

OUTLINE

DEALING WITH COMMON MISTAKES USING AN ERROR CORPUS FOR EFL STUDENTS TO INCREASE THEIR AUTONOMY IN ERROR RECOGNITION AND CORRECTION IN EVERY DAY CLASS TASKS

In this article, readers can see the error recognition and correction goes far beyond the teachers' responsibility. Indeed, the students take active participation in a set of activities that I called "error hunting" process. Getting students to be aware of their own errors and other students' mistakes in an EFL environment by using a language corpus of mistakes is important for three important reasons.

A. The theoretical support of error classification is basic for teachers and students to deal with the "error hunting" process.

1. Recognizing and correcting errors in order to adapt this data to specific points and to use these points in every day classroom task in a gentle way.

- Classifying the language in two big areas: Spoken and written language.
- Classifying errors: Global errors and local errors

2. Specify these sub-classifications for each main area of the language.

- Sub-classification in the spoken area, the common errors in pronunciation.
- Sub-classification according to the written area.

B. Teachers' can adapt the theoretical frame for error recognition and correction and give the students specific ideas that can help them to be autonomous in the "error hunting" process.

1. The process of "error hunting"

- Tailor-making this process of "error hunting" to keep error recognition and correction autonomy and lower the affective filter.
- Teachers' experience to create autonomy in the students and lower affective filter.

2. Students do not have to set up their minds in order to recognize each and every mistake during the whole class.

- Helping students to be awareness on how rewarding is error recognition and correction in their learning process.
- Encouraging students to feel confident to discover these errors as something that is not going to affect anyone.
- Students' accepting the "error hunter" process.

3. After recognizing the areas of the language to proceed with the “error hunting,” the ideal thing of this process is to try to use an error corpus for EFL teachers and students as a tool to adapt this “hunting” process during class tasks.

- A collection of error information that is classified as the most common, so teachers focus their attention to them as well as they lead the students to recognize them, too.

- Having a corpus is helpful in the extension of the statistical frequency of error repetition.

C. Preparing lesson plans to practice everyday exercises meanwhile students participate in the process of “error hunting” is rewarding to progress in students’ learning.

1. What to tell the students in order to recognize and correct errors.

- Easy awareness to discover and correct errors.

- More detailed awareness to discover and correct errors.

- Extra careful detailed awareness to discover errors.

2. Application of these exercises in the different praxis at the faculty that teachers work.

- Tailor-made lesson plans for: For basic, intermediate and advanced students.

- Teachers’ confidence on good student participation in the “error hunting” process.

In conclusion, based on the theoretical rational of error classification and recognition for teachers and students, the adaptation of this theoretical frame to give students specific ideas to discover in the process of “error hunting”, and the preparation of lesson plans to be used in different levels, the “error hunting” process supports the idea of using a language corpus of errors as an important tool for EFL students to be autonomous when recognizing and correcting errors in a gentle way.

DEALING WITH COMMON MISTAKES USING AN ERROR CORPUS FOR EFL STUDENTS TO INCREASE THEIR AUTONOMY IN ERROR RECOGNITION AND CORRECTION IN EVERY DAY CLASS TASKS

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INTRODUCTION

In this article, readers can see the interrelation of the level of students' knowledge and the capacity to recognize and correct errors according to their knowledge of the target language. Besides, the students can increase their ability to recognize their own errors other students' mistakes, too. *Chandra (2005) mentions that some teachers choose from alternative correction methods which helped in actual students learning process*, so it is helpful to let students take more active participation in error discovery and correction. Moreover, in everyday classes, teachers do not let students recognize and correct their mistakes. This happens because in the everyday instruction, the students are not asked to become aware of catching and correcting errors in class since it is apparently a teacher's task. Additionally, *it is shown that the traditional way to prepare an error corpus is to manually annotate it with extended information on grammar mistakes, style abuses, miss spelling, typos, etc (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 2008)*. Consequently the proposal to use a language corpus of the most common errors for these students seems to be difficult, but it is beneficial. The proposal here is to make our students to be more autonomous on their responsibility to increase in their learning process, and also students can increase their autonomy when they discover and correct errors in a gentle way. *It is mentioned that the students are trained to grow about their language classes that they pick up the negative attitudes of their teachers about error correction (Chandra 2005)*. However, this attitude can be changed when the teachers can be convinced that their active participation in discovering and correcting mistakes is not difficult when the tasks are clear. In that case, this article proposes that the students can have active participation in a process that I called "error hunting," which is just the process that lets students take more active participation to recognize, and correct mistakes by being told what to look for in the "error hunting" process. All in all, getting students to be aware of their own errors and other students' mistakes in an EFL environment by using a language corpus of errors is important for the students to participate in the "error hunting" process because of three reasons.

