

# Beliefs and Attitudes of Primary School Learners toward Error Treatment in Foreign Language Learner Talk

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Sveučilište J.J. Strossmayera u Osijeku  
Diplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti

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**Beliefs and Attitudes of Primary School Learners toward  
Error Treatment in Foreign Language Learner Talk**

Diplomski rad

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Osijek, 2015

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Summary .....	2
Sažetak .....	3
1. Introduction .....	4
2. Theoretical Framework .....	5
2.1. Error in Second Language .....	5
2.2. Error Analysis .....	6
2.3. Implicit and Explicit Knowledge .....	6
3. Error Treatment Terminology .....	10
3.1. History of Error Treatment .....	12
3.2. Difference between Oral and Written Error Treatment .....	13
3.3. Written Corrective Feedback .....	14
3.3.1. Treatable and Untreatable Errors .....	16
4. Oral Error Treatment .....	17
4.1. Oral Correction Choices .....	19
4.1.1. Should Errors Be Corrected? .....	20
4.1.2. When Should Errors Be corrected? .....	21
4.2. Attitudes and beliefs .....	23
4.3. Effectiveness .....	26
5. Beliefs and Attitudes of Primary School Learners toward Error Treatment in Foreign Language Learner Talk .....	29
5.1. Aim of the study .....	29
5.2. Sample .....	29
5.3. Instruments .....	29
5.4. Procedure .....	30
5.5. Results .....	30
5.6. Discussion .....	32
6. Conclusion .....	34
7. Bibliography .....	36
8. Appendix 1 – Questionnaire for Learners of English .....	40
9. Appendix 2 – Questionnaire for Learners of German .....	43

## Summary

Error treatment is the way the teachers and/or instructors respond to a learner's linguistic error made in course of his or her learning a second language. Learners' beliefs and attitudes are an important aspect of error treatment. The awareness of learners' beliefs toward error treatment can aid teachers of foreign languages in applying more successful language teaching methods and techniques.

This research focuses on the beliefs and attitudes of primary school learners toward error treatment in English as a foreign language and German as a foreign language learner talk. The results suggest that learners have a generally positive attitude towards error treatment. Learners of German have more positive attitudes toward error treatment in general than learners of English. This could be attributed to the way English and German are taught in the Croatian context, as well as the general level of competence of Croatian learners in both languages.

**Keywords:** foreign language, error treatment, beliefs and attitudes, English, German

## Sažetak

Postupanje s grešakama je način na koji učitelji i nastavnici reagiraju na jezične greške učenika stranog jezika. Važan dio tretiranja grešaka su stavovi i mišljenja učenika o postupanju s grešakama u nastavi stranog jezika. Poznavanje stavova i mišljenja učenika o postupanju s grešakama u nastavi stranoga jezika može pomoći nastavnicima stranih jezika da uspješnije primjene razne metode poučavanja stranoga jezika.

Ovo istraživanje proučava stavove i mišljenja učenika osnovnoškolskih učenika prema postupanju s grešakama u govoru u nastavi stranih jezika (engleskog i njemačkog). Rezultati upućuju na to da učenici većinom imaju pozitivne stavove prema postupanju s grešakama. Učenici njemačkog jezika imaju pozitivnije stavove prema postupanju s grešakama od učenika engleskog jezika. Mogući razlog su različite metode poučavanja oba jezika te razina jezične kompetencije učenika engleskog i njemačkog u Republici Hrvatskoj.

Ključne riječi: strani jezik, postupanje s grešakama, stavovi i mišljenja, engleski, njemački

## 1. Introduction

One of the definitions of error treatment says that it is the way the teachers and/or instructors respond to a learner's linguistic error made in course of his/her learning a second language (Ellis, 2009). According to Pawlak (2014), “the opinions on the utility of the treatment of learner errors in speech and writing have been in a state of constant flux for many decades and they have been a close reflection of the major shifts of perspective on the value of form-focused instruction as such.” (Pawlak, 2014: 37) Therefore, a research on the perspective and learners’ beliefs toward error treatment can tell us a great deal about their perspective about language in general and vice versa. Although there are some studies that deal with the perspective on error treatment, most of them are done from the teacher’s perspective (Čurković-Kalebić, 2001). Nowadays, most aspects of teaching are student-centered, which points to a need for more studies about learners’ perspectives.

The first part of this paper provides a theoretical backdrop for the practical part of the paper. It focuses on the theory behind the nature of errors in second and foreign language and it also gives an insight into the area of Error Analysis and Error Treatment. It also provides information about implicit and explicit language knowledge, the history and the main terms connected to Error Treatment.

The second part of this paper deals with the theory of Oral and Written Corrective Feedback (CF) in more detail, which is important for the understanding of the practical part of the paper. In the second part of the paper, the difference between Oral and Written CF is discussed, as well as the beliefs and attitudes toward Error Correction, the focal point of the practical part of this paper.

The third part of this research is the experimental (practical) part in which aims, participants, instruments, procedures, and results of the research conducted in two primary schools in Slavonski Brod are discussed.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Error in Second Language

Ellis (1994) defines an error as a deviation from the norms of the target language. Naturally, such a definition raises several questions, e.g., what are the norms of the target language, can oral and written production be treated the same if they have different norms, etc. Lennon (1991: 182, as cited in Pawlak, 2014:3) gives a broader definition, describing an error as “[a] linguistic form or a combination of forms, which, in the same context and under similar conditions of production, would, in all likelihood, not be produced by the speakers’ native speaker counterparts.” Although most definitions include the native speaker norm, Pawlak (2014) argues that there is no single correct form of a language if we consider dialect and sociolinguistic factors. Of course, if we consider the nature of language itself, it is no wonder that the definition of error and other terms in the area of language errors are in a state of constant flux.

Furthermore, a distinction must be made between errors and mistakes. In SLA, errors reflect gaps in a learner’s knowledge, whereas mistakes reflect occasional lapses in performance, i.e., errors occur when a learner lacks certain knowledge and mistakes occur when a learner cannot perform what he or she already knows. Ellis (1994) makes a distinction between comprehension and production errors. A comprehension error occurs when a learner misunderstands something, e.g. “Pass me the paper” as “Pass me the pepper” because he or she cannot discriminate between similar sounds. Ellis (1994) further notes that in the area of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research, the focus was mostly on production errors. Of course, errors are also made by children in their first language. Bloom (1970, as cited in Ellis, 1994: 47) gives the following examples:

\*I goes see Auntie May. (= I went to see Auntie May.)

\*Eating ice cream. (= I want to eat an ice cream.)

\*No writing in book. (= Don’t write in the book.)

However, as Ellis (1994: 47) emphasizes, “these errors are not generally thought of as errors in the same sense as those produced by L2 learners. George (1972, as cited in Ellis, 1994) differentiates between L2 learners’ errors, which are viewed as “unwanted forms”, children’s errors as “transitional forms”, and adult native speakers’ errors as “slips of the tongue.”

## 2.2. Error Analysis

The study of error correction is carried out by means of Error Analysis, which, as defined by Ellis (1994) studies the types and causes of language errors. Ellis (1994) discusses the history and importance of EA.

Before Error Analysis, errors were predicted by using Contrastive Analysis (CA). CA tried to predict learners' errors by identifying the linguistic differences between their L1 and target language. The basis was an assumption that most errors in the target language are caused by interference<sup>1</sup>. However, EA challenged this assumption by providing a methodology for investigating learner language. Yet, EA became a recognized part of applied linguistics only in the 1970s, mainly because of the work of the linguist Corder, who noted the significance of errors in a 1967 article. According to Corder (1967), errors are significant in three ways:

- 1) they serve as information about how much the learner has learnt,
- 2) they serve as evidence of how language has been learnt, and
- 3) they help the learner discover the rules of the target language.

Therefore, it is no wonder that EA plays an important role in the acquisition of a foreign language. Ellis (1994: 70) claims that "EA has made a substantial contribution to SLA research. (. . .) It helped to make errors respectable- to force recognition that errors were not something to be avoided but were an inevitable feature of the learning process." Also, it is important to understand what causes errors in the first place and how to treat them when they do appear.

