feedback the students receive from their teachers, have 'considerably low' (between 2 and 2.99) Mean scores, which imply that learners' errors are frequently corrected by their teachers, that the teachers mostly train the learners to strictly avoid errors in learning English, that learners most often regard fluency less important than accuracy in learning English, and they most often receive negative feedback from their teachers in the classroom.

Statements 7, 8, 13, 15 and 18 on the use of the explicit error correction method, on the traditional role of the teachers in error correction, on the perception of the learners about their need for remedial feedback, on the learners' preference for getting apposite feedback from the teachers, and on the teachers' focus on accuracy in teaching English have 'very low' (below 2) Mean scores, which show that the learners' errors are generally corrected directly by the teachers, that the teachers commonly correct the errors the learners make immediately, that the learners feel that they highly need remedial feedback on their English language errors, that they heavily depend on obtaining corrective feedback from their teachers, and that development of learners' accuracy is usually prioritized in teaching English.

7.2 Results of Teachers' Questionnaire Survey

Table no. 2

The Results of Teachers' Questionnaire Survey

No	Statements	Results Questionnaire Survey	
		Mean	SD
1	The learners need remedial feedback on errors	1.92	0.79
2	You immediately correct the errors your students make	2.31	1.44
3	The students hesitate to seek corrective feedback from their peers on errors	1.43	1.13
4	You correct the errors learners make later in the feedback session	4.02	1.11
5	You encourage and allow the learners to acquire English spontaneously by applying the technique of trial and error	3.48	1.56
6	You correct the learners' errors directly	1.49	0.83
7	You give negative feedback to the learners on their English language errors	3.48	0.92
8	You help the learners to make self-correction of their errors	4.21	0.92
9	You prefer to correct learners' errors indirectly	3.72	1.10
10	You provide positive feedback to the learners	2.52	0.89
11	You use the technique of peer correction in the classroom	3.87	0.94
12	You make the learners focus on fluency while learning English	3.19	1.13
13	The students prefer to seek feedback from you on their errors	2.88	1.35
14	You focus on accuracy in teaching English	2.44	1.52
15	You provide adequate feedback on the learners' errors	3.17	1.02
16	The learners prefer to correct their own errors	4.30	0.85
17	You train the learners to strictly avoid errors in learning English	2.63	0.89

The Table: 2 shows that in the results of the teachers' questionnaire survey, statements 4, 8 and 16 concerning the technique of error correction, the teachers' role in facilitating the use of the self-correction method, and the teachers' view about the inclination of the learners to make self-correction have 'very high' Mean scores which indicate that the teachers hardly correct the errors their students make later in the feedback session, that the teachers scarcely promote the use of the self-correction method in the learners, and that the teachers mostly find the learners showing low inclination for correcting their own errors. Statements 7, 9, 11, 12 and 15 on the nature of feedback the teachers provide their students, on the use of the method of implicit error correction, on the use of the method of peer error correction, on the teachers' focus on fluency in teaching English, and on providing adequate feedback on the learners' errors by the teachers have 'considerably high' Mean scores, which suggest that the teachers sometimes give negative feedback to their students, that the teachers infrequently correct the learners' errors indirectly, that the teachers occasionally employ the technique of peer correction, that development of learners' fluency is most often undermined in teaching English, and that the teachers sometimes provide feedback on the learners' errors in the classroom. Statements 2, 5, 10, 13, 14 and 17 on the aspect of teacher correction method in the treatment of learners' error, on the preference of the teachers for the liberal approach to error correction, on the nature of feedback they offer to the students, on the learners' dependence on the method of teacher correction, on the teachers' focus on accuracy in teaching English, and on the teachers' preference for the traditional or

restrictive approach to error correction have ‘considerably low’ Mean scores which indicate that the teachers very often correct the errors made by the students immediately, that some of the teachers inspired by the liberal approach to error correction encourage and allow the learners to learn English spontaneously by the technique of trial and error, that the teachers provide positive feedback infrequently to their students, that learners conventionally prefer to seek feedback from their teachers on errors, that the teachers concentrate on accuracy in teaching English to a great extent, and that the teachers mostly train the learners to strictly avoid errors in learning English. Statements 1, 3 and 6 concerning the teachers’ perception about learners’ need for remedial feedback, the teachers’ view concerning learners’ willingness to use the peer correction method, and the use of the explicit method of error correction have ‘very low’ Mean scores which imply that the teachers think that their students highly need remedial feedback on errors, that the learners usually hesitate to seek corrective feedback from their co-learners on errors, and that the teachers commonly correct the errors made by the learners directly.