THEORETICAL SUPPORT OF THE LANGUAGE AREAS TO LOOK FOR ERRORS

Presenting data classification of common errors made by EFL students helps teachers and students to recognize and correct errors in order to adapt this data to specific points and to use these points in every day classroom task in a gentle way. Indeed, it is necessary to be concern on

what errors are and how they can be classified inside of the spoken and written language. *Elliot (1983) writes that it is proposed to examine the errors made in spoken and written English.* For that reason, these are the two main areas to deal with errors – the spoken and written parts. *The errors can be presented orally but are usually presented in writing (Ellis, 1994).* In fact, this division helps to categorize the language that we need to check into the following: pronunciation, structure, lexis, usage of words and mechanics, all of which affect the unity and coherence of our L2 outcome. Obviously, the teachers need to adapt this division to their needs. Moreover, the main areas (spoken and written) have inside the classification of the error in one of the sub-classifications as these are presented here. In fact, it is necessary to mention that errors can be seen under the scope of “global” and “local” errors. *Elliot (1983) cites in her book that Burt and Kiparsky have suggested that errors be classified as local if the error affects a single element in the sentence and does not hinder comprehension, and as global if it affects overall sentence organization in which case it usually interferes significantly with communication.* This previous classification is important since recognizing what they are leads the decision on what to look for when discovering what is wrong in language production. Precisely, “local errors” can not affect language outcome since these are not so notorious and do not affect the message delivery and the message understanding in general or specific context. On the other hand, “global errors” are more serious and they indeed affect the message delivery and the understanding since they block areas of the language that without them the message is misunderstood or unclear in general or specific context. As it is seen, the classification of global and local errors and the two main areas of the language where teachers are dealing with error recognition, represent something important because in that way teacher can notice what to focus and tell the students to recognize and correct.

Furthermore, because of the main areas have certain sub-divisions that are common, it is important to specify these sub-classifications for each area. In particular, the spoken area deals with pronunciation, structure and lexis, usage of words and certain level of mechanics. In fact, the spoken area is the territory of pronunciation and not exactly related to the other areas mentioned here: however, when speaking, native or nonnative speakers deal with these sub-divisions at a certain extension, too. More specifically, when people speak, not only do they pronounce, but also they use structures (grammar), lexis (vocabulary), words that are adequate according to specific contexts, and mechanics that are the normal stops as when speakers respect punctuation in writing.

Besides, based on this sub-classification in the spoken area, the common errors in pronunciation are related to the usual mispronunciation of minimal pairs, sounds produced with the same organs of speech parts, but in an incorrect position of the organs of speech, all of which

cause incorrect pronunciation and intonation. Additionally, when these pronunciation errors are added to the pronunciation of structure, lexis and adequate words in context, the teachers have an excellent tool to create awareness and autonomy on students' minds about the process of "error hunting." For this reason, when teachers try to provide students the necessary ideas about what errors students can "hunt", so it is basic that the students have the necessary information about pronunciation and the sub-divisions that are adapted by the teachers in an easy way task during class instruction every day. According to what has been exposed in lines above, what teachers need to ask students to look for is mispronunciation that deals with incorrect sounds that can cause confusion as when a nonnative speaker says, "I'm looking for my false tits. I am hungry and I need to put them in my mouth to eat." First of all, this global error can sound funny to a native or nonnative speaker who has certain minimum level of good pronunciation – intelligibility, *term which concerns the extent to which sentences containing different kinds of error can be comprehended (Ellis, 1994)*. Consequently, the error falls into the minimum level that a sentence can have to be understood. Then in the case above, this level on intelligibility is below the normal level to understand the idea because the minimal pair error (incorrect vowel sound), incorrect position of the organs of speech, and incorrect lexis in context can produce an incorrect message. The correct message is as follows, "I'm looking for my false teeth. I am hungry and I need to put them in my mouth to eat." For these reason, the example shows how a global error can affect the real message tremendously. However, this error recognition and correction process is tailor made for the students at different levels. It is absurd to pretend that students at low levels try to recognize other types of errors that do not correspond to their level. This example is just and adaptation that each teacher can make according to what they look for in each session of class. It is essential to focus on the "error hunting" of the day, so the students are ready to look for specific mistakes.