## 2.3. Implicit and Explicit Knowledge

Many researchers (e.g., Ellis, 2009; Sheen, 2006; Ammar and Spada, 2006) deal with errors from the perspective of implicit and explicit knowledge. First, it is important to look at the meaning and difference between implicit and explicit knowledge. Ellis (2009) deals with implicit and explicit knowledge of language and states that implicit and explicit knowledge are two completely different things. Children learn their first language (L1) implicitly, but the learning of a second language (L2) is limited in terms of implicit acquisition and explicit

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<sup>1</sup> The term **interference** refers to the influence of one language (or variety) on another in the speech of bilinguals who use both languages. (<http://www.glottopedia.org/index.php/Interference>)



learning is almost always needed. Ellis et al. (2009) look at implicit and explicit learning in relation to SLA learning, testing and teaching. Ellis (2009:6) assumes that “a distinction can be made between the implicit and explicit learning of an L2 and between implicit and explicit L2 knowledge.”

Pawlak (2014: 94) presents the potential contributions of corrective feedback to explicit and implicit knowledge.

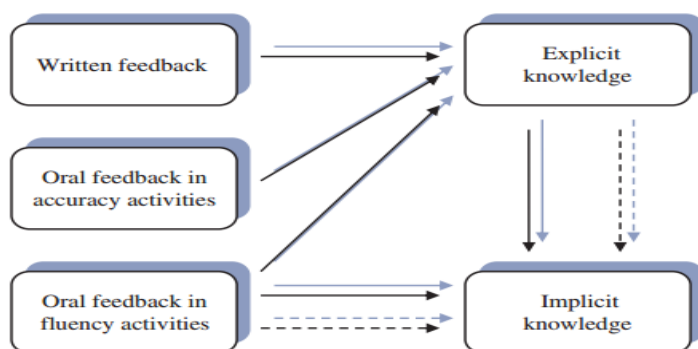


Fig.1: Potential contributions of corrective feedback to explicit and implicit knowledge (Pawlak, 2014: 94)

As can be seen in Fig 1, Pawlak believes that both written and oral feedback contribute to explicit knowledge. However, implicit knowledge is directly influenced only by oral feedback in activities focused on fluency. When it comes to accuracy-based activities, Pawlak explains: “More specifically, it allows learners to better grasp the requisite rules, apply them more rapidly, accurately and consistently in controlled exercises and on traditional tests, and, in line with the premises of Skill Learning Theory (DeKeyser, 1998, 2001, 2007a,b), proceduralize initial declarative representation.” (Pawlak, 2014:94)

Of course, as can be seen in Fig 1, explicit knowledge naturally influences and contributes to implicit language knowledge. It can be concluded that error correction affects both explicit and implicit knowledge in any form.

Ellis (2009) mostly focuses on implicit and explicit corrective feedback (CF). According to Ellis, the difference is whether there is an overt indicator that an error has been committed (explicit feedback) or not (implicit). Implicit feedback often takes the form of recasts, defined by Long (as cited in Ellis, 2009: 303) as “a reformulation of all or part of a learner’s

immediately preceding utterance in which one or more non-target like (lexical, grammatical etc.) items are replaced by the corresponding target language form(s), and where, throughout the exchange, the focus of the interlocutors is on meaning not language as an object". Ammar and Spada defined recasts in their study on the benefit of recasts and prompts as "a CF technique that reformulates the learner's immediately preceding erroneous utterance while maintaining his or her intended meaning (e.g., in response to "The boy has three toy," a teacher might respond "The boy has three toys")" (Ammar and Spada, 2006:3). According to Ammar and Spada (2006), recasts are believed to help the learners notice the difference in their utterances and the target forms. Many L2 researchers (Doughty & Varela, 1998; Long, 1996, as cited in Ammar and Spada, 2006) consider recasts to be the ideal CF technique because they are implicit, unobtrusive, and perform the dual function of providing a correct model while maintaining a focus on meaning.

However, in their previously mentioned 2006 study, Ammar and Spada compared the effects of recasts and prompts (techniques that lead learners to self-correction or peer-correction). Their hypotheses were:

- 1) learners exposed to Corrective Feedback included in their communicative activities will benefit more than those exposed to communicative activities only,
- 2) prompts will be more effective than recasts, and
- 3) prompts will be more effective than recasts no matter the proficiency level of the learners.

Their results indicate that exposure to CF is more effective to learners than not being exposed to CF. Although prompts turned out to be more effective than recasts, the results were different for low-proficiency and high-proficiency learners. This points to the conclusion that no single correction technique is ideal and that many factors need to be taken into consideration when applying error correction techniques, whether it is age, proficiency level, or even attitudes toward error correction.

A similar study by Ellis et al. (2009) was conducted in New Zealand. Ellis et al. compared the effectiveness of recasts (implicit feedback) and metalinguistic explanations about the errors (explicit feedback). The results of the study implied that explicit feedback was more effective.

A 2006 study by Sheen also suggest that explicit feedback leads to more repair or uptake "because they are focused on a single linguistic feature and the reformulated item is salient to learners." (Sheen, 2006: 2) Salience is defined as "the ease with which a linguistic item is

perceived.” (Richards et al., as cited in Sheen (2006: 7). It is closely connected to explicit corrective feedback, since both deal with perceiving linguistic items. In the same study, Sheen presents various aspects of recasts, which were researched by several researchers, including “(1)whether recasts contribute to learning; (2) the relative effect of recasts over models; (3) the extent to which recasts lead to learner uptake – learner’s immediate response following teacher’s error correction (4) whether recasts provide positive evidence or negative evidence; (5) the extent to which recasts are noticed by learners; and (6) the relationship between recasts, uptake and L2 development.” (Sheen, 2006: 3) Of course, as noted by Sheen (2006), these studies have their limitations and they cannot be easily generalized since recasts are not singularly defined in the studies. It is important to be aware of this fact when considering evidence for or against recasts, implicit and explicit corrective feedback.

DeKeyser (2007: 115) notes that implicit feedback sometimes proves to be less successful “because learners may mistakenly assume that their interlocutors are responding to the content rather than the form of their utterances.” Further, learners’ recasts may simply be interpreted as “an alternative way to express the same meaning, rather than a subtle message that their own utterance was unacceptable.” (Long, 1996, as cited in DeKeyser, 2007: 115)

### 3. Error Treatment Terminology

For the purpose of this paper, the terms of error treatment, error correction, repair, and correction feedback are mostly used interchangeably because the differences among the terms are fairly subtle. However, it must be noted that some authors make a distinction between the terms (Ellis, 1994; Pawlak, 2014).

Ellis (1994: 584) defines feedback as “a general cover term for the information provided by listeners on the reception and comprehension of messages.” Ellis (1994) further suggests that repair and correction have narrower meanings. Repair refers to “attempts to identify and remedy communication problems, including those that derive from linguistic errors.” (Ellis, 1994: 584) Correction is further defined as “attempts to deal specifically with linguistic errors.” (Ellis, 1994: 584) The broadest term would be “error treatment.” Ellis (1994: 701) says that “error treatment concerns the way in which teachers (and other learners) respond to learners’ errors. Error treatment is discussed in terms of whether errors should be corrected, when, how, and by whom.” Chaudron (1977, as cited in Ellis, 1994: 584) distinguishes four types of error treatment:

- 1) Treatment that creates an autonomous ability in learners to correct themselves on any item
- 2) Treatment that elicits a correct response from the learners
- 3) Any reaction/treatment by a teacher that demands improvement
- 4) Positive or negative reinforcement involving the expression of approval or disapproval.

Ellis (1994) criticizes the first and last type of error treatment due to the limited evidence of the effect the teacher’s feedback has on language acquisition and notes that most studies have been done on treatment that elicits a correct response and that demands improvement.

DeKeyser (2007) also deals with the terms ‘positive and negative evidence’ in the context of error treatment. DeKeyser (2007: 112) first defines evidence as “information about whether certain structures are permissible in the language being acquired.” He further goes to define more precisely positive and negative evidence. According to DeKeyser (2007: 112), “positive

evidence consists of information that certain utterances are possible in the target language, although this term is perhaps even more frequently used to refer to exemplars of possible utterances. Negative evidence, on the other hand, is information that certain utterances or types of utterances are impossible in the language being learned.” In connection to positive and negative evidence, DeKeyser (2007) mentions positive and negative feedback. While positive feedback informs of success, negative feedback informs of failure. DeKeyser notes that negative feedback may contain positive or negative evidence.

