
ERROR CORRECTION IN WRITING

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Firstly, I would like to express my opinions and experience concerned with composition writing with the words of a famous person called Konrad Adenauer, "We all live under the same sky but don't all have the same horizon."

It is well known that composition is the subject our students largely find to be very difficult. As long as we manage to arouse our students' interest and enjoyment in writing, they will become fond of it and particularly creative in writing compositions.

Before discovering the effective techniques in error correction, some teachers spend a lot of time correcting students' assignments produced at home and examination papers written during the class-hour. Mostly, the learners are amazed at the amount of time those teachers have to spend in correcting and grading their compositions, because of the large number of students in classes. When the papers are returned, the students are more interested in their grades than in learning what kind of mistakes they have made. After the application of new correction techniques in students' compositions, the students begin to realize the advantages of having a corrected composition paper, in which they see and learn their errors at which they are astonished.

Errors the students often make are divided into two groups, errors related to performance, errors of competence, the treatment of each of which should be obviously differentiated. Before expressing differences between these two error

groups, answering the question "What is an error?" will be very helpful in understanding them. According to Johanne Klassen. "An error is a form or structure that a native speaker deems unacceptable because of its inappropriate use."¹

Let me present some explanations related to error groups: Performance errors consist of spelling, punctuation, lense errors, those which can easily be corrected by the students themselves when their attention is focused on them. Whenever the learner makes a mistake as mentioned above, it should be underlined by the teacher and corrected by the students first. The second type, namely, competence errors consist of errors such as akardness, ordiness, ord choice, sentence structure, lack of smoothness due to the absence of transitional elements. In the early part of the course, the teacher is expected to explain and give equivalentents for the words misused by the student writer.

As is well known there are two important expressions is foreign language learning. It is important to think about the distinction between "Learning to write and writing to learn." We, as teachers, should let our students write on any subject they like or the subject we choose in order to motivate and encourage them to produce compositions creatively. Encouraging the students to produce new compositions (once in two weeks) first corrected by the members in the mixed-ability group of 4 or 5 students, and then by the instructor. The teacher should ask them to revise their compositions considering the errors determined both by the fellow students and by the instructor.

Some teacher who do not have enough knowledge and experience in dealing with the students' mistakes made in their compositions have a negative attitude towards the students' mistakes. They consider mistakes as the signs of the students' failure in foreign language learning, and they are intolerant towards the mistakes. Such teachers are first unaware of the fact that instead of facilitating the students' task in writing, they place obstacles in the student's writing activity. Secondly, they are unaware that a number of errors are overgeneralization errors, part of which constitutes evidences for the student's using his hypothesizing capacity and creativity in the use of language.

SomeSome inexperienced and unqualified foreign language teachers consider the correction of all kinds of errors irritating owing to both the amount of students' compositions they have to correct and the alarming number of errors students make. A major reason which lies in the teacher's worry is the fact that their students' compositions reflect both the kind of teaching and the fundamental quality of education which exist in their classes.

As a matter of fact, with the application of effective techniques in error correction both foreign language teachers and the learners have positively changed their attitudes, criteria and behaviour to each other. As a result of this healthy interrelationship, the motivation of the students who make errors has increased to generate newer and more satisfactory compositions with fewer errors.

Formerly, some teachers' attitudes towards their students' errors were intolerant strict. Moreover the students' errors were considered to be "a crime", for which they were they were sometimes seriously punished by hurting their prestige and by giving them very low grades.

Now, there are various effective ways of correcting compositions students write. I often prefer three techniques each of which is very beneficial, which prevents the students from getting bored and discouraged, and it saves time for the instructors. They can be applied in accordance with the class size and level.

Pair work is the first technique I employ. I ask the students to correct each other's piece of work before handing in it to me. I correct the composition paper and then I return it to the student to revise it. Seeing the errors in both his composition and his friend's composition helps the student to learn.

The second technique which I have used for a long time is group work. In general, I divide the students into groups of four or five. I give them the individual compositions written before. I form mixed ability groups consisting of bright, average and slow students. Each group reads the composition papers of the students in another group. I visit each of the groups observing their work acting in my capacity as facilitator, assessor and resource. All of us discuss where to use correction and what kind of correction should be used. After the group finishes

correction, I collect the compositions to return them to the students. Then the individual student finds a chance to see his errors and to rewrite his composition. Then I correct the student's composition by entering the symbols. The third technique consists of self-correction by the students before the teacher's correction by using the correction symbols. The student finds an opportunity to look back at his composition and to rewrite it by comparing it with the first draft and thus, the student learns a lot through this composition which provides him a chance to learn from his mistakes. Self-correction, pair work, and group work all aim at developing writing accuracy, fluency, quantity, and quality.

