



## Correcting Oral Errors for University Students (A classroom research in Bina Sarana Informatika University)

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### Abstract

The objectives of the research are: 1). to make aware of the type of the students errors, 2). to develop positive strategies of error correction, 3). to find out the effective techniques in conducting errors correction, and 4). to know the students' English progress after being corrected during the learning activity of the English Conversation II class in semester 4. The result of the research showed that most mistakes made by students consist of over generalization and interference errors. In correcting the errors, students prefer to have discussion, drilling, and echoing techniques. When the writer corrected errors, students gave good responses in terms of their willingness, and happiness.. The techniques of correcting errors applied by the writer have improved the students' performance when they communicate in English. It was proved by the number of mistakes made by the students is 102. These mistakes were produced during their oral presentation in the last session of the class. The decreasing mistakes made by the students are from 192 to 102 mistakes. Due to the research findings, it is suggested to the teachers of English to do the error correction persistently otherwise, the mistakes became fossilized. Apply the right and effective techniques based on the students' condition and personality. Make students participate actively in the learning activity by creating positive atmosphere so that students will feel free to express their thoughts in oral communication.

**Keywords:** Correcting Oral, Errors, University Students, A classroom research



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### INTRODUCTION

Many students of university feel reluctant to use their English. One dominant reason is that they are afraid of making mistakes. They feel shy when their English is not understood by their interlocutors. As a result their English becomes passive, and when they must communicate in English, many errors and mistakes are often occur. On the other hands, teachers are often afraid of their students making

errors when they speak English. They feel that the students 'will not learn their mistakes' and keep using the incorrect language. Therefore, they must make sure that everything they say is correct. This idea derives from the view to language teaching that was popular in the 1950s - 1960s upon which audiolingualism is based. It was believed that language was learned by repetition of correct forms until they become automatic, so repeating incorrect forms would be harmful.

In contrast when a teacher gives too much attention to students' errors will endanger their learning motivation. Even as, errors are indeed revealing of a system at work, the English language teacher can become so preoccupied with noticing errors that the correct utterances in the second language go unnoticed. In the writer observation of errors, when the teacher corrected too much on the students mistakes and errors, students become reluctant to use their English. Therefore, teacher must be careful of treating the students that is not losing sight of the value of positive reinforcement of clear, free communication. It is true that minimizing errors is an important component to communicate accurately. Therefore, being able to communicate fluently is another goal of learning English language which mistakes sometime happens.

It is now widely agreed that language is not learned in this way, rather it is a system of rules that the learner has to acquire. To learn a language effectively (Sujarwo, et al, 2020), one must 'experiment with it'. Making errors is a natural and unavoidable part of the learning process. In fact, students can be useful for the teacher because they tell him what they have and have not learned. So, instead of seeing errors negatively, as a sign of failure, we can see them positively as an indication of what we will need to teach. Obviously, if we try to prevent students from making errors we can never find out what they do not know. It may be helpful to refer to other skills in which errors are accepted as a natural part learning process e.g, mastering chess, learning to cook, and learning to drive.

To encourage students willing to study the language actively (Imran, 2022), teacher should know how to treat students' error. Therefore, a way of correcting errors should be taken into account in the teaching and learning of the language. University students are adult learners so that teacher should take care of them different from other learners. To treat adult learners we should know how they learn the language. They are some ways of adult learning a language according to Harmer, J (2012:88): "Adults can think in abstract ways, we can introduce wide range of topics into adult classroom and expect that the students will have some knowledge of what we are talking about, and many adult learners have strong opinions about how learning should take place".

Based on the Harmer's point of view above, we can conclude that facing adult learner like university students, teachers can tell or describe language items in various way. Sometimes teacher can give direct explanation and in some other times, teacher apply parable. The same case when a teacher corrects students' errors or mistakes. The technique to be applied is depended very much

on the students' condition. Therefore, the teacher should know the character and personality of his students.

To make the students willing to speak, the teacher should consider the principles and technique applied in correcting the students' errors. One of important principle is that teacher should be able to create learning atmosphere that enable students to express their ideas freely and confidently. When this situation happens, students will feel secure to convey their thought in a positive atmosphere and that becomes a habit for the students to communicate in English.

Addressing the background above, the writer tried to correct student errors based on the theory as well as matching the students' character. The teacher applied this technique during a semester of teaching English conversation II to the semester 4<sup>th</sup> students of Bina Sarana Informatika University. In practice, the teacher didn't do the excessive error correction since it is harmful to the students, but selected errors are to be made. The selected errors chosen are the global errors which interfere with communication such as *wrong word order*, *misplaced sentence connectors*, etc. Selecting errors are not always easy especially when students make varied errors. So which errors should be corrected? And which ones can be tolerated are very important aspect to do the selection.