Hendrickson (1978) lists the „five fundamental questions „of error correction:

1. Should errors be corrected?
2. If so, when should errors be corrected?
3. Which learner errors should be corrected?
4. How should learner errors be corrected?
5. Who should correct learner errors?

Krashen (1982) answers these questions and states that if error correction is done according to the principles he describes, it will be effective. Krashen (1982:117) maintains that “second language acquisition theory implies that when the goal is learning, errors should indeed be corrected (but not at all times; and not all rules, even if the goal is learning).” When it comes to when errors should be corrected, Krashen (1982) believes that there should not be error correction in free conversation, but it is allowed on written work and grammar exercises. The reasoning behind such beliefs is that students should have time for the correction of their errors and only when it does not interfere with communication. Hendrickson (1977, as cited in Krashen 1982:117) gives an overview on the type of errors that should be corrected:

- (1) We should correct “global” errors, errors that interfere with communication or impede the intelligibility of a message (Burt and Kiparsky, 1972). Such errors deserve top priority in correction.
- (2) Errors that are the most stigmatized, that cause the most unfavorable reactions, are the most important to correct.
- (3) Errors that occur most frequently should be given top priority.

As can be seen, errors that occur the most and that cause problems with global understanding should mostly be corrected, while others may be neglected according to level of proficiency of the learner, age, etc. Hendrickson reviews several methods of error correction, including

the two most widely used: (1) providing the correct form ("direct" correction) and (2) the discovery (inductive) approach. (Krashen, 1982: 118)

### 3.1. History of Error Treatment

In the 1950s and 1960, foreign languages were mostly taught by using the audio-lingual approach. (Hendrickson, 1978) The attitudes toward error correction were mostly strict. It was expected of learners to avoid and overcome the influence of errors. (Brooks, as cited in Hendrickson, 1978) Teachers were advised to correct all errors immediately and students were not to correct their own mistakes. (Hendrickson, 1978) However, with the shift in focus from preventing to learning from errors in the 1970s, error treatment gained much more attention and importance in foreign language acquisition studies. (Hendrickson, 1978) Of course, error treatment, as an area of language research, provided a lot of material for discussion among researchers. DeKeyser (2007: 113) notes that "feedback is an area in which SLA researchers and instructors historically have not seen eye to eye." The main reason for dismissing the importance of error treatment in the past was the position toward first language (L1) research. DeKeyser (2007) explains that L1 researchers maintained that children acquire an L1 based solely on positive evidence. This led some L2 researchers to believe that negative evidence is irrelevant for the acquisition of L2 syntax. Some authors (Krashen, 1981; Truscott, 1999, as cited in Ammar and Spada, 2006) even argued that Corrective Feedback should be abandoned because it can have potential negative effects on learners' affect, thus endangering the flow of communication.

DeKeyser (2007) divides research on error feedback in two main categories: 1) research that examines the types of feedback provided and students' response to feedback and 2) research that explore the effects of exposure to various feedback types. Pawlak (2014: 1) noticed that most contemporary textbooks for foreign language teachers deal with "the provision of corrective feedback when discussing teaching different skills and subsystems rather than address it in its own right." This shows that error treatment is still a field that offers a lot of ground for researchers and foreign language teachers to explore.

The recent studies mention correction in the context of speaking (divided into fluency-oriented and accuracy-based activities) and writing skills or the role of correction in grammar instruction. (Pawlak, 2014)

Pawlak (2014:10) also discusses the history of error correction, or in this case, corrective feedback. He notes that “the two major shifts in perspective on the role corrective feedback, closely connected with evolving views on the role of formal instruction in foreign language pedagogy, can also be related to very specific theoretical explanations of how languages are learnt, as represented by behaviorist, nativist, interactionist and skill-learning approaches.” According to Pawlak (2014), behaviorists believed that errors should be avoided at all costs because language learning involves habit formation. Pawlak (2014) further discusses the shifts in perception; in the 1960s, Chomsky challenged the behaviorists’ beliefs with his nativist theory, the introduction of the Language Acquisition Device (LAD), and later Universal Grammar (UG). Chomsky (1968, as cited in Pawlak, 2014) concludes that language development needs positive evidence, rather than negative. Li (2010) gives definitions of positive and negative evidence. According to Gass (1997: 36, as cited in Li 2010: 310), positive evidence informs the learner of what is acceptable in the target language and contains “the set of well-formed sentences to which learners are exposed.” Li (2010: 310) continues with defining negative evidence and states that it “provides the learner with information about the incorrectness of an L2 form or utterance and is often realized through the provision of corrective feedback in response to the learner’s nontargetlike L2 production.”

### 3.2. Difference between Oral and Written Error Treatment

Although oral and written corrective feedback are sometimes considered to be one and the same, they actually differ in many important aspects. The following figure presents the most important differences between the two and it is compiled on the basis of the discussion of relevant issues included in Pawlak (2006a), Sheen (2010c) and Sheen and Ellis (2011) (Pawlak, 2014: 97)

Oral corrective feedback	Written corrective feedback
Corrective force may not always be clear	Corrective force is usually clear
The feedback is publically available	Feedback only on one’s own errors
The feedback is provided online and offline (i.e. immediate and delayed)	The feedback is provided only offline (i.e. it is delayed)
Relatively straightforward focus (i.e. target language form)	Considerable complexity of focus (i.e. many aspects of second language writing)
Both input-providing (e.g. recast) or output-inducing (e.g. clarification request) corrective techniques are available	Both input-providing (direct correction) or output-inducing (indirect correction) corrective techniques are available
The feedback can be explicit (overt) as well as implicit (covert)	The feedback can only be explicit (overt) as the intervention is evident
The correction can be conducted by the teacher, the learner who erred, or a peer	The correction can be conducted by the teacher, the learner who erred, or a peer
Metalinguistic information possible	Metalinguistic information possible
Conversational or didactic	Mostly didactic
Possible direct impact on implicit, procedural knowledge	Only explicit, declarative knowledge affected in the main

Fig 2: Key differences between oral and written corrective feedback (based on Pawlak 2006a; Sheen 2010c; Sheen and Ellis 2011, as cited in Pawlak, 2014: 97)

As can be seen in Fig. 2, one of the differences between oral and written feedback is that while the corrective force of oral corrective feedback may sometimes be unclear, it is usually clear in written feedback. The main reason for this is that, as Pawlak explains, “due to limited attentional resources, the need to focus on various aspects of the process of speech production and the demands of real-time interaction, the learner may prove to be unable to notice, let alone fully comprehend and process, the corrective reaction in the course of message conveyance.” (Pawlak, 2014:97)

On the other hand, when it comes to written feedback, the teacher’s comment is impossible to ignore, as it is marked on the written work itself. Furthermore, an interesting difference between those two types of feedback is the focus of the correction. With oral feedback, the focus is mostly on the target language form of the lesson. However, written feedback can target “not only grammatical accuracy but also syntactic and lexical complexity, overall quality, content, mechanics, coherence, cohesion or discoursal features.” (Polio, 2001, as cited in Pawlak 2014: 98). Another major difference is the implicit vs. explicit knowledge and feedback, which are previously discussed in this paper. In the case of oral feedback, it can be explicit as well as implicit, which means that learners need not be aware that they are being corrected, e.g., the teacher can pretend to misunderstand in order to get the learner to repeat his or hers utterance and self-repair it (Pawlak, 2014). However, written feedback is almost exclusively explicit by its nature.

### 3.3. Written Corrective Feedback

Learners’ written work can come in various forms, whether in essays, paragraphs, letters, creative writing or a homework assignment. (Pawlak, 2014) As Ferris (2011) argues, error treatment is very important in the language development of L2 student writers and their teachers. However, there are many components involved in written error correction, which can be somewhat overwhelming for teachers. Ferris (2011) discusses whether error treatment is helpful for L2 writers and states that “there is disagreement and even controversy among



writing specialists and SLA theorists as to the nature and very existence of “error,” and as to whether any classroom intervention, such as teacher feedback and formal grammar instruction, can help students to improve in written accuracy over time.” (Ferris 2011: 20) Pawlak (2014) concludes that the treatment of errors in writing mainly helps with the expansion of explicit, declarative knowledge.