As well as errors are sub-classified according to the spoken area, these errors are sub-classified according to the written area. In other words, it is more obvious that structure, lexis, usage of words, and mechanics are more related to the main area of writing. Indeed, creating awareness and autonomy in the students' recognition and correction of written mistakes is related to the sub-division of this main area. As well as in the area of pronunciation, the area of written expression has grammar, vocabulary, word use, and mechanic mistakes that in a global vision, can affect the message enormously. Moreover, the unity and coherence of the written expression is indeed more centered than in speech since speech can be informal or formal. However, the classification for class instruction must be focusing on formal written expression to lead the minds

of the students in such a way that they can think and write in better ways that informal forms do not provide. In fact, the way we think is the way we write, so leading the students by formal ways of writing is better than leading them through informal forms. For these reasons, the sub-classification of the written area in the process of “error hunting” emphasizes the awareness and autonomy of discovery and correction of grammar, vocabulary, word usage in context, and mechanics in a much more precise intention. According to the ideas presented in the previous paragraph, dealing with errors such as the nonnative student’s error that is made when this student tries to support why it is interesting to visit Trujillo. Then in the first reason, the student mentions that it is because its excellent archeological sites and continues writing that on a time off, all the family went to Trujillo and in this city, on a Sunday, the grandparents took the family to “La Huaca del Sol y La Luna,” and they were **taking** by **their** grandparents in their minivan that is an American car, which is very large and that is the reason why when this student lives in the U.S. the dream is to have a large car as the minivan, a house, a nice dog and an American spouse because this is the American dream. As it is observed, the comma splice errors, grammar, incorrect use of words, and lack of unity are the main mistakes to correct. Consequently, the teacher needs to tell the students what to look for when correcting themselves or their friends’ papers so that they can discover the specific subdivided errors in written expression. As it is seen, when teachers use this knowledge as a tool for students to be autonomous in “error hunting” activities, they can become better students in their learning progress. As a result the students accept error making, recognizing and correcting as a normal process as it happens in everyday life. *Chandra (2005) mentions that errors during the usage of language did no longer brook any strong resentment as these were accepted or tolerated as creative uses in new and at times unpredicted situations.*

ADAPTING THE THEORETICAL FRAME AND TELLING STUDENTS WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE “ERROR HUNTING” PROCESS

Teachers can adapt the theoretical frame for error recognition and correction and give the students specific ideas that can help them to be autonomous in the “error hunting” process. In fact, the process that I called “error hunting” is simply the awareness of students having to catch mistakes while the class activities are in progress so that this “error hunting” procedure does not affect the classroom progression and this process does not increase students’ affective filter since the process is developed in a gentle way. Additionally, it is important for the teacher to tailor-make this process of “error hunting” in order to keep these two points of autonomy for error recognition and correction, and lower the affective filter. For that reason, students need to be ready to

recognize errors of specific kinds according to the standard theoretical frame of error recognition and error correction by the EFL students themselves. The theory and practice about error recognition and error correction gives teachers the idea that combining the theoretical frame that experts provide for EFL/ESL teachers and these teachers' experiences in their everyday labor helps instructors create autonomy in the students when they discover incorrect output in spoken and written expression. Indeed, this theoretical aspect values how independently students can act in catching mistakes when they specially prepare to be aware of these mistakes. In this aspect, the students are given the opportunity to be prepared step by step to "hunt" for errors in a gentle way. Consequently, when the students focus their attention on the class tasks and in the meantime they are asked to increase their ability to observe by reading, listening, speaking and writing the different aspects of L2 and the possible errors that the students make or their classmates show, these students can notice and take notes about the possible aspects of the production they have or others have. Moreover, at the end of the session, teacher and students can have some spare time to deal with errors without revealing who has made these errors, but just concentrating on the errors themselves. This is a friendly way to deal with these corrections, so students and teacher avoid making feel other students uncomfortable. As a result the affective filter is really low.