To err is human. This wise saying indicates that human often makes error in their life. It happens also in leaning a language, more over foreign language. Everyone makes mistakes. They never get it right first time. Even native speakers make mistakes. According Harmer, J (2012:86) making mistakes is a normal part of learning a first, or any other, language. So making mistakes and errors is common process of learning activity. To get more understanding on mistakes here are some definition given by some experts. According to Richard, J.C (2010:201) "a mistake is a fault by a learner when writing or speaking and which is caused by lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or some other aspect of performance". Another definition is delivered by Harmer, J (2012:272) a mistake is when students say or write something which is not correct. While Brown, H.D (1993:205) defined that "a mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a 'slip' in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly".

Based on the experts' opinion above, it can be concluded that a mistake is a fault made by a learner of first or second language caused of their lack of attention to the language system. The mistake could be in the form of "attempt" and "lapses" People make mistakes, in both native and second language situation. The different between native and language learner is that a native can correct the mistakes himself, while non-native cannot.

On the other hand, error is classified as a fault by the learner caused of the incomplete knowledge of the language. According to Burt and Kiparsky (1972:1) an error is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the inter-language competence of the learner. Richard J.C (2010:272 & 544) stated that errors is faults made by a speakers during the production of sounds, words, and sentences caused their lack understanding of the language. While Harmer, J. (2012:266) defined that error is a formal word to describe

'mistakes' and 'slips'. From the three (3) definitions conveyed by the experts above, we can conclude that errors is a fault made by native and non native speaker occur during the written or spoken activities, These errors are made because they don't know the rules and the language system yet.

Based on the elaboration kinds of mistakes above we use to be aware of what kind of mistake is being made so that teacher can correct in a wise way. Marsudi, J.S (2018:62) said that "a good teacher will use different strategies according to the kind of error, the ability and personality of the student, and the general atmosphere in the class" From what Marsudi said, it is clear that teacher may not generalize the way to correct students' error.

Mistakes should be differentiated from errors. Foreign language learners often think that the language system they are learning is strange. This point of view is due to the many differences of rules, grammar, and sound between their first language and the target language (interlanguage). Here is the confusion on how to distinguish which one is mistake and which one is error. When student say: *Does Robby can play the guitar?* In this question form, student may think that every question needs "do" auxiliary. In this case student committed an error, most likely not a mistake, since an error exposes the students' ignorance in the learned language. In other occasions a student may say: *Robby cans play the guitar*, but on the other occasion, he may say: *Robby can play the guitar*. Therefore, it is difficult to say whether "cans" is a mistake or an error.

When the same student reveals some utterances such as *Robby mays play the guitar*, *Robby wills study English*, *Robby cans ride motor bike*, etc. with very few correct sentences using third-person singular of modal auxiliaries, we might then say that "mays", "wills", and "can" and other same sentences are errors. These happening show that the student has not known the different between modals and other verbs form. Since sometimes it is difficult to differentiate between mistakes and errors, we should, however decide which fault should be corrected. As guidance, therefore, we should have some criterion to determine the types of fault.

In language study phase such in a conversation class, students will not always say the correct speech or utterances (Saputra, 2022). They will make mistakes especially in speaking more freely. When students use their English during the study or practice session, the teacher should note down the language they use. It could be grammar, pronunciation or choice of word. Here are the criterion which should be taken into account when the teacher notes down the mistakes.

According to Harmer, J. (2007:96) mistakes is divided into three categories i.e "slips", "errors", and "attempts". "Slips" are mistakes which students can correct themselves, once the mistake has been pointed out to them. "Errors" are mistakes which they can't correct themselves – and which, therefore, need explanation. "Attempts" are mistakes that students make when they try to say something but do not yet know how to say it. The way we give feedback and correct such mistakes will be heavily influenced by which type we think the students are making.

When students learn a foreign language, generally students make sensible assumptions about the way language works. An example of this is when a student has learnt saying *I have to go*, *I want to go* or *I would like to go*. This might lead the student to say – with perfectly appropriate logic things like *I must to go*, without realizing the use of 'to' is not allowed with 'must'. There are some reasons why students make errors they are among others

1) Developmental errors. Harmer, J (2012: 86) said that developmental errors is a natural part of language learning because (either consciously or subconsciously) the learner are trying to work out how the language system works.

