Literature, Language and Cultural Studies
ISSN Print: 3079-5095
ISSN Online: 3079-5109
https://doi.org/10.63313/LLCS.9138

Strategies for Teacher Error Correction Feedback in English Teaching and the Application Pathways

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How to cite this paper: Zhang, X. Y. (2026). Strategies for Teacher Error Correction Feedback in English Teaching and the Application Pathways. *Literature, Language and Cultural Studies*, 4(3), 1-8. ISSN Print: 3079-5095; ISSN Online: 3079-5109.
https://doi.org/10.63313/LLCS.9138
Published: 2026-03-03

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Abstract

As a core subject in basic education in China, English teaching quality directly affects the development of students' English core competencies. Language errors are inevitable in second language acquisition, and teacher error correction feedback is a key link connecting teaching, learning and assessment. Based on the competency-oriented approach and the integration of teaching, learning and assessment in the 2025 Edition of General High School English Curriculum Standards, this paper combines second language acquisition theories and research, analyzes the essential attributes and generation logic of language errors, defines the concept and implementation principles of error correction feedback, constructs a multi-dimensional strategy system, and proposes targeted optimization paths.

Keywords

English teaching; Teacher error correction feedback; Second language acquisition; Integration of teaching, learning and assessment

1. Introduction

Language acquisition is a dynamic construction process, and errors run through the whole process of second language acquisition. Traditional English teaching regards errors as "negative by-products" and adopts a single correction model, ignoring their acquisition value. Since Corder (1967) proposed the positive value of learners' errors, the academic community has realized that errors are the manifestation of learners' interlanguage system, which can help teachers evaluate learning progress and adjust teaching strategies.

The 2025 Edition of General High School English Curriculum Standards emphasizes the integration of teaching, learning and assessment and formative evaluation, which makes error correction feedback not only focus on linguistic form correction, but also bear the mission of cultivating core competencies. However, the current secondary school English error correction feedback has many problems: teachers lack theoretical basis for error diagnosis, overemphasize linguistic accuracy and

ignore emotional experience, and disconnect feedback from teaching and assessment.

Existing researches on error correction feedback focus on higher education, pay less attention to the cultivation of core competencies, and are not closely combined with secondary school teaching practice. This paper aims to explore the multi-dimensional error correction feedback strategies for secondary school English teaching and put forward practical optimization paths.

2. Language Errors in English Teaching

2.1. Essential Attributes and Conceptual Distinctions of Language Errors

Ellis (2020) defines language errors as expressions deviating from the linguistic norms of native speakers due to learners' incomplete mastery of target language rules. Selinker (1972) points out from the perspective of interlanguage theory that errors are the discrepancy between learners' interlanguage system and target language system. In secondary school English teaching, students' language errors are deviations that fail to meet linguistic norms and communicative requirements, caused by linguistic competence, cognitive level and other factors.

It is crucial to distinguish errors from mistakes. Corder (1971) holds that errors stem from the deficiency of language competence, are systematic and recurrent, and need teachers' intervention; mistakes are caused by temporary factors such as inattention, are occasional, and learners can correct them independently. Confusing the two will lead to over-correction or neglect of correction, which will trigger foreign language anxiety or solidify errors in interlanguage system.

2.2. Classification and Characteristic Analysis of Language Errors

Combined with the practice of secondary school English teaching, students' language errors are divided into three types:

Linguistic Knowledge Errors: The most common type, including phonetic errors (wrong stress, inaccurate pronunciation), vocabulary errors (confused meaning, improper collocation) and grammatical errors (tense confusion, misused relative pronouns), which directly affect the accuracy of language expression and comprehension.

Pragmatic Communication Errors: Deviations caused by the lack of understanding of pragmatic rules and cultural context, including pragmatic language errors (misused polite forms) and social-pragmatic errors (applying native cultural communication rules to English), which are easy to cause communicative misunderstandings.

Cognitive Thinking Errors: Linguistic deviations caused by limited thinking patterns and cognitive levels, manifested as illogical expression and deviated text interpretation, reflecting the deficiency of students' thinking ability development.

2.3. The Generative Logic and Influencing Factors of Linguistic Errors

Students' language errors are the result of the combined action of multiple factors, and their generation logic is reflected in three levels:

Native Language Negative Transfer Level: Chinese and English belong to different linguistic systems. The differences in phonetics, grammar and other aspects lead to students' easy transfer of native language rules to English learning, which is the main cause of errors in the early stage of second language acquisition.