Before asking the students to correct their own compositions or their friends' compositions, I teach them correction symbols. Here are the correction symbols I often use:

- | | |
|----------|------------------------|
| 1. // | New paragraph |
| 2. ne | not clear (meaning) |
| 3. ^ | add omitted words |
| 4. X // | not a new paragraph |
| 5. cap | capitalization |
| 6. p | incorrect punctuation |
| 7. sp | spelling |
| 8. art | article problem |
| 9. G | use gerund |
| 10. N | use noun |
| 11. NR | use number |
| 12. per | shift in person |
| 13. PR | use pronoun |
| 14. SV | subject verb agreement |
| 15. Inf. | use infinitive |
| 16. Mod. | modal problem |

- 17. ~ connect this sentence
- 18. pr/p Use present participle
- 19. pst/p Use past participle
- 20. CV Change voice
- 21. VB/F Incorrect verb form
- 22. t Tense error
- 23. Adj Use adjective
- 24. adv. Use adverb
- 25. dm dangling modifier
- 26. mm misplaced modifier
- 27. prep add preposition
- 28. ss sentence structure
- 29. r-o run-on sentence
- 30. subj/vb subject or verb needed
- 31. wo wrong word order
- 32. o omit
- 33. w/c word choice
- 34. conn incorrect connective
- 35. L link/combine
- 36. r/pr add relative pronoun
- 37. par faulty parallelism
- 38. par/un lacks paragraph unity
- 39. trans transition needed
- 40. t/s improve topic sentence
- 41. unr/par unrelated paragraph
- 42. ir irrelevant
- 43. uno unoriginal
- 44. L/d lacking detail

- 45. n/fac not factual
- 46. sup. superficial
- 47. () optional
- 48. wf word form
- 49. frag Sentence fragment
- 50. gr Grammar
- 51. K awkward sentence

Some sample sentences with correction symbols from the students' compositions:

- vb/t ^ 1. According to her, she must cook perfect and delicious food for the visitors whether they were like or not.
- 2. A few minutes later, an other old man comes and asks permission to sit near him.
- sp cv 3. Every night lots of inocent people were killing by the murderers of the night.
- Prep 4. I wanted to go marmaris but they wanted to go Bodrum Nevertheless, It was an anfortetable anni versary for me.
- cap.sp 5. Nevertheless, It was an anfortetable anniversary for me.

I would like to introduce a sample composition which contains some correction symbols:

P
gr sp
cap
w.ref
p
r-on
frag
K

A repertory company, with it's command of a number of plays, are quite different from a cast which preforms only one play for a run and then breaks up. The usual company on Broadway consists of actors brought together to produce one thing. If it is a success, the actors repeat the same roles night after night. A repertory company on the other hand produces a number of plays, it may produce three or for different plays in the course of one week. Each actor thus playing a different role each night. At any time a repertory company is able to revive an old play with as many as twenty-five plays in its repertoire.

NC The parts are all ready and the scenery, propertics, and costumes.

The Corrected Form

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A repertory company, with as many as twenty five plays in its repertoire, is able to revive an old play at any time. The actors are familiar with their parts, and the scenery, properties, and costumes, are ready in the company's storeroom."

In conclusion, I'd like to point out that fear of making mistakes and fear of failure always impede language learning. As long as we live in this world, error cannot be avoided whatever methods we employ and what kind of materials we use. Mistakes are inevitable, natural, and necessary in learning a foreign language. The aim is to contribute to the students' learning task as much as possible. Perfection is not possible to achieve all the time. Therefore, some mistakes can still exist in the students' composition after the second revision. But now there is the opportunity for the student to try to correct those mistakes by referring to his peers or to the instructor himself.

I believe the following chart is usually useful for the student himself to see the categories of his errors for the whole term.

Error Chart

Name and Surname		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	//										
2	nc										
3	^										
4	x//										

Error Chart

Name and Surname		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	//										
2	nc										
3	^										
4	x//										
5	Cap										
6	P										
7	Sp										
8	art										
9	G										
10	N										
11	NR										
12	Per										
13	PR										
14	SV										
15	Inf.										
16	Mod										
17	∪										
18	Pr/p										
19	pst/p										
20	cv										
21	Vb/f										
22	t										
23	adj.										
24	adv.										

Error Chart

Name and Surname		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
25	dm										
26	mm										
27	prep										
28	ss										
29	r-o										
30	subj/vb										
31	wo										
32	w/c										
33	o										
34	conn										
35	L										
36	r/pr										
37	par										
38	par/un										
39	trans										
40	t/s										
41	unr/par										
42	ir										
43	uno										
44	l/d										
45	n/fac										
46	sup										
47	()										
48	wf										

Error Chart

Name and Surname		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
49	frag										
50	gr										
51	k										

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