7.3 Results of Classroom Observation

Results of the class observation are presented below:

i. Nature of Student Feedback

Some English language teachers provided their students with positive feedback. Majority of the teachers gave the students negative feedback. And a few teachers preferred to make use of both positive and negative feedback. They mostly gave positive feedback but sometimes also used negative feedback.

ii. Mode of Error correction

To help the students to overcome their errors in learning English several teachers preferred to correct error in a gentle implicit manner, while most others used the traditional technique of explicit error correction. Moreover, some teachers were found oblivious about the accuracy of language use and basically concerned with the appropriateness of content.

8. Discussion

Findings of the study reveal that Bangladeshi secondary level learners hardly receive adequate and proper reinforcement on their performance in using English in the classroom, particularly in the treatment of error correction. Particularly, the negative feedback or punishment the learners receive, instead of inspiring them to concentrate on their study, often intensifies their aversion to learning English.⁴⁶ The study also indicates that the objectives of developing fluent speaking and free writing skills lie far behind because of most of the teachers’ obsessive concern for accuracy.⁴⁷ The students⁴⁸ are rarely given the required opportunity to practice using English spontaneously and creatively without restraint.⁴⁹ Clearly majority of the secondary students find it difficult or almost impossible to become a fluent user of English because of the frequent direct interferences of their teachers in response to the errors in their performance or their own over-consciousness and anxiety to avoid errors in using English.⁵⁰ Conversely, many of the teachers are not very careful about correcting mistakes of the students while they learn in the classroom. This is possibly because some of them take tolerance of correction for total ignorance of errors.⁵¹ Again, though the teachers are expected to teach the students the correct uses or forms of the target language in a moderate way, many teachers can be observed to criticise the students for their errors in the process of learning, which often demoralize and dampens the confidence of the students.⁵² Specifically, the weaker students, who often receive negative feedback from their teachers, need positive feedback from their teachers to be properly motivated to learn English successfully.⁵³

9. Recommendations

Considering the present circumstances, a number of measures could be suggested to render the learners proper treatment of their errors. First and foremost, the teachers ought to provide requisite effective corrective feedback to the learners. To address the errors of the learners, the teachers should identify and interpret the kinds of errors made by the learners.⁵⁴ Moreover, the teachers should focus on the frequency of errors made by the students in learning English. Moreover, various techniques as well as modes could be utilized for providing beneficial corrective feedback

to the learners.⁵⁵ Teachers should employ both verbal and written feedback. They need to apply Explicit correction method and Implicit correction method considerably. Explicit correction may not be always necessary and even sometimes harmful to the learners of a second or foreign language. Therefore, the teachers can opt to making less use of overt correction. Additionally, learners' errors should neither be tolerated nor corrected excessively.⁵⁶ Hence, the teachers may adopt a liberal approach to error correction by tolerating errors moderately, when such errors do not threaten to destroy harmony and meaning in communication. Moreover, the learners should not be corrected immediately all the time because errors are to be considered with greater tolerance as a normal phenomenon in the process of development of their communicative competence in English.

Furthermore, the teachers must pay equal attention to developing fluency and accuracy of the language learners. They should avoid making harsh direct criticism and relentless corrective interruptions in the learning process of the learners in the classroom. The mode of error correction needs to be indirect, positive and constructive.^{57, 58}

Besides, the teachers should allow sufficient freedom and autonomy to the learners and create opportunities for them to correct their own errors in the classroom. Specifically, use of 'Self-correction' method by the learners must be encouraged by the teachers. In the same way, teachers should also develop the practice of engaging the learners to correct each other's mistakes. For this purpose, teachers may employ the technique of 'Peer correction' in the classroom.

In addition, the teachers are required to provide positive feedback to the students to help them overcome the affective barriers and, thereby, create a stimulating atmosphere for the students in the classroom. Finally, "Teachers need to be aware of the dangers of an over-reliance on praise, and of the negative effects of punishments and reprimands".⁵⁹

10. Conclusion

In short, this paper investigated into the current teaching and learning techniques in relation to the issues concerned with addressing learners' English language errors and the prospect of offering proper remedial feedback to Bangladeshi secondary level learners. Findings of the study clearly indicate that error correction as a mode of feedback plays a very significant role in teaching and learning of English rewardingly in the secondary schools. This analysis also reveals the detrimental effects of the lack of corrective feedback as well as use of inappropriate mode of feedback on the learners. Therefore, the teachers need to get conversant with the advanced language teaching techniques to ensure proper and adequate corrective feedback to the learners. Likewise, the students, who should no longer act or be treated as mere passive recipients of knowledge, ought to play active roles in proper utilization of corrective feedback to achieve desired proficiency in English.

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