When it comes to written error correction, a teacher can opt for direct or indirect correction of errors that appear in written works. Direct correction involves “supplying learners with the correct form or reformulating the entire text; indirect correction involves indicating that an error has been committed either in the margin of the text or within the text where the error occurs”. (Sheen and Ellis, 2011, as cited in Pawlak, 2014: 144). If the teacher decides to opt for direct correction, he or she can cross out the unnecessary element, insert a missing element, write down the correct version above or near the linguistic error, or combine some of these. (Pawlak, 2014)

There are even more options when it comes to indirect correction: “simply underlining, circling or marking the error with the help of a highlighter, indicating in the margin the number of errors in a given line (e.g. using numbers, ticks), or devising some kind of code.” (Pawlak, 2014: 144)

In Fig. 3, an example of a coding system in indirect written correction can be seen. (Pawlak, 2014: 145) Some methodologists claim that the use of such a system helps learners think for themselves and attempt to correct the error. (Pawlak, 2014)

Symbol	Meaning	Example error
S	A spelling error.	<i>He gave away all his <u>possessions</u> and <u>tresures</u>.</i>
WO	A mistake in word order.	<i>I <u>liked</u> very much it.</i>
G	A grammar mistake.	<i>There were two <u>boy</u> on the bridge.</i>
T	A wrong tense used.	<i>I <u>know</u> her for ten years.</i>
V	A vocabulary mistake.	<i>My parents decided to <u>lend</u> money from my uncle.</i>
C	A concord mistake.	<i>People <u>is</u> angry.</i>
A	Lack or wrong use of article.	<i>The room was full of <u>the</u> books.</i>
PR	A wrong preposition.	<i>It depends <u>from</u> what you want to do tonight.</i>
R	A register problem.	<i><u>Hi</u> Mr. Franklin, <u>Thanks</u> for the letter...</i>
P	A punctuation mistake.	<i><u>Although</u>, he lived in Paris for years, he...</i>
( )	Something is not necessary.	<i>He was <u>not</u> (too) strong enough.</i>
V	Something has been left out.	<i>He told <u>V</u> that he was sorry.</i>
?	The meaning is unclear.	<i>That is a <u>very</u> excited photograph.</i>
!	A careless mistake.	<i>She <u>like</u> Arabic coffee the most.</i>

Fig 3: An example of a coding system that can be applied in indirect written error correction (Pawlak, 2014: 145)

### 3.3.1. Treatable and Untreatable Errors

Two terms that comes up in the discussion about written error correction are “treatable” and “untreatable” errors, introduced by Ferris (2011). A treatable error refers to errors that occur with linguistic structures which follow grammar rules. As Ferris explains, a treatable error is treatable “because the student writer can be pointed to a grammar book or set of rules to resolve the problem.” (Ferris, 2011: 36) With an untreatable error, a student must use his or hers acquired knowledge of language to self-repair the error.

Examples of treatable errors are, according to Ferris (2011) verb tense and form; subject-verb agreement; article usage; plural and possessive noun endings; sentence fragments; run-ons and comma splices; some errors in word form; and some errors in punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. Ferris (2011) also lists examples of untreatable errors: most word choice errors and unidiomatic sentence structure (e.g., problems with word order or with missing or unnecessary words).

#### 4. Oral Error Treatment

Oral error treatment, as previously mentioned, differs from written error treatment in various ways. Since it can be explicit and implicit, the treatment of oral errors is more complex. Many researchers deal with the various aspects of oral error treatment, such as the sequence of error treatment.

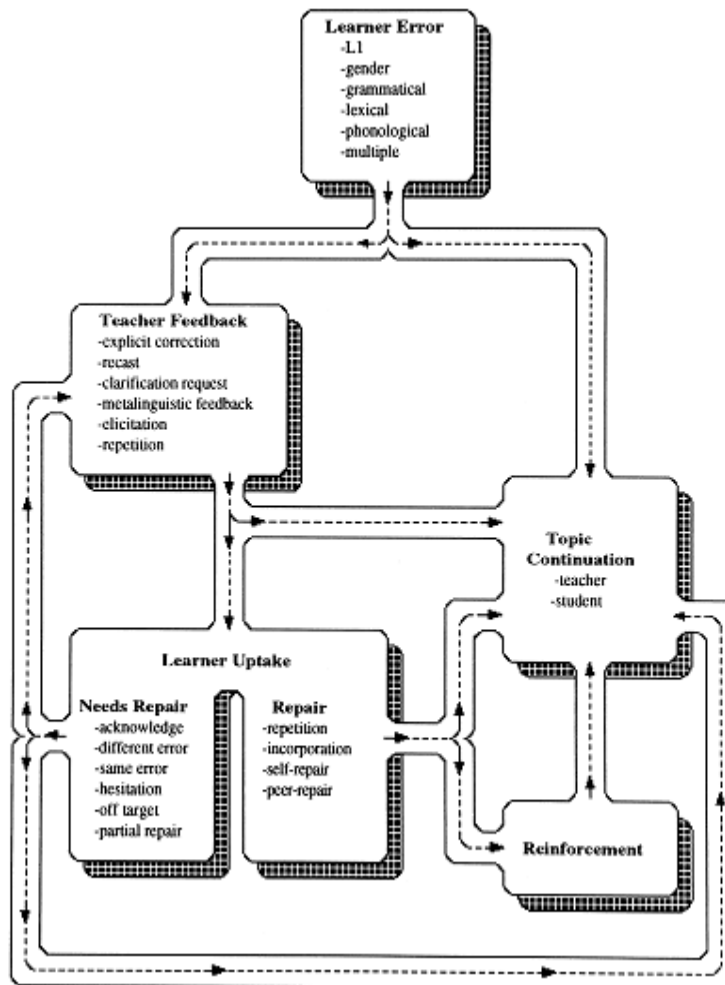


Fig 4: Error Treatment Sequence (Lyster and Ranta, 1997:44)

Lyster and Ranta present the error treatment sequence. The learner's error can be influenced by his or hers first language (L1) or it can be grammatical, lexical, morphological, etc. Further, Lyster and Ranta classify the type of feedback that a learner can receive. It can be explicit correction (Student: *I goed to the movies yesterday.* Teacher: *We don't say "goed," we say "went." It's an irregular verb.*), recast (Student: *I seed it yesterday.* Teacher: *Oh, you saw it yesterday?*), clarification request (Student: *I saw the movie Kilanic yesterday.* Teacher: *Excuse me, you saw what movie?*), elicitation (Student: *Yesterday with friends I saw a*

*ummm.... Teacher: What do we call a video on a big screen?*), metalinguistic feedback (Student: *I seed it yesterday. Teacher: Is seed the past tense of saw?*), and repetition (Student: *I seed it yesterday. Teacher: You seed it?*). (Bikowski, 2013)

When it comes to the learners' reactions to error treatment, Pawlak (2014) classifies the types of uptake in response to error treatment, which are also seen in Fig 4:

#### Repair

1. Repetition (i.e. the student repeats the feedback provided by the teacher)
2. Incorporation (i.e. the learner incorporates the repetition of the correct form in a longer utterance)
3. Self-repair (i.e. the learner corrects the error in response to a corrective move that did not supply the correct form)
4. Peer-repair (i.e. a student other than the one who produced the inaccurate form performs the correction in response to the feedback offered by the teacher)

#### Needs repair

1. Acknowledgement (i.e. a student says 'yes' or 'no')
2. Same error (i.e. the learner produces the same error one more time)
3. Different error (i.e. the learner fails to correct the original error and in addition produces yet another inaccurate form)
4. Off target (i.e. the student responds by circumventing the teacher's linguistic focus, which might involve modifying a different part of the utterance)
5. Hesitation (i.e. the student hesitates in response to the feedback)
6. Partial repair (i.e. the learner only partly corrects the initial error)

(based on Lyster and Ranta 1997; Lyster 1998b; Lyster and Mori 2006; Ellis 2008, as cited in Pawlak 2014: 172)