The key element is to combine students' language autonomy to recognize their own errors and other classmates' mistakes, too. In fact, students do not have to set up their minds in order to recognize each and every mistake during the whole class. It would be absurd. The ideal thing is that the teacher can help them to focus their attention on what is going on during the task development, but at the same time, based on the awareness that has been provided on rewarding error recognition and correction, so the teachers can tell the students that in this way the students would have better input and output in the L2 learning process. The principal idea is that students are convinced that being better students means to be aware of discovering errors and correcting them as well. After that, they are encouraged to feel confident to discover these errors as something that is not going to affect anyone. At this point, it is important that the students are convinced that doing this "hunting errors" is similar to what could happen in L1 since native speakers of L1 make mistakes and then other natives can grasp these errors, correct them and normally continue with their everyday activities. Therefore, this attitude is encouraged in class. In other words, the gentle way to catch these mistakes includes note taking, and latter discussion. It means that the last five, eight or ten minutes before the class is over, the session can open a free discussion of what the students have discovered during the session and how they possibly correct them. The students are free to participate, and also they can be considered, the same as in stores,

the “error hunter of the week.” Consequently, the gentle way to focus this task is valuable. It is important that these “error hunter” process needs to be accepted by the students and see that the process is not harmful for the students, but beneficial for them when recognizing the areas of the language to deal with. Additionally, it is also important that the teacher provides the students information about the areas of the language they can “hunt” the errors. For that reason, before the students are given this information about the specific areas of the language, the teacher in simple explanation can tell the students that they can focus on pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, usage of words and mechanics. It is essential that the students be concern about their own background to discover these mistakes. *L2 proficiency might be a significant contributing factor in determining whether or not students noticed error corrections and understood the nature of errors so noticed (Schmidt, 1995)*. As a result, it is beneficial for the students to be involved in this “error hunter” process by activating their proficiency level. Besides, the aspects of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, word usage and mechanics are the simplest forms to explain students to participate in this task, although it involves a more academic classification. In fact, as a teacher the classification of the language areas where the students can focus on the “hunting” experience represent a more academic form as these classification has been presented lines above in this article.

In addition, after recognizing the areas of the language to proceed with the “error hunting,” the ideal thing of this process is to try to use an error corpus for EFL teachers and students as a tool adapt this “hunting process during class tasks as I proposed in my goal statement for 2012. *The development of teaching-oriented corpus tools together with the analysis of teacher and learner needs will undoubtedly lead to a more active participation of both teachers and learners in the corpus-based learning process, that is, in how we may teach and learn a language (Belles-Fortuno, B & Gea-Valor M. L., 2010)*. Therefore, teachers have a collection of error information that is classified as the most common, so teachers focus their attention to them as well as they lead the students to recognize them, too. Indeed, the benefit of his corpus is that the frequency of appearance represents a casuistic repetition that EFL students operate in the pronunciation, structure, lexis, usage of words and mechanics. As a result, the corpus helps to center the attention exactly on what the proposal of “error hunting” involves. In other words, having a corpus is helpful in the extension of the statistical frequency of error repetition so that the teachers can get the students to be aware of specific errors to discover meanwhile they normally develop their everyday tasks in such a way that this “error hunting” process does not interfere with the daily tasks in class. In fact, the corpus of errors needs a lot of physical support. It means that having a

computer that has certain limitation makes the collection of data very difficult. Moreover, this collection of information needs the software support of a program to deal with the lots of information to get more input and to store that information. As a result it would be better to have a powerful computer and good software to store error data. An alternative to this is to have a long term project to develop that corpus but at an institutional level; however, it just mention here as a good idea, but it is not the focus of the article. The main idea is just to show that the error corpus helps the teacher to have a tool in order to concentrate on what to tell the students to look for when they participate in this “error hunting” process.