2). Over generalization. An example of over generalization is when students learnt early of the past tense forms such as *went*, *came*, *run*, etc. However, later, when they become aware of "regular past tense" endings, they started saying *goed*, *came*, *runned*, etc. Other example of over generalization is that when students say things like: *he must to go*. In this case students are over-generalizing *to + infinitive*. Which they have become aware of in sentences like *he has to go*.

3). Interference errors. This error arises when students try to use their first language knowledge to speak the new language. Example student say: *I want to cut my hair*. Instead of saying: *I want to have my hair cut*, since, actually he is going to ask someone to cut his hair. Another example is *I am come from Indonesia*, *I come here walking*, etc.

4), Students' inter-language.

Some researchers also mentioned a language student's inter-language – that is students' own version of the language they are learning at a certain stage in their language development. The term of language development refers to the progress of their language capability.

The crucial activity of correction is when the teacher conducts speaking activities. Sujianto, B (2018:27) said that "when the activity is in progress it is important that the teacher restrains himself from correcting errors too much". Instead, he should move from student to another student in group or pair to facilitate the students to speak. At the same time, the teacher should monitor the language use, simultaneously collecting every possible error. He may take note of the error in a way that does not disrupt the students' attention. It should be kept in mind that the main purpose of the activity, the teacher conducts the speaking practice is to get students willing to talk as freely and as much as possible. The best thing for the teacher to do is to deal with language errors for the purpose of enhancing the students' communicativeness without neglecting language accuracy.

The most important thing for the teacher is to be flexible and to be aware of the effect on each individual learner of correcting errors. If a student is willing to be corrected directly when he/she use it, the teacher can correct the mistake straightly. In this case the teacher should make sure if the student really doesn't feel offended when the teacher correct the mistake in a straight way. However, this way is only can be implemented to some students. Basically many students do not like to get the correction from the teacher directly more over in front of their friends like the example above. As mentioned earlier that teacher should

use different strategies according to the kind of error, ability and personality of the student, and general atmosphere in the class.

## **METHOD**

The research methodology of this study is Mixed Method Approach that is qualitative and quantitative approaches. The writer chose this method, it because more appropriate with topic being evaluated. It is also more specific because it includes the mixing of data, and related to the studies.

According to Jacobs, Ary, and Razavieh (2002:421), qualitative research focuses on understanding social events from the perspective of the human participant. The most common data collection methods used in mixed method approach are class observation, interviewing the students and document analysis. To be exactly, it was a survey research. As said by Sprinthall, R., and Lee S. (1991:93) that survey research is design to gather information from samples by interviewing or using questionnaires, class observation, and discussion. Survey research focused on a group's opinions, beliefs, attitudes and or characteristics. The advantage of using this type of research is that substantial amounts of information can be collected in a relatively short time.

The qualitative study is employed in order to meet the research's objectives that is to make aware of the type of the students errors, develop positive strategies of error correction, and to find out the effective techniques in conducting errors correction to university students.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This error correction was conducted to 75 students of Bina Sarana Informatika Ciputat and Pemuda who were in semester six (6) academic year 2021/2022. The students learn English conversation II. The classroom practiced lasted for about 14 sessions during the conversation practice. To know the effectiveness of the correcting error strategies, the teacher applied 6 techniques elaborated previously. Here are the measurements that the writer used to evaluate the activities.

To know the type of mistakes, the writer collected the mistakes. This is done in every session, The collection of the mistakes then divide into 4 (four) categories of mistakes. They include; 1). Developmental errors, 2). Over generalization. 3). Interference errors, and 4). Student's inter-language.

In correcting the students' language error, the writer applied the 6 techniques as described earlier. In practice, the writer used one of those techniques. The chosen technique to be applied was based on the character and personality of the writer's students. After knowing the technique that students like, the writer used this technique more often.

By applying error correction technique, the writer wanted to know the students' willingness, feeling, and contribution to error correction when the discussion is in progress.

As all students were corrected when making mistake, the writer monitored the students' participation in the learning activities. The writer wanted to know



the effect of the error correction technique applied to the students' participation.

After having 12 sessions of English conversation II the writer asked each student to have oral presentation. In this time, the writer observed the students' progress. The writer hoped that the students will be able to decrease the mistakes when they do the speaking activity.

The result of collecting mistakes in 12 sessions of class activity is 192. These mistakes derive from two classes of English conversation II. The first class is from Pemuda Campus which consists of 42 students that made 108 mistakes. Therefore, the average of mistakes made by this class is 9 mistakes for each session. While the second class is from Ciputat Campus which consists of 33 students made 84 mistakes. So, the average of mistakes made by this class is 7. The mistakes are categorized into the types of mistakes as shown in the table 1.