## 4.1. Oral Correction Choices

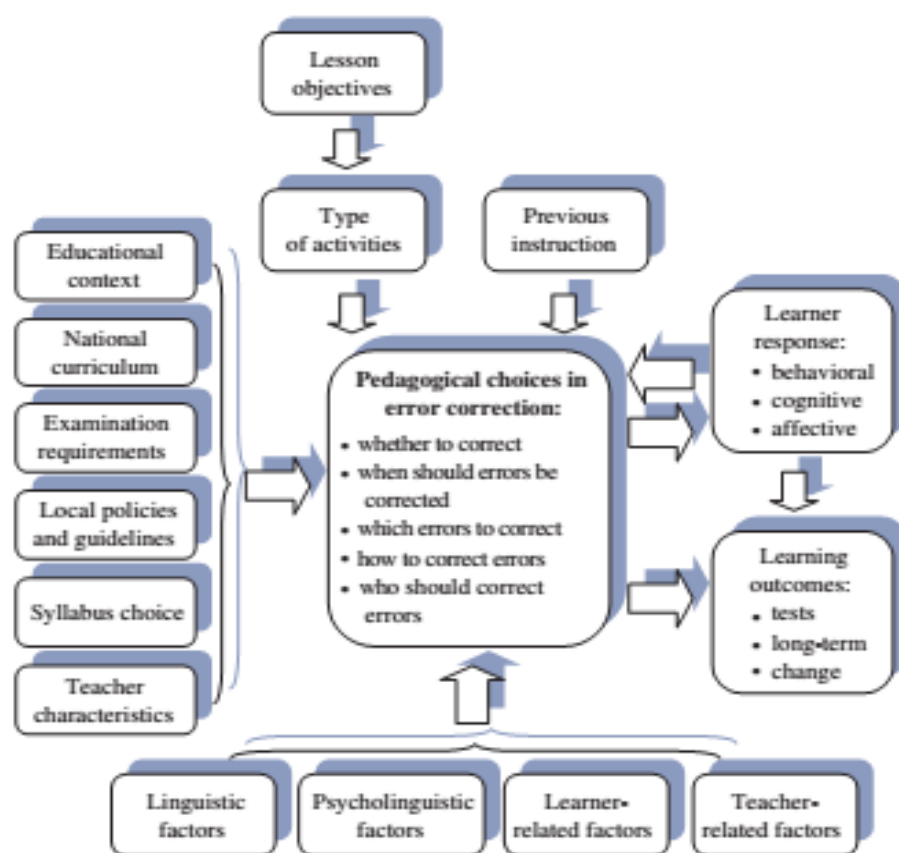


Fig. 5: Factors influencing pedagogical choices in oral and written corrective feedback (Pawlak, 2014: 110)

As Fig. 5 shows, there are various factors that influence the choices in error treatment, whether oral or written. Pawlak gives an example of whether or not feedback should be provided during communicative activities and says it would depend on “the importance attached to formal accuracy in official documents, the extent to which erroneous use of TL forms may affect the final score or grade, or teachers’ prior experiences, beliefs and knowledge about language teaching methodology gained in the course of college or university education.” (Pawlak, 2014: 110). Educational context refers to the setting (whether it is second or foreign). Also, national curriculum, examination requirements (e.g. overall focus, task types, evaluation criteria) and local policies (e.g. a preference for a specific type of teaching methodology) have to be taken into consideration, as well as the choice of the syllabus (e.g. task based vs. functional vs. structural) and teacher characteristics (e.g. command of the target language, type and quality of preparation in terms of teaching methodology, beliefs, experience). Pawlak also emphasizes the difference of accuracy and

fluency based activities. Naturally, when it comes to grammar, much more error correction is expected than when it comes to communicative activities. Furthermore, other factors that play an important role in error correction are those labeled as linguistic, psycholinguistic, learner-related and teacher-related factors. Those factors are connected and also influence each other, as Pawlak concludes that “teachers’ decision-making can be, among others, influenced by learners’ ability in the target language, age, behavior, anxiety, self-esteem, motivation, learning style or interest in a class.” (Pawlak, 2014: 112) Finally, Pawlak interestingly notes that “teacher-related factors should be viewed as evanescent and temporary rather than fixed characteristics, and they might be reflective of the teacher’s perception of a particular student, the willingness to reassert his or her authority in the face of rowdy and intractable conduct, or simply his or her disposition on a given day.” (Pawlak, 2014:112)

Considering the previously mentioned numerous factors that go into error correction, it is no wonder that error correction can sometimes appear to be so subjective. Another reason for the subjectivity is the fact that errors are predominantly corrected by teachers, self-corrected or peer-corrected. (Pawlak, 2014)

#### 4.1.1. Should Errors Be Corrected?

Whether all errors should be corrected or not was discussed at length in SLA. It was also mentioned previously in this paper. When it comes to oral corrective feedback, a few issues need to be discussed, such as noticing errors in classroom discourse (Long, 1977, as cited in Pawlak, 2014). It can be difficult to notice errors in oral communication, especially for teachers that are not native speakers. Also, “in the case of communicative activities, where things are happening very quickly, there is scarce time for monitoring, and the limited attentional and working memory capacities make it difficult to keep track of everything that is being said.” (Pawlak, 2014: 114)

Li (2013: 2) also emphasizes that “it is difficult for teachers to distinguish errors from mistakes in spontaneous classroom discourse, even though Hedge (2000: 289, as cited in Li 2013) suggests that teachers should respond to ‘errors’, rather than ‘mistakes.’ Li (2013) then gives another suggestion, that only errors which cause communication problems be addressed, but not those which do not. However, it is important not to lose track of the main purpose of

oral correction, that is, according to Li (2013:2) to “provide opportunities for exposure to negative (as well as positive) evidence and the consolidation of L2 linguistic knowledge.”

#### 4.1.2. When Should Errors Be Corrected?

The timing of error correction is also an important part of a successful language learning experience. Some researchers and theorists (e.g. Pawlak, 2014; Li, 2013) mention “online” and “offline” error correction. Online error correction occurs when errors are responded to during a task, while offline error correction refers to responding to errors after a task has been completed. As Li (2013) notes, both types of correction can focus on a particular linguistic feature.

Online error correction is ideal in task-based language teaching. When it comes to offline error correction, it is mostly used in communicative activities. Pawlak (2014) emphasizes that it is an inevitable feature of written corrective feedback, since written work is always corrected some time after it has been produced.

Pawlak further expands on oral correction feedback and lists three options in error correction: immediate correction, delayed correction and postponed correction. The teacher can decide to correct an error as soon as it occurs or delay it in the sense that it is addressed in the same lesson that it occurred in. However, the correction can be postponed for a longer period of time. All in all, the decision when to correct depends mainly on the type of activity at hand (fluency or accuracy based).

The rationale behind correcting “an error involving the use of the linguistic feature that is the main focus of highly controlled text-manipulation activities (e.g. sentence completion or multiple-choice)” (Pawlak, 2014: 118) immediately after it occurs is explained by Pawlak. He states that the pedagogic focus of accuracy based work is focused at “the development, proceduralization, and some degree of automatization of explicit knowledge.” (Pawlak, 2014:118) If the teacher were to wait until the end of the activity or the lesson to intervene, the learner could miss out on “the teachable moment”, that is “when a learner’s attention is maximally focused on the problem, and risking the same error being repeated in the following sentences by other students.” (Larsen-Freeman 2003, as cited in Pawlak, 2014:118)

Willis and Willis (2007, as cited in Li, 2013:2) suggest providing error correction during the post-task stage because “when linguistic forms are addressed in a pre-task phase, learners’ consequent obsession with form can undermine the primary focus on meaning, which is of overarching importance in a task-based or communicative approach.”

These suggestions confirm the online and offline options for correction. Immediate and delayed correction (which are similar to the online option) are best used in accuracy based activities, while postponed (offline) correction is most suitable for fluency based activities.

