Volume 4, Issue 5, May – 2026 **ISSN (E):** 2938-379X

A STUDY OF ERROR CORRECTION TECHNIQUES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND THEIR PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract
This study examines error correction techniques in English Language Teaching (ELT) and analyzes their pedagogical implications in classroom practice. It investigates how different corrective feedback strategies influence learners' language development, accuracy, and communicative competence. The research focuses on major types of error correction, including explicit correction, recast, metalinguistic feedback, clarification requests, and elicitation, and evaluates their effectiveness in different instructional contexts.
The study highlights that error correction is not merely a corrective act but an essential pedagogical tool that shapes learner awareness, interlanguage development, and language acquisition processes. Findings indicate that the effectiveness of error correction depends on multiple factors, including learner proficiency level, task type, instructional goals, and classroom interaction patterns. While explicit correction is effective for accuracy-focused learning, indirect techniques such as recasts and elicitation are more suitable for promoting fluency and learner autonomy.

Keywords: Error correction; corrective feedback; English Language Teaching; pedagogical implications; recast; elicitation; learner autonomy; interlanguage development; classroom interaction; language accuracy.

Introduction

Error correction has been a central and continuously debated issue in English Language Teaching (ELT) and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research for several decades. It refers to pedagogical practices through which teachers respond to learners' linguistic errors in order to improve accuracy and support interlanguage development. According to classroom research in SLA, corrective feedback plays a crucial role in shaping learners' acquisition of target language forms, although its effectiveness depends on the type of feedback and instructional context .

Historically, the debate on error correction can be traced back to behaviorist learning theory. Behaviorist perspectives, strongly influenced by B. F. Skinner's work in the mid-twentieth century, viewed errors as undesirable habits that should be eliminated through immediate correction and reinforcement. However, later developments in applied linguistics challenged

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this view and shifted attention toward cognitive and interactional perspectives on language learning.

From the late 1960s onward, SLA researchers began to critically examine the role of learner errors. Corder's influential work (1967) emphasized that errors are not simply failures but evidence of an active learning process, reflecting the learner's internal system of language development. This perspective marked a significant shift from behaviorist correction toward a more developmental understanding of language acquisition.

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MAIN BODY

In English language pedagogy, error correction techniques are not merely corrective interventions but constitute a structured pedagogical mechanism that directly influences learner development, interlanguage formation, and communicative competence. Classroom-based research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has identified several dominant corrective feedback types, including recasts, explicit correction, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, clarification requests, and repetition, which are consistently observed in real instructional environments (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Ellis, 2009) .

In practical classroom settings, recasts are one of the most frequently used teacher responses. For instance, when a learner says *"He go to school"*, the teacher reformulates the utterance as *"He goes to school"* without explicitly highlighting the error. Empirical classroom studies show that although recasts are widely used due to their natural flow in communication, they often result in limited learner uptake because students may not always recognize them as corrective feedback, especially in meaning-focused interaction (Lyster & Ranta, 1997) . This indicates a pedagogical limitation: recasts support exposure to correct forms but may not consistently trigger conscious error repair.

In contrast, explicit correction is more direct and unambiguous. In classroom practice, when a learner produces an incorrect structure such as *"She don't like music"*, the teacher directly states: *"You should say 'She doesn't like music'."* This type of feedback ensures clarity of correction; however, research shows that while it promotes immediate accuracy, it may reduce learner autonomy because the correct form is supplied rather than discovered or constructed by the learner (Ellis, 2009) .

A more cognitively engaging technique is metalinguistic feedback, where the teacher does not provide the correct answer directly but gives grammatical explanations. For example, if a learner says *"He go to school every day"*, the teacher may respond: *"Remember, in third person singular we add -s."* Classroom studies indicate that this technique encourages learners to activate grammatical knowledge and self-repair, making it more effective for long-term retention compared to purely corrective methods.

Similarly, elicitation techniques are widely observed in communicative classrooms. Teachers pause or prompt learners to self-correct, such as: *"He…?"* after an incorrect utterance. Empirical findings from classroom interaction studies demonstrate that elicitation leads to high levels of learner-generated repair, as it forces students to retrieve correct forms from their internal linguistic system rather than relying on teacher correction (Lyster & Ranta, 1997) . Pedagogically, this enhances active learning and supports interlanguage restructuring.

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Another important technique is clarification requests, where teachers signal misunderstanding, for example: *"Sorry?" or "What do you mean?"* when an error occurs. In practice, this pushes learners to reformulate their utterance, thereby indirectly promoting self-correction. Classroom-based studies show that this method is particularly effective in interactional settings where meaning negotiation is prioritized.

Finally, repetition with corrective intonation is used to highlight errors by repeating the learner's incorrect form with emphasis. For instance, *"He go to school?"* is repeated with stress to signal the error. Research indicates that this technique increases learner awareness of incorrect forms while maintaining conversational flow, making it a balanced corrective strategy.