PREPARING LESSON PLANS FOR THE DIFFERENT LEVES OF INSTRUCTION

Preparing lesson plans to practice everyday exercises meanwhile students participate in the process of “error hunting” is rewarding to progress in students’ learning. When the process of “error hunting” is adapted and practice, it means that the students in each level of instruction have received clear ideas about what to discover in general form, more detailed, and extra careful detail. Besides, the students are told to have three levels of awareness when recognizing and correcting errors. First of all, the students who want to catch errors that are easy to discover are in the group of the easy awareness to discover errors, so they do not have to make a lot of effort to pay attention to what L2 output shows. As a result, students have an easy task to discover, take notes and correct errors when they practice the daily exercises. Second, the students can have a more detailed awareness in the “error hunting” process because their willingness to do that makes them to be more alert to do that. Therefore, these students have a little harder task in the process, but it is not exactly the obligation to do that, so it depends on them to have this level of discovery. Third, when the students want to proceed in the level of the extra careful detailed awareness, they have to have a much more difficult task, which is not obligatory, but very rewarding since they have the willingness to do that in order to show that their level in the “error hunting” process is high, so it makes them feel a sense of great reward because this high level give a similar level as a teacher detailed awareness of error recognition and correction. Additionally, these three different levels are rewarded all the time by the teacher to make the students feel secure and recognized in the effort of the “error hunting” process.

In our faculty praxis, the application of the every day exercises and the “error hunting” process at each language school is to make tailor-made lesson plans. Indeed, the lesson plans are very similar to any single plan, so de difference is established in the fact that the teacher needs to concentrate on the sub-classification of the errors to discover and correct in spoken and written forms. In the following part, the recommendation for teachers is that each level needs specific

errors to be captured by the students. First, the recommendation for basic level teachers is much more related to the pronunciation mistakes that are global and the difficulties of grammar and vocabulary use in conversation, all of which represent easy awareness discovery. The error discovery in word usage and mechanics is not necessary to be encouraged except for students who want to enter in the level of more detailed and extra careful detailed awareness, two levels of which are not obligatory in basic courses. In the written area, the students need to be aware on the grammar, vocabulary and usage of words, and mechanics. Moreover, the students can proceed to the easy and more detailed awareness of “error hunting” process, so the detailed level is not obligatory, but it is accepted if it happens. Second, the recommendation for intermediate level teachers is much more related to the pronunciation mistakes that are global and the difficulties of grammar, vocabulary, use of words in contexts, all of which represent easy awareness and more detailed awareness of discovery since these are intermediate students. The error discovery in mechanics is not necessary to be encouraged except for students who want to be in the extra careful detailed awareness. Besides, in the area of written expression, the intermediate level has to be in the easy and more detailed awareness level of recognition and correction because the intermediate students can have enough background to do that. For that reason, these students can focus on grammar, vocabulary, word usage in context and mechanics. Finally, the recommendation for advanced students is that the students have a much more advanced background in L2 so that these students can proceed in both areas of the language (spoken and written) by focusing on the easy, more detailed, and extra careful detailed awareness of the “error hunting” process. In fact, these advanced students can be alert and try to discover in the spoken and written forms the three different levels of awareness since the progress in their learning gives the necessary knowledge to do that. Furthermore, whatever adaptation that teachers have to make of the ideas presented in this article is done under the criteria that teachers have to know about how aware and how motivated the students can be in the process of “error hunting.” Additionally, teachers need to know about how confident the teachers are about the students’ good practicing in the “error hunting” process. In other words, teachers who believe that students can not recognize and correct errors think that students do not have the capacity to participate in the “error hunting” process. However, because of my experience, I can tell that even our basic students can participate in this process when they are motivated and led to specific forms to discover and correct.

In conclusion, based on the theoretical rationale of error classification and recognition for teachers and students, the adaptation of this theoretical frame to give students specific ideas to discover in the process of “error hunting”, and the preparation of lesson plans to be used in

different levels, the “error hunting” process supports the idea of using a language corpus of errors as an important tool for EFL students to be autonomous when recognizing and correcting errors in a gentle way.

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