Another suggestion is given by Ellis (2009: 14), who proposes the following general guidelines for correcting learner errors:

1. Teachers should ascertain their students’ attitudes towards CF, appraise them of the value of CF, and negotiate agreed goals for CF with them. The goals are likely to vary according to the social and situational context.
2. CF (both oral and written) works and so teachers should not be afraid to correct students’ errors. This is true for both accuracy and fluency work, so CF has a place in both.
3. Focused CF is potentially more effective than unfocused CF, so teachers should identify specific linguistic targets for correction in different lessons. This will occur naturally in accuracy work based on a structure-of-the-day approach but can also be usefully applied in fluency work.
4. Teachers should ensure that learners know they are being corrected (i.e., they should not attempt to hide the corrective force of their CF moves from the learners). Whereas it will generally be clear to learners that they are being corrected in the case of written CF, it may not always be clear in the case of oral CF.
5. Teachers need to be able to implement a variety of oral and written CF strategies and to adapt the specific strategies they use to the particular learner they are correcting. One way of doing this is to start with a relatively implicit form of correction (e.g., simply indicating that there is an error) and, if the learner is unable to self-correct, to move to a more explicit form (e.g., a direct correction). This requires that teachers be responsive to the “feedback” they get from learners on their own corrective feedback.
6. Oral CF can be both immediate and delayed. Teachers need to experiment with the timing of the CF. Written CF is almost invariably delayed.
7. Teachers need to create space following the corrective move for learners to uptake the correction. However, whether the correction is or is not appropriated should be left to



the learner (i.e., the teacher should not require the learner to produce the correct form). In the case of written CF, learners need the opportunity to attend to the corrections and revise their writing.

8. Teachers should be prepared to vary who, when, and how they correct in accordance with the cognitive and affective needs of the individual learner. In effect this means they do not need to follow a consistent set of procedures for all students.

9. Teachers should be prepared to correct a specific error on several occasions to enable the learner to achieve full self-regulation.

10. Teachers should monitor the extent to which corrective feedback causes anxiety in learners and should adapt the strategies they use to ensure that anxiety facilitates rather than debilitates.

#### 4.2. Attitudes and beliefs

Studies about students' and teachers' attitudes and preferences towards error correction include different nationalities, contexts, or target language but nevertheless can help teachers and learners alike in acquiring a language. The importance of such studies is illustrated in the following comment found in Loewen et al. (2009:1):

“Studying learner beliefs might help explain and predict behaviors that learners demonstrate when learning an L2. In addition, research indicates that L2 learner beliefs correlate with strategy use, motivation, proficiency (Mori, 1999; Yang, 1999), learner anxiety, and autonomous learning (Kalaja & Barcelos). Furthermore, learner beliefs may influence teachers' classroom activities (Borg, 2003; Burgess & Etherington, 2002), and unrealistic beliefs or misconceptions about language learning can impede the learning process.” (Sawir, 2002). (as cited in Loewen et al., 2009:1)

Oladejo (1993) concludes in his paper about learners' preferences concerning error correction: “If the error correction is to be effective, classroom practice cannot afford to be based rigidly on any standardized practice derived from the opinions of linguists and teachers alone, but it must be flexible enough to incorporate the preferences and needs of the language learner.” (Oladejo, 1993: 1). What this means is that learners' preferences are as important as the opinions and beliefs of teachers. This view is confirmed by Katayama, who in his 2007 study noticed that “many foreign language educators and researchers support the view that a gap

between teacher and student perceptions about the effectiveness of instructional practices can contribute to unsatisfactory learning outcomes.” (Katayama, 2007: 285).

Therefore, studies about learners’ and teachers’ beliefs can be of great help to everyone involved in the learning process. However, as Pawlak (2014) explains, leading figures in the field of second language acquisition have not reached a consensus on error treatment. Krashen (1982: 119) comments, for example, “even under the best of conditions, with the most learning-oriented students, teacher corrections will not produce results that will live up to the expectations of many instructors”. Truscott similarly declares: “[m]y thesis is that grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned” (1996: 328, as cited in Pawlak, 2014: 37). On the other hand, Chaudron (1988: 133, as cited in Pawlak, 2014:37) wrote that “from the learners’ point of view (...) the use of feedback may constitute the most potent source of improvement in (...) target language development”, a position that is supported by a growing number of specialists. Finally, Ellis (2009: 314) suggests that “[t]here is increasing evidence that CF [corrective feedback] can assist learning (...), and current research has switched from addressing whether CF works to examining what kind works.”

Furthermore, in their 2009 study of learners' beliefs and attitudes about grammar instruction and error correction, Loewen et al. state that teachers’ and learners’ beliefs may differ and that there are even differences between learners studying English as a second language and those studying a foreign language.

Some studies (Lee, 2005; Simpson, 2006; Hamouda, 2011) focus on learners’ beliefs, attitudes and preferences when it comes to written correction. Overall, the studies showed that learners have positive attitudes toward written error correction and that teacher and learner beliefs do not differ greatly. Also, most of the time students prefer teacher correction to self and peer correction.

Other studies included both oral and written correction. As was previously discussed, there are some differences between oral and written correction, mostly in the implicit vs. explicit sense. Therefore it is important to take this into consideration as a possible limitation to certain studies. However, the findings of these studies can still point to learners’ needs and beliefs when it comes to error correction and language learning. For example, Zhu (2010) conducted a survey to establish Chinese college students’ attitudes about English teachers’

error correction practice in oral and written work. Zhu found that Chinese college students also have generally positive attitudes toward error correction. He further suggests that the students may be accustomed to teacher correction due to the deep-rooted teacher-centered teaching approach in China.

Oladejo's findings also confirm the general views and attitudes toward error correction. Interestingly enough, the majority of the learners in his study disagree with the view that "constant error correction could frustrate the learner and inhibit his willingness to perform in the language." (Oladejo, 1993: 8)

Similar results were presented by Katayama (2007). He conducted a study among Japanese university students. The results show a strong favorable attitude toward error correction. However, almost half of the Japanese students have negative attitudes toward peer correction. Katayama postulates that EFL students in Japan have negative attitudes toward peer correction "based on the assumption that the students do not expect to have their oral errors corrected because peer correction violates the concept of "ingroup harmony," an important cultural value in Japan" (Katayama, 2007: 288) Other parts of the study examined the type of errors the students want corrected. 61.8 % want their errors in pragmatics always corrected. Katayama assumes that this is connected to the Japanese education system, which is grammar-oriented. Katayama states that Japanese students "may produce grammatically correct sentences, but may not be sure whether or not their utterances are appropriate in a specific context. This may help to explain why the students in this study showed great interest in the correction of their errors in pragmatics." (Katayama, 2007: 289)

Such assumptions are in accordance to the three factors connected to positive attitudes toward error correction, as presented in a study by Schulz (2001):

"Perceptions could be the result of the way FLs are taught or tested (i.e., with predominantly form-focused, discrete-point tests) or both; perception could also be due to a myth, passed on from generation to generation of learners, regarding the usefulness of grammar study: or they could be based on actual personal experiences that convinced the majority of learners that their learning has been helped by rule awareness and corrective feedback." (Schulz, 2001:255)

A small-scale research by Jovanović (2012) in Serbia reveals results similar to those previously mentioned. A notable emphasis was placed by the interviewed students on the

difference between oral and written error correction. The students in question believe that all written errors should be corrected. However, oral correction is sometimes unwanted because the learners feel they can be discouraged and even lose their concentration.

### 4.3. Effectiveness

The question of effectiveness of error correction has been a source of disagreement among many researchers (Ferris, 2006). While some, such as Truscott (1996) claimed that error correction has no positive effects, others believe the opposite (e.g. Russell and Spada, 2006). There are also debates about which types of Error Correction are more beneficial to L2 learning. For example, some researchers argue that recasts are the most effective type (Doughty, 2003; Long, 2007). Other researchers, however, claim that types that withhold the correct form (e.g., clarification requests, elicitation) are more effective (Ammar and Spada, 2006; Lyster, 2004 ). Ellis (2009) compared 11 studies that have compared implicit and explicit corrective feedback. He concluded that “overall, the results point to an advantage for explicit over implicit corrective feedback in studies in which the treatment involved production.” (Ellis, 2009: 313)

In a meta-analysis of the effectiveness of corrective feedback in SLA conducted by Li (2010), a total of 33 studies were included in the analysis. An interesting conclusion is the effect of implicit vs. explicit feedback. Explicit feedback has more effect on immediate and short-delayed posttest, while implicit feedback has more effect on long-delayed posttests. Li gives the following explanation:

“One speculation is that implicit feedback might be more beneficial than explicit feedback to the development of implicit knowledge (L2 competence). Over the short term, explicit feedback might work better than implicit feedback, but because it primarily contributes to the development of explicit knowledge (learned linguistic knowledge), it might not be as effective as implicit feedback in transforming explicit knowledge into implicit knowledge.” (Li, 2010: 344)

Li (2010) also differentiates between second and foreign language setting. Li defines the two: “A foreign language setting is one where the learner studies a language that is not the primary language of the linguistic community (e.g., an L1 Korean speaker learning English in Korea);

a second language setting is one in which the learner's target language is the primary language of the linguistic community (e.g., an L1 Korean speaker learning English in the United States).” (Li, 2010: 315) Li states that different setting may yield different results.