From a pedagogical perspective, classroom evidence consistently shows that no single error correction technique is universally effective. The effectiveness of corrective feedback depends on multiple variables, including learner proficiency level, instructional focus (accuracy vs. fluency), task type, and interactional context. For example, interaction-based studies demonstrate that techniques such as elicitation, clarification requests, and metalinguistic feedback are more effective in promoting learner uptake than recasts, particularly in communicative classrooms where students are encouraged to produce language actively .

Therefore, the practical application of error correction techniques suggests that effective English language teaching requires a balanced and context-sensitive approach. Teachers must strategically select corrective feedback types based on pedagogical goals, ensuring a combination of explicit correction for accuracy development and interactional techniques for fostering learner autonomy and communicative competence.

Advanced Grammar Teaching: Practical Classroom Processes (Analytical Table):

Grammar Focus (Advanced Level)	Behaviorist Classroom Practice (Drills & Reinforcement)	Cognitivist Classroom Practice (Rule Processing & Analysis)	Constructivist Classroom Practice (Communication & Meaning-Making)
1. Advanced Conditional Structures (Mixed Conditionals)	The teacher provides fixed transformation drills: "If I had studied harder, I would be successful now." Students repeat multiple times with substitutions (he/she/they). Errors are immediately corrected. The aim is automatic production of correct patterns through repetition.	Students are given sentence sets like: "If I had known, I would be there now." They analyze tense mismatch (past → present result). They deduce rules for mixed conditionals and create formula charts. Focus is on mental rule-building and conceptual understanding.	Students discuss hypothetical life scenarios: "If you had chosen another career, what would your life be like now?" They negotiate meaning in groups, using conditionals naturally in discussion without explicit focus on rules.
2. Passive Voice (Advanced Forms)	Teacher models: "The report has been completed." Students repeat and convert active to passive sentences (e.g., "They have completed the report → The report has been completed"). Reinforcement is given for correct structure.	Students receive mixed active/passive sentences and identify tense and auxiliary changes. They categorize passive forms (present perfect passive, past passive). Cognitive focus is on transformation logic.	Students analyze news reports or real articles and explain processes: "The bridge was built in 2020." They describe real-world processes collaboratively using passive structures in context.

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Grammar Focus (Advanced Level)	Behaviorist Classroom Practice (Drills & Reinforcement)	Cognitivist Classroom Practice (Rule Processing & Analysis)	Constructivist Classroom Practice (Communication & Meaning-Making)
3. Relative Clauses (Defining & Non-defining)	Students repeat patterned sentences: "The man who lives next door is a doctor." Substitution drills are used: "The woman who…", "The teacher who…". Immediate correction ensures accuracy.	Learners compare sentences with and without commas and determine meaning differences. They identify clause function and analyze syntactic structure step by step.	Students describe classmates or famous people: "My friend, who studied abroad, speaks three languages." Language emerges naturally in description tasks.
4. Reported Speech (Complex Reporting)	Teacher provides direct speech: "He said, 'I will go.'" Students transform into reported speech repeatedly: "He said that he would go." Accuracy is reinforced through repetition drills.	Students analyze tense backshifting rules (present → past, will → would). They create transformation tables and explain grammatical logic behind changes.	Students conduct interviews and later report findings: "She said she was planning to travel." Focus is on meaning reconstruction in real communication tasks.
5. Advanced Modal Verbs (Speculation & Deduction)	Students practice fixed patterns: "He must be at home." Repeated oral drills with different subjects. Teacher corrects modal usage immediately.	Learners analyze levels of certainty (must, might, could, can't). They categorize modal verbs based on probability scales and infer usage rules.	Students solve mystery-based tasks: "Who stole the object?" They use modal verbs to speculate collaboratively in group discussions.
6. Complex Sentence Structures (Subordination & Embedding)	Sentence combining drills: "The boy is my friend. He lives in London → The boy who lives in London is my friend." Repetition strengthens structural accuracy.	Students break complex sentences into clauses, identify main/subordinate structures, and map syntactic hierarchy. Cognitive processing is emphasized.	Students write and discuss essays or opinions where multiple ideas are combined naturally in speech or writing, focusing on meaning flow rather than form control.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the practical implementation of behaviorist, cognitivist, and constructivist paradigms in the teaching of advanced grammar within English language pedagogy. The analysis demonstrates that each paradigm contributes distinct pedagogical value when applied in real classroom contexts, particularly in relation to accuracy development, rule internalization, and communicative use of complex grammatical structures.

The behaviorist paradigm remains effective in the early and controlled stages of advanced grammar instruction, where repetitive drills and structured practice support the formation of accurate linguistic habits. However, its limitation lies in restricted learner autonomy and reduced opportunities for spontaneous language production.

The cognitivist paradigm plays a crucial role in enabling learners to understand and process complex grammatical systems. Through analytical tasks, rule deduction, and structural comparison, learners develop deeper cognitive awareness of language forms, which supports long-term retention and systematic language development.

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