Table 1: Types of mistakes

Types	Pemuda Class	Ciputat Class	Total (%)
Developmental errors	21	13	34 (17,7%)
Over generalization	45	36	81 (42,2%)
Interference errors	33	27	60 (31,3%)
Student's inter-language	9	8	17 (8,8%)
Total	108	84	192 (100%)

Table 1 above shows that many students made over generalization errors that was 81 (42,2%). The number of interference errors was 60 (31,3%), while developmental errors has 34 (17,7%). And student's inter-language was 17 (8,8%). From the data it can be concluded that the students of Bina Sarana University who learn English Conversation often make mistakes due to the over generalization which is common for students of foreign language.

Among the 6 (six techniques), students prefer to be treated by the discussion technique. When the writer applied this technique many students took part in making the sentence correctly. They like to convey their opinions in informing the rule of the language as well as telling their friends the right sentence. From this experience, the writer concluded that most of the mistakes they made are "slip". This is due to the students speak too quickly and are careless. Therefore, some students actually know the right one.

The second technique became preferred by the students was drilling technique. Students are eager to repeat the right sentence by the teacher. Beside, students having benefit from the information given by the teacher, students also learn how to pronounce correctly. That's why students like to repeat what the teacher said. Another technique that students like was that echoing technique. In this technique the students are motivated to think what the teacher meant by giving an example and clue.

Though most students prefer to have the three techniques above, the writer still apply the other 3 (three) techniques as variation. And it was proved that during a semester students enjoy the correcting sessions.

The empirical practice showed that students gave a good response when the writer conducted the error correction. Based on the writer observation during the learning process students were happy, no student was offended, and they laugh when the writer stressed on the funny mistakes. In conclusion, no objection came from the students when their mistakes were being exposed.

Though the writer always corrected the errors, students still actively joined and participated in the learning process. From the writer observation students don't give up trying to speak. Though students were struggling to express things in English, but they still take the opportunity to speak up. They feel confident expressing their thoughts. They performed good attitude in learning a foreign language.

At the last session of the English conversation, each student presented a certain topic in front of the class. Most of their presentation last for 2-3 minutes consisting 8 to 12 sentences. In their presentation then the writer noted down the mistakes. The result was every student made 1 – 4 mistakes. The total number was 102 with the average was 1.5 mistakes for each students. Students of English conversation II Pemuda Campus was 62 mistakes, and the students of English conversation II Ciputat Campus was 40. The following table shows that the number of mistakes made during the students' presentation in the last session of the English conversation II class.

Table 2: Mistakes in students' presentation

Types	Pemuda Class no of students	Ciputat Class No. of students	Total students
No. Mistakes	-	5	5
1. Mistakes	27	20	47
2. Mistakes	11	6	17
3. Mistakes	3	1	4
4. Mistake	1	1	2
Total	42	33	75

Table 2 above shows that the students English improvement after having corrected resulting 5 students made no mistakes when they presented his topic, 47 students only made 1 mistake, 17 students made 2 mistake, and the rest is 6 students make more 3 to 4 mistakes. If it is compared with the number of sentences which consist of 8 – 12 sentences and occurring 1-2 mistakes, means that the accuracy level of students range from  $1/8$  to  $1/12 = 12,5\% - 8\%$ . Therefore the error correction activity resulting the students' accuracy of at least 87 %.

Comparing the number of mistakes occurred during the learning activity, the writer wrapped up that there was decreasing mistakes from 192 to 102 mistakes. From the data above, it could be concluded that the technique



chosen by the writer could improve the students' performance when they communicate in English.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the result above, the writer makes some conclusion as follows correcting oral errors in a positive way may improve students' accuracy in oral communication. The proper technique of correcting error should be based on the students' condition. Therefore, teacher should try and chose the right technique for his students. The techniques accepted by the students in this class practice were discussion, drilling, and echoing techniques. While the other 3 techniques such as showing the mistake, Passing the error to another student, and explaining the grammar rules were good for variation in correcting students' error. The correcting oral errors activity were successful to maintain the students' participation. Though students were given correction when they communicate in English, they still participate actively in the learning activities without being afraid of making mistakes. Students give positive response to the writer by showing their willingness, happiness, and positive attention to correcting errors activities.

As recommendation for referring to the conclusion, the writer would like to deliver some suggestion as follows since mistake is common to students who learn English, it is important and necessary for the teacher to always do the error correction otherwise, and the mistakes became fossilized. To apply the right and effective techniques based on the students' condition and personality. And make students actively participated in the learning activity by creating positive atmosphere so students feel free to express their thoughts in oral communication.

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