A foreign language study on the effects of correction of learners' grammatical errors on acquisition was conducted in Iran. (Ansari and Varnosfadrani, 2010) Results showed that treatment of morphological features was found to be more effective than that of syntactic features. Ansari and Varnosfadrani (2010) argue that morphological features are generally learnt as items while syntactic features involve system learning. They also state that “this finding lends support to suggestions that corrective feedback (like other types of form-focused instruction) needs to take into account learners' cognitive readiness to acquire features.” (Ansari and Varnosfadrani, 2010: 1) Another Iranian study (Aliakbari and Toni, 2009) investigated the effects of error correction strategies, but in writing. The results of the study suggest that the participants who received ‘indirect coded correction’ feedback showed better performance compared to those who received ‘indirect uncoded error correction’ or ‘direct correction’ feedback.

In his overview of the studies on the effectiveness of oral correction strategies, Pawlak (2014) states that a clear-cut interpretation of the studies is not possible. Pawlak mentions that “in line with the results of the majority of descriptive and experimental studies, that, in order to be most beneficial, corrective feedback should be focused, explicit, output-prompting, and consistently provided over an extended period of time. (Pawlak, 2014: 215) On the other hand, more implicit, input-providing corrective techniques, such as recasts, also contribute to language development. (Pawlak, 2014) The conclusion from the different studies is obviously not one-dimensional, seeing as there are various factors that need to be taken into consideration.

Pawlak describes the issues in the research methodology of oral correction with the following comment:

“The methodology of research on the effects of different types of oral error correction has evolved over the last decade from mainly descriptive studies of naturally occurring classroom interaction to quasi-experimental and experimental studies which might include additional variables and often draw upon multiple data collection tools. An important caveat, however, is that the description of how feedback is implemented in the classroom as well as the

examination of its immediate effects have never been abandoned, and may in some situations constitute an invaluable source of data when used in combination with more rigorous experimental designs. Also of great significance to the development of the field are research syntheses and meta-analyses of studies of corrective feedback.” (Pawlak, 2014: 170)

## 5. Beliefs and Attitudes of Primary School Learners toward Error Treatment in Foreign Language Learner Talk

### 5.1. Aim of the study

The study was carried out in order to investigate learners' beliefs and attitudes toward error treatment in foreign language learner talk. This was done with the purpose of helping teachers become more aware of learners' preferences in order to create a more positive learning atmosphere. More specifically, the aims were: 1) to find out what are learners' general beliefs and attitudes toward error treatment in foreign language learner talk, 2) to see if there is a difference between learners' beliefs and attitudes toward error treatment in foreign language learner talk regarding gender, and 3) if there is a difference between learners' beliefs and attitudes toward error treatment in German as a foreign language learner talk and English as a foreign language learner talk.

### 5.2. Sample

140 foreign language learners from two primary schools in the Slavonski Brod area participated in the study. The sample comprised 69 male and 71 female students from the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school. The average age of the participants was 13.4 and the average years of learning English or German as a foreign language was 7.5 years.

### 5.3. Instruments

A questionnaire by Sanja Kalebić Čurković on learners' beliefs and attitudes toward error treatment in English as a foreign language learner talk was used to collect data. (Kalebić Čurković, 2006) The questionnaire was adapted for learners of German as a foreign language as well. The first part of the questionnaire comprised 14 items eliciting participants' beliefs and attitudes toward error treatment. The items were grouped in items about general attitudes (items 1, 2, 3), error correction time (4, 5), error correction techniques (items 6-11), and self-correction (items 12, 13, 14). A five-point Likert-type scale of agreement accompanied each statement (1-strongly disagree, 5-strongly agree). The second part asked for demographic

data. A reliability test was carried out on the questionnaire, deeming it acceptable (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.647$ ).

#### 5.4. Procedure

The questionnaire was administered to participants in eastern Croatia (the Slavonski Brod region) by their teachers. Participants were filling in the questionnaire during their regular classes. The survey was anonymous and took about 10 minutes. A quantitative analysis was performed on the collected data using SPSS for Windows. A descriptive statistical analysis was carried out to describe the sample and each item, including minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation. Statistical tests were carried out on the data (Independent t-tests).

#### 5.5. Results

Table 1 shows results for each group of items from the questionnaire. The results show generally positive attitudes toward error correction, with a mostly neutral attitude toward error correction time, techniques and self-correction.

Table 1: Average results of each group of items

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
General attitude	139	1.33	5	4.0983	0.84026
Error correction time	140	1	5	3.9607	0.95033
Error correction techniques	138	1.5	5	3.6304	0.67023
Self-correction	139	1	5	3.5659	0.95017

Table 2: Difference in attitude toward error correction between genders

	Sex	N	Mean	SD
General attitude	m	69	3.9082	0.92688
	f	70	4.2857	0.70262
Error correction time	m	69	3.7464	1.04889
	f	71	4.1690	0.79706



Error correction techniques	m	69	3.6377	0.62096
	f	69	3.6232	0.72064
Self-correction	m	68	3.4265	1.03799
	f	71	3.6995	0.84357

Table 2 above shows the difference between male and female students. The mean results suggest that there is a difference between attitudes for male and female students. Independent t-tests were carried out on the data to check if the difference is statistically significant. Results of the t-tests show that the difference between general attitudes, error correction time and self-correction is statistically significant. i.e., female students have a more positive attitude in those three fields. However, there is no significant difference in the error correction techniques both sexes apply (see Table 3).

Table 3: Significance of differences: results of independent samples t-tests

	t	df	Sig.
General attitudes	-2.703	126.769	0.008**
Error correction time	-2.679	126.911	0.008**
Error correction techniques	0.127	136	0.899
Self-correction	-1.698	129.121	0.092*

The difference between learners of English as a foreign language and German as a foreign language was also of interest. The results in Table 4 show the difference between those two groups, suggesting a difference in some of the fields. To check if the difference is significant, another set of t-test was carried out on the data.

Table 4: Difference between learners of English and German

	FL	N	Mean	SD
General attitudes	English	70	3.9476	0.93360
	German	69	4.2512	0.70804
Error correction time	English	70	4.0786	0.87905
	German	70	3.8429	1.00917

Error correction techniques	English	69	3.6594	0.62061
	German	69	3.6014	0.71983
Self-correction	English	69	3.4831	0.98938
	German	70	3.6476	0.90958

Table 5: Significance of differences: results of independent samples t-tests

	t	df	Sig.
General attitude	-2.158	137	0.033**
Error correction time	1.474	138	0.143
Error correction techniques	0.507	136	0.613
Self-correction	-1.021	137	0.309

Table 5 above shows that when it comes to learners of English as a foreign language and learners of German as a foreign language, the only significant difference is in general attitudes. Both groups of learners have similar attitudes about error correction time, techniques and self-correction.

## 5.6. Discussion

The analysis shows that learners in general have a positive attitude toward error treatment in foreign language learner talk. These results corroborate the findings of recent research that was discussed in the theoretical part of this paper. The hypothesis of this research was that learners would have more negative attitudes toward error treatment in general. In addition, the hypothesis was that learners of English would have a more positive attitude than learners of German. However, the results showed the opposite. Learners generally have a positive attitude toward error correction. The results also draw attention toward differences between genders. Female learners are more likely to see error correction more positive than male learners. Furthermore, when it comes to learners of English and German as a foreign language, learners of German are generally more prone to consider error correction positive. However, there are no notable differences when it comes to other aspects of error correction, such as error correction techniques, the timing of error correction or self-correction.

A possible explanation for the difference in results between English and German learners could be linked to the attitudes toward English and German in general and the perception of grammar. As was previously mentioned, Schulz (2001) attributes the positive attitude toward the way learners are taught or tested (i.e., with predominantly form-focused, discrete-point test). In the Croatian education system, German is still taught mostly with the focus on form, much more than English, which places more emphasis on communication. Also, in a study on English and German learners' communicative competences by Bagarić (2007), it was concluded that "learners of German who have been learning this language for 8-9 years have less developed communicative competence in writing and speaking than learners of English." (Bagarić, 2007: 13). Students who have a lower level of competence in a language perhaps rely more on grammar rules, which are a frequent error correction topic. This may explain why learners of German generally expect and want to be corrected more than learners of English.