Target Language Acquisition Level: Learners' misunderstanding or overgeneralization of target language rules leads to intralingual errors, such as applying the regular past tense rule to irregular verbs and simplifying complex grammatical rules.

External Environmental Factors Level: Inappropriate teaching methods, unscientific textbook content and lack of a good learning environment make it difficult for students to convert linguistic knowledge into application ability, leading to the accumulation of errors.

3. The Conceptual Definition and Implementation Guidelines of Teacher Error Correction Feedback

3.1. The Definition and Functional Positioning of Teacher Error Correction Feedback

Teacher error correction feedback refers to the responses, guidance and evaluations given by teachers to students' language errors in language practice, including direct correction and indirect guidance for students to self-correct. Combined with the new curriculum standards, it is a comprehensive teaching activity integrating teaching, learning and assessment, and its essence is the interactive dialogue between teachers and students.

In competency-oriented teaching, error correction feedback has four core functions: knowledge construction, such as making up for students' linguistic knowledge gaps, competency development, such as cultivating autonomous learning and critical thinking abilities, motivational function, such as protecting learning confidence and reducing foreign language anxiety and teaching optimization, such as helping teachers adjust teaching strategies through error analysis).

3.2. Classification and Characteristics of Teacher Error Correction Feedback

Based on the implementation methods, error correction feedback is divided into direct and indirect types, with distinct characteristics and applicable scenarios:

(1) Direct Error Correction Feedback: Teachers explicitly point out errors and provide correct expressions, with the characteristics of directness and high efficiency, including explicit correction and demonstration correction. It is suitable for basic common errors such as pronunciation and simple grammar, but overuse will make students in a passive learning state.

(2) Indirect Error Correction Feedback: Teachers guide students to self-correct

through restatement, metalinguistic prompts and clarification requests, which protects students' self-esteem and stimulates independent thinking. It has high requirements for teachers' professional ability and is suitable for students with certain language foundation.

3.3. Implementation Guidelines for Teacher Error Correction Feedback

(1) Under the competency-oriented approach, teachers should abide by four basic principles when providing error correction feedback:

(2) Competency-Oriented Principle: Take the cultivation of core competencies as the fundamental goal, and correct not only linguistic knowledge errors, but also pragmatic and cognitive thinking errors, and integrate the cultivation of cultural awareness and thinking ability into the correction process.

(3) Student-Centered Principle: Respect students' dominant position, establish a two-way interactive model of "teacher guidance-student autonomy", and guide students to independently identify, analyze and correct errors.

(4) Differentiated Implementation Principle: Adopt tailored strategies according to students' language proficiency, personality and learning styles, such as direct correction for low-proficiency students and private feedback for introverted students.

(5) Appropriate Timing for Feedback Principle: Select correction timing according to teaching context and error nature, including immediate correction, which is for errors affecting communication and key teaching points, delayed correction, which is for oral communication activities emphasizing fluency. And postponed correction, which is for individualized errors and sensitive students.

4. Establishing a Strategic Framework for Teacher Error Correction Feedback

4.1. Differentiated Error Correction Strategies Based on Error Types

(1) Targeted strategies should be adopted for different types of errors to improve the pertinence of feedback:

(2) Linguistic Knowledge Errors: Adopt the strategy of "explaining rules — comparative analysis — reinforcement exercises", systematically explain linguistic rules, distinguish easily confused concepts through comparison, and design targeted exercises to consolidate knowledge.

(3) Pragmatic Communication Errors: Adopt the strategy of "cultural immersion— situational simulation—practical application", supplement cultural background knowledge, create authentic communicative scenarios for simulation, and encourage students to apply pragmatic knowledge in real communication.

(4) Cognitive Thinking Errors: Adopt the strategy of "logical structuring—method guidance—thinking training", help students construct clear logical frameworks, impart scientific thinking methods, and design special exercises to cultivate

logical and critical thinking.

4.2. Targeted Error Correction Strategies Based on Teaching Modules

Different teaching modules have different objectives, and error correction feedback should be adapted to the characteristics of each module:

(1) Spoken Language Teaching: Adhere to the principle of "fluency first, accuracy second", minimize immediate correction, use indirect correction for errors affecting communication, and collectively correct common errors after students' expression; focus on pronunciation and intonation correction through model reading and shadowing practice.

