

“To Err Is Human...” Revisiting Oral Error Correction in Class

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Abstract : The widely accepted “Input Theory” of language acquisition proposes that language is basically acquired unconsciously through extensive exposure to all kinds of natural oral and written sources, especially those where the level of the input is slightly above the learner’s competence. As such, it implies that oral error correction by teachers in a classroom is unnecessary, a waste of time, and maybe even counterproductive. And yet, oral error correction by teachers in the classroom continues to be a very common phenomenon. While input theory advocates claim that such correction doesn’t work, interrupts a student’s train of thought, harms fluency, and may cause students embarrassment and fear, many teachers would disagree. They would claim that students know they make mistakes and want to be corrected in order to know they are improving, thereby encouraging students’ desire to keep studying. Moreover, good teachers can create a positive atmosphere where students will not be embarrassed or fearful. Perhaps now is the time to revisit oral error correction in the classroom and consider the results of research carried out long ago by the present speaker. The research indicates that oral error correction may be beneficial in many cases.

Keywords : input theory, language acquisition, teachers' corrections, recurrent errors

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