## 6. Conclusion

This research was conducted in order to explore primary school students' beliefs and attitudes toward oral error treatment in the foreign language. The research focused primarily on the presumed difference in beliefs between learners of English as a foreign language and learners of German as a foreign language. It also established a difference between male and female learners of English and German.

The results of the research show that learners of English and German have generally positive attitudes toward error treatment. However, upon further examination, the results of the research suggest that learners of German are more positively inclined to accept error treatment than learners of English. It was established that there are no significant differences in the attitudes toward error correction time, error correction techniques and self-correction between learners of English and German as foreign languages. There is, however, a difference between genders. Female learners have more positive attitudes than male learners in almost all aspects. No significant difference was established in the attitudes toward error correction techniques that both groups apply.

The conclusions drawn upon this research may, however, not be completely reliable. There are limitations to this research that need to be taken into account. The study included a relatively small number of participants and therefore its results cannot be generalized. Also, it does not take into account learners' grades which can also play a part in the attitudes toward the foreign languages themselves and error correction. Furthermore, the score of the questionnaire's reliability test is not very high. Also, the research includes only primary school learners and other age groups are not included. Nevertheless, the research may serve as a possible guideline for Croatian teachers when it comes to implementation of successful error treatment in the classrooms of both English and German.

The further implications of this study include research on attitudes and motivation in other areas of error treatment (written and peer correction), especially with learners of German and

English as foreign languages, and the effects of error correction in foreign language classrooms.

To conclude, the significance and value of error treatment has been discussed by many SLA researchers. In addition, learners' attitudes toward error treatment are an important aspect of error treatment. The knowledge about learners' attitudes can be used as a valuable resource for more efficient implementation of error treatment in the foreign language classroom. The results of this research provide an insight into learners' beliefs and attitudes toward error treatment in Croatian primary schools and can be used to aid teachers and learners of foreign languages in the complex learning process.

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## 8. Appendix 1 – Questionnaire for Learners of English

### Stavovi i mišljenja učenika prema tretiranju pogrešaka u govoru učenika stranog jezika

Dragi učenici/ice,

ovo istraživanje se provodi u svrhu polaganja kolegija Istraživanja u nastavi engleskog jezika. Cilj upitnika je istražiti stavove i mišljenja učenika prema tretiranju pogrešaka u govoru učenika stranoga jezika.

Ovaj kratak upitnik je anonimn i koristit će se samo u znanstvene svrhe. Za svaku od 14 tvrdnji možete zaokružiti jedan od ponuđenih odgovora:

- 1- uopće se ne slažem
- 2-djelomično se ne slažem
- 3-niti se slažem niti se ne slažem
- 4-djelomično se slažem
- 5-potpuno se slažem

Za rješavanje je potrebno 5 minuta. Molimo vas da budete iskreni, ne postoje točni ili krivi odgovori. Hvala! ☺

1. Kada govorim na engleskom, očekujem da me nastavnik/ca ispravi ako kažem nešto pogrešno.

1      2      3      4      5

2. Smeta mi kada nastavnik/ca ne popravlja pogreške kada govorimo na engleskom.

1      2      3      4      5

3. Smatram da nastavnik/ca treba popraviti sve pogreške u govoru učenika na engleskom jeziku.

1 2 3 4 5

4. Ne smeta mi ako me nastavnik/ca prekine dok govorim na engleskom kako bi me ispravio/la.

1 2 3 4 5

5. Volim kada nastavnik/ca popravi pogrešku u mom govoru nakon što prestanem govoriti.

1 2 3 4 5

6. Volim kada mi nastavnik/ca na engleskom objasni što sam pogriješio/la.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Volim kada me nastavnik/ca upozori na pogrešku u mom govoru, a da je pritom sam/a ne ispravi.

1 2 3 4 5

8. Smeta mi ako nastavnik/ca prozove drugog učenika kada ja ne uspijem točno odgovoriti na pitanje na engleskom.

1 2 3 4 5

9. Ne smeta mi kada nastavnik/ca nakon što me ispravio/la traži da ponovim ispravan oblik.

1 2 3 4 5

10. Volim ako mi nastavnik/ca da mogućnost da sam/a pokušam ispraviti pogrešku u svom iskazu.

1 2 3 4 5

11. Ne smeta mi kada netko od učenika ispravi pogrešku u mom govoru.

1 2 3 4 5

12. Kada primijetim da sam pogriješio/la, nastojim sama/a popraviti pogrešku u svom govoru.

1 2 3 4 5

13. Kada me nastavnik/ca ispravi, glasno ponovim taj ispravak.

1 2 3 4 5

14. Kada me nastavnik/ca ispravi, u sebi ponovim taj ispravak.

1 2 3 4 5

Dob \_\_\_\_\_

Spol            m ž

Razred \_\_\_\_\_

Škola \_\_\_\_\_

Prvi strani jezik \_\_\_\_\_

Engleski učim \_\_\_\_\_ godina.

## 9. Appendix 2 – Questionnaire for Learners of German

### Stavovi i mišljenja učenika prema tretiranju pogrešaka u govoru učenika stranog jezika

Dragi učenici/ice,

ovo istraživanje se provodi u svrhu polaganja kolegija Istraživanja u nastavi engleskog jezika. Cilj upitnika je istražiti stavove i mišljenja učenika prema tretiranju pogrešaka u govoru učenika stranoga jezika.

Ovaj kratak upitnik je anonimn i koristit će se samo u znanstvene svrhe. Za svaku od 14 tvrdnji možete zaokružiti jedan od ponuđenih odgovora:

- 1- uopće se ne slažem
- 2-djelomično se ne slažem
- 3-niti se slažem niti se ne slažem
- 4-djelomično se slažem
- 5-potpuno se slažem

Za rješavanje je potrebno 5 minuta. Molimo vas da budete iskreni, ne postoje točni ili krivi odgovori. Hvala! ☺

1. Kada govorim na njemačkom očekujem da me nastavnik/ca ispravi ako kažem nešto pogrešno.

1      2      3      4      5

2. Smeta mi kada nastavnik/ca ne popravlj a pogreške kada govorimo na njemačkom.

1      2      3      4      5

3. Smatram da nastavnik/ca treba popraviti sve pogreške u govoru učenika na njemačkom jeziku.

1      2      3      4      5

4. Ne smeta mi ako me nastavnik/ca prekine dok govorim na njemačkom kako bi me ispravio/la.

1      2      3      4      5

5. Volim kada nastavnik/ca popravi pogrešku u mom govoru nakon što prestanem govoriti.

1      2      3      4      5

6. Volim kada mi nastavnik/ca na njemačkom objasni što sam pogriješio/la u govoru.

1      2      3      4      5

7. Volim kada me nastavnik/ca upozori na pogrešku u mom govoru, a da je pritom sam/a ne ispravi.

1      2      3      4      5

8. Smeta mi ako nastavnik/ca prozove drugog učenika kada ja ne uspijem točno odgovoriti na pitanje na njemačkom.

1      2      3      4      5

9. Ne smeta mi kada nastavnik/ca nakon što me ispravio/la traži da ponovim ispravan oblik.

1      2      3      4      5

10. Volim ako mi nastavnik/ca da mogućnost da sam/a pokušam ispraviti pogrešku u svom iskazu.

1      2      3      4      5

11. Ne smeta mi kada netko od učenika ispravi pogrešku u mom govoru.

1      2      3      4      5

12. Kada primijetim da sam pogriješio/la, nastojim sama/a popraviti pogrešku u svom govoru.

1      2      3      4      5

13. Kada me nastavnik/ca ispravi, glasno ponovim taj ispravak.

1 2 3 4 5

14. Kada me nastavnik/ca ispravi, u sebi ponovim taj ispravak.

1 2 3 4 5

Dob \_\_\_\_\_

Spol            m ž

Razred \_\_\_\_\_

Škola \_\_\_\_\_

Prvi strani jezik \_\_\_\_\_

Njemački učim \_\_\_\_\_ godina.