(2) Writing Teaching: Adhere to the principle of "equal emphasis on accuracy and logical coherence", adopt the strategy of "multi-round feedback, step-by-step refinement", review the macro structure first and then the micro linguistic errors, and carry out peer review to improve students' writing ability.

(3) Reading Teaching: Focus on comprehension and strategy application errors, guide students to self-identify error causes, emphasize the guidance of reading strategies such as skimming and inferring, and design targeted training for different types of reading questions.

(4) Listening Teaching: Pay attention to listening comprehension and strategy application errors, replay the wrong listening segments, analyze error causes, and guide students to master strategies such as capturing key words and predicting content; carry out phonetic recognition and listening comprehension training.

4.3. Closed-loop Error Correction Strategy Based on the Integration of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

(1) Based on the new curriculum standard's requirement of integrating teaching, learning and assessment, construct a closed-loop error correction strategy system of "teaching—feedback—evaluation—improvement":

(2) Instructional Phase: Define feedback objectives and correction priorities according to teaching goals and students' actual situation, and anticipate potential errors to formulate corresponding correction strategies.

(3) Feedback Phase: Implement diverse feedback methods combining direct and indirect, collective and individual feedback according to students' performance, and ensure the timeliness and accuracy of feedback.

(4) Evaluation Phase: Conduct formative assessment through questioning and quizzes to evaluate feedback effectiveness, and guide students to carry out self-assessment and peer assessment.

(5) Improvement Phase: Adjust teaching strategies and refine teaching content according to assessment results; for uncorrected errors, increase exercises and explanations to help students overcome difficulties.

5. Optimal Pathways for Teacher Error Correction Feedback in English Instruction

5.1. Update Teaching Philosophy and Establish a Competency-Oriented Approach

Teachers should abandon the narrow understanding of error correction, recognize that error correction feedback is an important way to cultivate core competencies, and take the development of students' core competencies as the fundamental goal. Adhere to the student-centered concept, build an equal teacher-student relationship, and view students' language errors as valuable teaching resources to realize precision teaching.

5.2. Strengthen Professional Foundations and Enhance Teachers' Error Feedback Capabilities

Teachers should deepen the understanding of second language acquisition and foreign language pedagogy to lay a theoretical foundation for error correction; improve their own linguistic competence and cultural literacy to accurately identify and correct various errors; participate in teaching and research activities such as observing exemplary lessons and exchanging experiences to accumulate practical experience. Schools should organize special lectures and model lessons to strengthen teachers' professional development.

5.3. Refine the Evaluation System and Establish a Diversified Feedback Evaluation Mechanism

Integrate formative and summative assessment, and focus on the learning process evaluation through classroom observation and assignment review; establish a diversified assessment subject system of "teacher assessment—student self-assessment—peer assessment—parents evaluation" to give full play to the role of all parties; adopt diversified assessment methods such as portfolio assessment and situational assessment to comprehensively evaluate students' language proficiency and core competency development.

5.4. Integrate Teaching Resources and Create a Supportive Error Feedback Environment

Create a relaxed and inclusive classroom atmosphere, use encouraging language to build students' learning confidence and reduce foreign language anxiety; make full use of modern teaching tools such as multimedia and online learning platforms to enrich the form of error correction feedback and provide personalized guidance; strengthen home-school communication, guide parents to view students' errors correctly, and form an educational synergy.

6. Conclusion

Teacher error correction feedback is an indispensable part of secondary school English teaching, and its effectiveness directly affects students' language development and core competency cultivation. Language errors are an inevitable phenomenon in second language acquisition with specific attributes and generation logic. Accurately distinguishing errors from mistakes and classifying error types is the prerequisite for effective error correction. As a comprehensive teaching activity integrating teaching, learning and assessment, error correction feedback has multiple core functions and plays an irreplaceable role in competency-oriented teaching.

This paper constructs a diversified error correction feedback strategy system based on error types, teaching modules and the integration of teaching, learning and assessment, and puts forward four optimization paths: updating teaching philosophy, strengthening professional foundation, refining evaluation system and integrating teaching resources. Effective error correction feedback requires teachers to adhere to competency-oriented and student-centered principles, adopt targeted strategies, and integrate feedback into the closed-loop process of teaching, learning and assessment.

Future research can carry out large-scale empirical research to explore the impact of different error correction strategies on the development of students' core competencies, and focus on the deep integration of information technology such as artificial intelligence and big data with error correction feedback, so as to provide more theoretical and practical guidance for secondary school English teaching.

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